

“Where Is the Child?”
Rev. Bill Freeman
December 24, 2016 at 7 pm
Menifee United Church of Christ

Santa Claus was sitting in a shopping mall. Little Debbie came up and sat on Santa’s lap. Santa looked at little Debbie and said, “So, little girl, what do you want for Christmas?” Little Debbie looked shocked. She stared at Santa and gasped, “Didn’t you get my e-mail?” Santa messed up.

Christmas is a busy time for everybody, especially Santa. So it’s not surprising that maybe Santa didn’t see her e-mail or misplaced it or didn’t read it. Hopefully, by tomorrow Santa will find little Debbie’s e-mail and get her what she wants. And hopefully, Santa will get us what we want. More importantly, hopefully, Santa will get little Debbie, and us, what we need for Christmas. But I believe, before tomorrow, Santa will find little Debbie’s e-mail.

The Wise Men were looking for something, but not e-mail. They went to Jerusalem. They saw King Herod and they asked King Herod, “Where is the child?” King Herod said, “Go to Bethlehem.” So they left and they followed the Star, and it stopped over a house. Apparently, Joseph and Mary and the baby Jesus had found better accommodations than an old barn. So the Wise Men went into the house and they saw Mary and the baby Jesus. They were overjoyed and they gave Mary and the baby Jesus gold and frankincense and myrrh. They had found Jesus. Do we find Jesus?

“Where is the shampoo?” my wife wondered the other day. We had gone shopping the day before and I took care of the groceries. And I said, “I remember buying the shampoo, but I don’t remember putting it away. I would have put it in the shower.” So she went and looked, but it wasn’t in the shower. Then, a minute later, she said, “Oh, it’s under the sink.” I didn’t remember putting it away under the sink, but I guess I did. Sometimes we misplace things, sometimes we put things in the wrong place, sometimes we forget where we put things. But I bet it’s easier to find Jesus than it is to find our shampoo.

Jesus’ parents couldn’t find Jesus, though. When Jesus was about 12 years old, his parents took him to Jerusalem, to the Passover festival. After the Passover festival, everybody headed back home. Mary and Joseph thought that Jesus was with them, but he had stayed behind. They couldn’t find him. This was a variation of the movie plot “Home Alone.” After a couple days, they did find Jesus in the Temple, talking with the rabbis. They were very angry with Jesus. They said: Jesus, you caused us much grief. Jesus said, “Didn’t you know I’d be in my Father’s house?” They were able to find Jesus. Do we find Jesus?

Christmastime we will find Jesus in the cradle. That’s where Jesus has been found on Christmas Day for over two thousand years – Jesus born again every year on December 25th, lying in a cradle. The baby Jesus. Where else do we find Jesus? I find Jesus in the temple of this church. I find Jesus in the people who brought gifts to seven children, who otherwise wouldn’t have Christmas presents, and the family was very grateful. I find Jesus in the people who bring food to our food pantry that we give to people who are in need, at Christmastime and other times of the year. I find Jesus in the people who put together our Christmas Eve play, entertaining us and giving us a good message. Where will Jesus be found in the future?

Jesus will be found coming in the clouds in the future. That’s what the gospel of Mark says. The gospel of Mark says that Jesus will return to earth and gather his elect. He will have his angels gathering the elect from the ends of earth to the ends of heaven. They will gather the elect when Jesus comes again. But nobody knows when that will happen. Where else can Jesus be found? Not necessarily in the future, but in the present and maybe even in the past?

Jesus can be found in Christians, but I think the Spirit of Jesus, or the Spirit of God, can be found in non-Christians, today and in years past. I find the Spirit of God in Lao Tzu. Lao Tzu wrote the “Tao de Ching.” And Lao Tzu says, “Treat those who are good with goodness, and treat those who are not good with goodness.” Doesn’t that sound like the Spirit of God? The Universal Spirit? The Spirit of Jesus is a Universal Spirit, I think, too. We can find it in many people today, in the past, and hopefully in the future.

“We Three Kings” has a universal message, I think. “We Three Kings” is a song I sang as a little boy. I was probably seven or eight, in our Christmas play in my boyhood church. I remember walking down the aisle with two other boys. We were probably dressed in the appropriate garb and we sang “We Three Kings.” I even remember the words to “We Three Kings.” Part of it goes, “Star of wonder, Star of night, Star of royal beauty bright, Westward leading, Still proceeding, Guide us to thy perfect light.” That’s the Spirit of Jesus, isn’t it? “Thy perfect light.” Jesus is the perfect light that wipes out the imperfect darkness. When we find the perfect light, we have found Jesus.

What about you? Have you found Jesus? Is Jesus within you? Is the Spirit of Jesus within you on this Christmas Eve? I hope so. I hope the Spirit of Jesus is within you on Christmas Eve and on Christmas Day. Then I hope the Spirit of Jesus will be with you every day of the year.

Let us pray:
God of love,
*Help us to find the Spirit of Jesus.
Help us to find the Spirit of Jesus within us and within others.
And help us to share the Spirit of Jesus with everyone everywhere.
Now and forevermore,
By the power of the Holy Spirit
And in the name of Jesus.
Amen.*

*(This sermon was delivered without manuscript or notes,
and was transcribed from a recording of it.)*