

Coram Deo
Soli Deo Gloria, Soli Deo Gracia, Soli Scriptura
Agnus Dei, Qui Tollis Peccata Mundi
Deo Volente
Sermon Preach at Stouffville United Church
By the Rev. Capt Dr. John S. Niles MSM CD

“Christmas is Coming: Why Aren’t You Dancing?”

November 27, 2022

Matthew 11:16-19

I've often wondered if children are able to walk. I've never see one do it. At least not around me. They seem to fly or jump, dance every place they go. Their feet very often never touch the ground. I know that is true in my house. We always have music on. And so, it would seem the children never ever walk anywhere. They dance. I remember on one occasion I was sitting and listening to music and writing, when one of my children walked very deliberately into the room. I was startled--it was so unnatural--because she wasn't dancing. I looked up and said, "Darling, there's music, why aren't you dancing?"

Well, there was a problem, and it had stopped her from being able to feel light on her feet. So we spoke, and when she left, she did so dancing.

It was C.K. Chesterton who said, Angels can fly, because they take themselves so lightly. Yet, we deal with life so deliberately. Is it any wonder that we find ourselves unable even to dance. Maybe, that's why children seem so much, at times, like angels; for when their hearts are light, their feet seem hardly to touch the ground.

That is where I want to begin this morning on this first Sunday of Advent before Christmas--when we talk about being alive to life, of being vital or being numbed--I want to say there is music; why aren't you dancing?

The Gospel of Matthew said it this way:

"We piped to you, and you did not dance:

We sang a lament for you and you did not mourn.'

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.'

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look a glutton, drunkard and a friend
of

tax collectors and sinners.'

But Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

What is being ask is: have you responded to God? Have you responded to His music? There is music. Why aren't you dancing?

"This is my Fathers world
and to my listen ears
all nature sings and round me rings
the music of the spheres."

Blake said that to him everything spoke and sung of the wonder of God. When he looked at the sun in the sky, he did not just see a circle of light, but a circle of angels singing 'Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God Almighty. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the Highest' There is music, why aren't you dancing?

I

"We piped to you, and you did not dance: we sang a lament for you and you did not mourn." What is being said is the people responded with **indifference**.

Christmas is a time for worshipping, singing and celebrating. Yet, for some it is a time of dismissing or ignoring – dismissing the significance of Christmas or ignoring the real reason for the season; ignoring the gift of new life, ignoring the guidance and wisdom; ignoring the One Who has come to put pieces of our lives back together again. However, having said that, I have to say that that was the case at the beginning; so why not now?

A number of years ago a well-known Bible teacher was invited to take part in a Christmas television program. It was to be a panel discussion and the theme was to be "The Coming of Jesus Two Thousand Years Ago." When the time for the program had come and the participants were assembled, the moderator of the program began the discussion by remarking how beautiful the Christmas story is and how eagerly the world waited for the coming of Christ in Bethlehem so long ago.

A number of comments were made. Then the Bible teacher had his turn to speak. He returned to the moderator's opening comment and said that at the risk of sounding contradictory it was necessary for him to say that the remarks just made were far from being accurate. "The world did not wait eagerly for the Christ child. On the contrary, the world was so busy with its affairs that it would not even make room for Him to be born. There was no room at the Inn. If angels had not been sent to shepherds and star to the kings he would have gone unnoticed by the world, largely indifferent and defiant.

I wonder, if it weren't for the pre-Christmas Sales and the post Boxing Day sales if anyone would notice today.

One time a rabbi, Christian minister were talking about how each of them celebrated Christmas. The minister said that they give thanks for all of God's blessings and on Christmas morning they open their gifts.

"We do it a little differently," the rabbi said. "On Christmas morning my entire family goes to my brother's department store. We look at the empty shelves, and then we all join in singing 'What a Friend We Have in Jesus.'"

II

"We piped to you, and you did not dance: we sang a lament for you and you did not mourn.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of

Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look a glutton, drunkard and a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' First there was indifference, and then there was **defiance**. Isn't that always the way!

Who can forget the children's story "*the Grinch who stole Christmas*". I watch it every year with my children and now grandchildren. I watch it even without my children. I love it, because it speaks of love that conquers all, and the out-right defiance the Grinch in the face of the truth. And how it speaks of the power of truth and love to overcome defiance and rebellion.

Have you notice that some people spend their whole lives angry at others, the world and God? They are never happy about anything. They live dissatisfied defiant lives. For people like this, Christmas is just one big letdown and another reason to be unhappy with the way their lives are going.

Little girl went to see Santa Claus she gave him a list of all she wanted then waited expecting him to give it to her right then. After which, he reached down and pulled out a candy cane and said, "Here you go; now what do you say?" "What my mother says, 'I want to exchange it.'"

I came across a framed poster a number of year ago that that said: "I believe in the sun - even when it does not shine; I believe in love - even when it is not shown; I believe in God - even when he does not speak." After finding this I came across Robert Schuller's version of the story behind those words: "Sweeping across Germany at the end of World War II, allied forces searched farms and houses looking for snipers. At one abandoned house, almost a heap of rubble, searchers with flashlights found their way to the basement. There on the crumbling wall, a victim of the Holocaust had scratched a Star of David. And beneath it, in rough lettering, the message: "I believe in the sun - even when it does not shine; I believe in love - even when it is not shown; I believe in God - even when he does not speak."

III

"'We piped to you, and you did not dance: we sang a lament for you and you did not mourn.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look a glutton, drunkard and a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

First there was indifference, and then there was defiance. Finally, if we get it there is **deference**. Christmas is about thinking about the One Who thought about others. It is about deferring with reverence to the needs of others and to the Glory of God. In doing so, wisdom is vindicated by her deeds. This wisdom is shown to be true by our actions.

It's like a child. Someone's once said a child's property law goes like this:

1. If I like it, it's mine.
2. If it's in my hand, it's mine.
3. If I can take it from you, it's mine.
4. If I had it a little while ago, it's mine.
5. If it's mine, it must never appear to be yours in any way.
6. If I'm doing or building something, all the pieces are mine.
7. If it looks just like mine, it's mine.

8. If I think it's mine, it's mine.
9. If it's yours and I steal it, it's mine.
10. If it's broken, it's yours.

At one time at the City Temple in London, there was in the congregation a wealthy restaurateur named Emil Mettler. Mettler would often do not allow a Christian worker to pay for a meal in his restaurant. Once he happened to open his cash register in the presence of a Secretary of the London Missionary Society and the Secretary was astonished to see among the bills and coins a six-inch nail. "What was it doing there?" Mettler explained, "I keep this nail with my money to remind me of the price that Christ paid for my salvation and of what I owe Him in return."

Vance Havner said, "Too many of us today are not just shaky about what we believe, but not *shaken* by *what* we believe." It doesn't move us.

You think about that. Amen.