

**SERMON: 2018/12/25 (Christmas Day, Yr. C) - Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96:2-7; Titus 2:11-14; and, Luke 1:5a, 2:7-18a \_BTR**

[Invite children to the front. Have giant candy-cane concealed nearby.]

For *many* people, today will be, sadly, a disappointment. Months *and months* of listening to songs on the radio and in stores about "white Christmases," "sleigh-bells," kissing beneath mistletoe, snowmen and such-like have *ill*-prepared us for the probably much less enchanting reality of these - the next - 24 hours in Middle Tennessee and elsewhere.

If, for example, like Mariah Carey, all you want for Christmas is to find an absent love '[s]tanding right outside [the] door'; [n.1] and that person doesn't show up - because they moved on (to a new relationship) or because they have died(!), then you're going to be crushed by self-pity or grief - that's *if* romance - is what, for you, Christmas is ultimately about.

Putting your hope in the wrong places on this day - and in the new year - is asking for heartache, which is easily avoidable when we recognize - *when we focus* - on what is *really* true about the reason to be *deeply* joyous this morning: on what makes Christmas a truly 'most wonderful time of the year'. And that's an amazing message - a unique message, embodied by a little baby, born in ancient Bethlehem - called "The Gospel," which can be explained - grasped and internalized - very easily.

Indeed, I'm going to remind you of it by using my favorite holiday candy: a candy-cane; a giant, *humongous* candy-cane.

[Lick it.]

*Mmmm!*

Delicious.

Now, notice that there are *three* colours in my candy-cane.  
(Like the Trinity - the three persons of God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.)  
I've got red, white and green stripes.  
Can you see that?  
Yeah?

Well, each colour has a special meaning for Christians.

Firstly, *the red*.

The red reminds us that the world is a terrible, violent mess but God loves us so

*much* He became a human being to save it – to save it by dying – painfully – on a cross (outside of Jerusalem) to take away God’s displeasure at all the bad stuff we’ve done: our “sin.”

*The white*: the white reminds us that because Jesus died as a sacrifice in my place, when I say “Sorry!” for the things I’ve done wrong, I am (completely) forgiven by God: made *spiritually* pure. A new person in His eyes.

And, thirdly, the *green* reminds us that it is never too late to make a *fresh* start and *grow* in a restored, renewed relationship with God; to try harder to be obedient to His will for my life.

Let’s pray: Father God, ..., in Jesus’ name, amen.

Footnotes:

1. ‘All I Want for Christmas Is You’ – see: <http://www.metrolyrics.com/all-i-want-for-christmas-is-you-lyrics-mariah-carey.html>