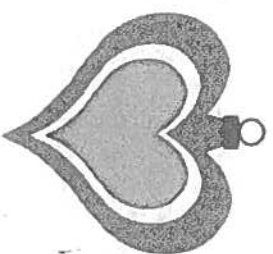


tires of making sure that we are valued and that we are precious and that we are God's own. Peace helps us build a framework so that we have the holy imagination to hope for a better tomorrow, but love is disarming. Love is the dismantling. Love believes all things and bears all things. Love never ends. "How can this be?" Mary asked. Because nothing is impossible with God.

Think about Gabriel's message to Mary. What did she know after the angel spoke, and what remained unknown?

When have you followed God's call on an unknown path? What did you find as you ventured forth?

Can there ever be any guarantees in love? Why or why not?



CHAPTER FOUR

WHEN JOY IS OUR SONG

So, here we are. The Grinch has succeeded. None of the Whos have any presents or decorations or even food for Christmas Day. The Grinch is sure that his wonderful, awful idea worked, and he has every reason to believe that it had. He has this image in his mind that all of the Whos would wake up, and their mouths would be open for a minute or two before they begin weeping and wailing as they notice what had happened. Well, the Whos' mouths were open early in the morning, but they weren't weeping and wailing; rather they began to sing. What happened? Why were they not wailing? We might understand a melody of lament or a rallying cry encouraging the Whos to storm the mountain,

but the music the Grinch heard led to his heart growing three sizes. How could this be? If you want to talk about the vehicle through which a heart can grow three sizes, music is the perfect example.

Music is unparalleled in its ability to move us, to illicit a response within us. It's almost subconscious.

Music is unparalleled in its ability to move us, to illicit a response within us. It's almost subconscious. When we hear a song in a major key, our bodies involuntarily respond with happiness. Similarly, when we hear music in a minor key we "feel" sadness. It's as if there's a fundamental connection between us and music, and that actually makes great sense. One prominent scientific theory about the fundamental nature of matter is called "String Theory." The idea of String Theory is that matter, everything that is, is the result of tiny vibrating strings, and the frequency of the different vibrations is how we get different particles. Those particles, like quarks, then make up larger particles like protons, which constitute atoms, which make up, well, everything, including you and me. Vibrations moving through the air is what music is, so for a moment consider that you are a song. We are a part of God's grand orchestra, and our role is to be in harmony with the music of the spheres, so to speak. Of course, not everything is in harmony. There is discord, and there is tension. Sometimes it's hard to hear God's melody with all of the noise about.

That is where the Grinch was. At the beginning of the story, he's standing outside his miserable home, and the music he hears coming from Whoville sounds like noise to him. It's aggravating and intense. It's like when the apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians,

"[I]f I don't have love, I am a clanging gong or a clashing cymbal" (13:1). In other words, when our heart is two sizes too small it almost doesn't matter what the song is. We can't hear it well. When the ancient Israelites were in captivity in Egypt and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, I have a feeling that there wasn't much singing. But when God's people finally find themselves on the other side of the Red Sea, Miriam, with tambourine in hand, sings, "Sing to the LORD, for an overflowing victory!" (Exodus 15:21). When Mary meets Elizabeth, they are both pregnant. Mary breaks out in song, "With all my heart I glorify the Lord! In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior" (Luke 1:46-47). Throughout Scripture, in moments of celebration and liberation we find music.

It is no surprise to me that the Advent and Christmas season is saturated with music, music that defies denominational boundary, music that isn't only played on Christian radio stations, music that can be heard in marketplaces and festivals and theme parks. It's everywhere. How is it even possible to talk about angels in the sky without singing, "Gloria, in excelsis deo!" Can you imagine what Christmas would be like if we weren't singing? Maybe you don't have to imagine it. During the COVID-19 pandemic we suspended congregational singing in our sanctuary, as many other churches did. It was a difficult but necessary decision.

In that difficult season, it was obvious that something was terribly missing from our worship. Admittedly, I am biased. For most of my undergraduate career, my major was vocal performance. Although it is charming that Buddy the Elf thinks singing is just talking really loudly, singing involves the entire body. Your eyes have to make sense of the notes, lines, and spaces; your mind has to keep track of rhythm and dynamics; you have to breathe energetically while keeping your body relaxed; your ears have to mark the correct key; and then finally when all of these things come together, you open your mouth to produce sound, never mind the art of interpreting what the composer is meaning to communicate. The act of standing and singing in worship involves the whole self, and without it worship can sometimes feel like taking your first bite of a hamburger just after everything slips out from between the buns.

But when [the Grinch] listens, he hears singing. He's heard the Whos sing before, and it was noise to him; but this time it stirs his soul, and it makes his heart tremble.

Something was terribly missing from the Grinch as well. He stands on the mountaintop listening for the lamentations that he knew would follow when the Whos discovered his wonderful, awful idea. But when he listens, he hears singing. He's heard the Whos sing before, and it was noise to him; but this time it stirs his soul, and it makes his heart tremble. Why? What song could

they possibly sing that would be so powerful to even transform the heart of the Grinch?

In the television special, the Whos sing a song called "Welcome Christmas" that Dr. Seuss wrote for the show. But the original book doesn't tell us the name of the song or its lyrics. It simply says that the Whos were singing, leaving us to imagine what the song may have been. I like to picture the Whos singing something like this:

My life flows on in endless song
Above earth's lamentation
I hear the clear, though far-off hymn
That hails a new creation

Through all the tumult and the strife
I hear that music ringing
It finds an echo in my soul
How can I keep from singing?

No storm can shake my inmost calm
While to that Rock I'm clinging
Since love is Lord of heaven and earth
How can I keep from singing?!

We don't know what the Whos sang, but we should rightly imagine that it wasn't a sweet Christmas carol about reindeer or snow. It was probably a song that spoke a deep and profound truth, a song that you can't help but sing when you wake up to find that everything you have is gone. "Since love is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?" Through their song the Grinch discovers that Christmas isn't about the packages

or presents or decorations. It is about love, a love that we celebrate in the best of time, and a love we cling to in times of strife and oppression. Jesus is what God's love looks like, and that's what Christmas is about. Finally recognizing this truth is what caused the Grinch's heart to grow. How could it not?

What is your favorite Christmas song? How does it make you feel?

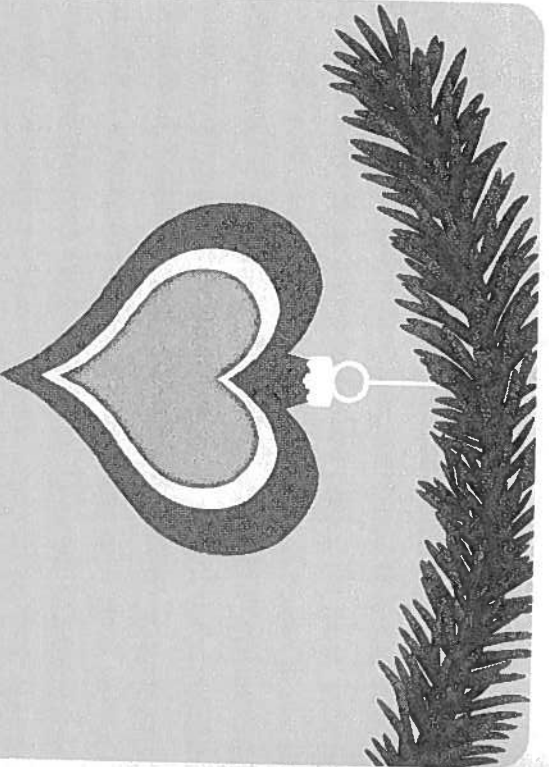
Why is music so central to our observance of Christmas?

THE HEART THAT GREW THREE SIZES

We don't know why the Grinch's heart grew three sizes, but I like to think that it grew once for each of the scenes we see in Luke's record of Jesus's birth. In the first scene the curtain opens and we see a magnificent palace, the seat of human power and authority. Caesar has the authority to order the lives of seemingly the entire world, or at least the world that mattered enough to be counted. The news of Caesar's census travels to Quirinius, governor of Syria, who enjoys a lower status than does Caesar, but he is important enough to be forever remembered by name. Joseph and Mary enter the scene preparing to make the journey from Nazareth in the north to Bethlehem in the south so that the proper authorities may count them. While they were there in Bethlehem, the "city of bread," the time came for Mary to deliver her child. She gave birth to a baby boy, wrapped him snugly, and placed him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.

The scene begins in the palace, the seat of all authority. The Grinch at the beginning of the story seems to think he holds a similar power. Instead of ordering the world to temporarily move to their ancestral home, he goes to their homes in the hope of moving them to despair. Instead of counting the people so that he could record their possessions, he takes their possessions to elicit misery. Though the actions of Caesar and the Grinch were different, their hunger for power is quite the same. Both wanted their respective worlds to know who was in charge. The Grinch's growing heart is so much more than a sentimental warm fuzzy. Hearing the Whos sing a joyful tune is like a peasant from Judea saying "No" to Caesar's order. I would imagine that defying Caesar's census would be met with a growing legion of soldiers rather than a growing heart. The Grinch's transformation is remarkable. Instead of growing even more embittered by his own failure, he becomes more malleable. The sweet sound of singing disarms him. In this first scene of the Christmas story we are also unexpectedly disarmed. Through Luke's careful unfolding from Caesar to Christ, we begin to realize that it is the child in the manger, and not the emperor in the palace, who has the power to move us. As the first scene concludes, the Grinch's heart has grown by one size.

In the second scene we find ourselves outside Bethlehem where shepherds keep a watchful eye over their flock, peering into the darkness for any signs of danger. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and they were afraid. Their job was to protect the herd from danger, and now standing before them is a frightful and unfamiliar sight. It is no surprise that the angel quickly calls



SMART INVESTING

When the storyboards were completed for the Grinch television special, Chuck Jones, head of MGM Animation, began shopping the project around to different investors and producers. After being rejected by twenty-six different potential sponsors, Jones finally received an investment from the Foundation for Commercial Banks, to which Jones replied, "You have to be kidding.... The bankers bought a story in which the Grinch says 'maybe Christmas doesn't come from a store'?! Well, bless their banker hearts!"²

out to them saying, "Don't be afraid." I would imagine even after the angel heralds them with peace, their grip on their staves and rods tightened. Then, the angel says something curious: "This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12).

Scripture doesn't say that the shepherds were looking for a sign, or that they were particularly interested in searching for anything beyond what would get their herd through the night. Nevertheless, the angel says, "You *will* find." It's so definitive. It almost sounds like a command, and it's hard to blame the shepherds if they thought it was. It was more the case, as my friend James Howell reminded me, "You may want to poke your head around to see what's happening in your own neighborhood. Aren't you interested in a bit of a 'child-like' surprise from heaven?"

It's not that Christmas is bigger and better, or the latest and greatest. Christmas simply is more.

The Grinch, too, was in for a bit of a surprise. For the shepherds, finding a child wrapped snugly was not the gift that they had expected, nor was it something for which they were searching. In the same way, the Grinch came to an unexpected realization. The singing he heard was so disarming that it caused him to stop for three hours to reconsider everything. Christmas came anyway. Christmas didn't depend on gifts under the tree, figgy pudding on the table, or stockings hung by the fireplace with care. In short, he realized that Christmas was more. It's not

that Christmas is bigger and better, or the latest and greatest. Christmas simply is more.

Christmas is abundant. Christmas is our human cup running over with divine favor and grace. Christmas is more than denominational lines. Christmas is more than our petty divisions and Twitter squabbles. Christmas is more than our traditions, hymns, candles, and wreaths. Take everything away, and Jesus was born anyway, and continues to be born within us through God's grace every day. Love truly did "come down" at Christmas. Psalm 136 reads as if we are hearing God's heartbeat.

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,

for his steadfast love endures forever.

O give thanks to the God of gods,

for his steadfast love endures forever.

O give thanks to the Lord of lords,

for his steadfast love endures forever.

(Psalm 136:1-3 NRSV)

And on and on it goes—"his steadfast love endures forever... his steadfast love endures forever..." The singing caused his heart to grow one size, and now, with his realization that Christmas is more, the Grinch's heart has grown two sizes.

Take everything away and Christmas remains, and fortunately the Grinch still has everything he stole. Though his sleigh is teetering on the edge of a cliff, it has not yet fallen. He pulls everything back from the brink and decides to go, with haste, down the mountain to return the Christmas he tried to devour.

As the curtain opens on scene three of the Christmas story, the shepherds say, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us" (Luke 2:15b). The Grinch and shepherds alike are filled with a sense of urgency. It reminds me of my young son, Robert, who on Christmas morning wants to play with all of his gifts immediately after they've been opened. "Daddy, can you open this?" is a constant refrain.

The shepherds finally make their way to the Holy Family and when they see the Christ Child, they tell everyone everything that had happened, like a child who darts out of the living room before breakfast to show the next-door neighbor what Santa left under the tree. When we approach this Word, the place where the seemingly parallel lines of the human and the divine intersect, I don't know whether I would kneel in adoration or keep my distance out of awe or reverence, but at least I know that I would leave changed. The Grinch charges down the mountain and returns everything that he packed away in the middle of the night. This act of giving, though he shouldn't have stolen it in the first place, is when his heart finally grows a third size. We often hear that giving is better than receiving, and for the Grinch, this is certainly true.

The Christmas story is a three-scene play that leads us from the palace to the manger, bringing us closer to God's own incarnate heart. We find in the Grinch's story a three-part transformation of his own heart, which started out two sizes too small and grew to the point of overflowing. His heart had been transformed, and it was transformed yet again when he rushed to share the fruits of that change with everyone else.

How does the Grinch respond when he first hears the Whos singing? What does this say about his heart in that moment?

For most of us, the Christmas story is a familiar one. Read it again, slowly, with fresh eyes in Luke chapter 2. Is there anything surprising about it? If so, what?

Is the Grinch's decision to return the Whos' possession a cause or an effect of his transformation? Why?



PEACE WITH JUSTICE

The story isn't over. How would the Whos react to this radically redeemed outsider whose heart seemed to miraculously grow three sizes larger? I certainly wouldn't blame them if they were suspicious of the Grinch's newfound grace. The Whos seem perfectly in the right should they want to bring the Grinch to justice. If the story were told today, I fear that the Grinch wouldn't have made it out of the first house alive. After all, he did sneak into all their homes and steal their possessions. It's a common enough story in our society for people to shoot first and ask questions later when possessions are threatened. How tragic and empty the ending of that story would be. It seems that the Whos have the final say in how this story will end.

Last words seem heavier than other thoughts we share. I dread thinking about what my last words are going to be. I hope that I say something profound like, "Best of all, God is with us," like John Wesley, or Steve Jobs's famous, "Oh wow!" Undoubtedly, it's more likely that I'll utter, "Check this out," as I recklessly tumble off a hover board forgetting that I'm no longer a teenager, or something dangerously mundane like, "That's not a poisonous snake."

Have you ever considered what your last words might be, or at least how you might want to be remembered? Of course, the tricky thing about last words is that rarely do we know that last words will be last words, which begs the question why all of our words aren't treated with the same emphasis, dignity, and importance. I've always found it curious that traditionally we attribute Jesus's last words as being things he said from the cross like, "Father forgive them," or "Today you will be with me in Paradise," or "My God, why have you forsaken me." Never mind that saying anything from the cross is exceedingly difficult, but we like these last words. They are comforting, and they are profound, but they aren't challenging. Maybe that's why the church likes them so much—because they aren't asking anything of us.

In Luke's Gospel Jesus's last words are a summary of who the Messiah is, and what is required of us as followers: "This is what is written: the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and a change of heart and life for the forgiveness of sins must be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things" (24:46-48). It seems that when Jesus's earthly ministry was over, Jesus wanted the disciples to remember forgiveness above all else.

We are charged to forgive while we hope for reconciliation. Reconciliation follows forgiveness, and sometimes forgiveness takes a long time.

Forgiveness is refusing your right to harm someone in the way that she or he has harmed you. Forgiveness isn't necessarily rebuilding friendship or bringing a relationship back to what it was. Another way to say this is that we are charged to forgive while we hope for reconciliation. Reconciliation follows forgiveness, and sometimes forgiveness takes a long time. How many times must we forgive our neighbor? Seventy times seven times, Jesus said, which is another way to say, you might have to do it every day for a good long while. Forgiveness doesn't mean that you are a doormat; rather forgiveness is freedom. It means that you are no longer bound by your anger and frustration toward someone else. I love how Paul puts it in Romans 12:

Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
 (12:17-21 NRSV)

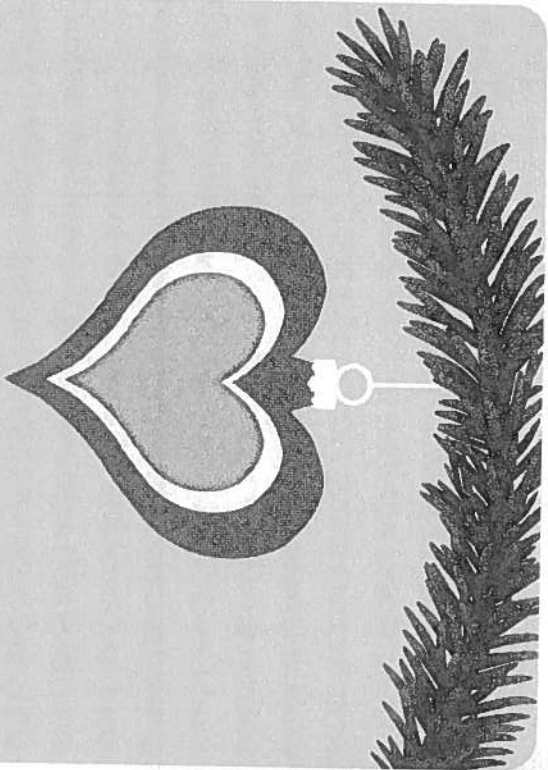
I love the honesty of that. Leave room for the wrath of God, not your own wrath. Forgiveness is hard work, especially when we realize that often the person we have to forgive is *ourselves*.

In the musical *Hamilton*, there is a beautiful song near the end of the musical titled "It's Quiet Upstern." At this point in Alexander Hamilton's story, he has been unfaithful to his wife, he has lost his oldest son in a reckless duel, and he's lost nearly all of his political influence. He hasn't yet lost his relationship with his wife, Eliza, but she has every reason in the world to separate herself from Alexander's recklessness and irresponsibility.

In lieu of analyzing the entire song in the context of the musical, I want to point out where the song begins and ends. As Eliza and Alexander wrestle with infidelity and the loss of their son, the song begins with:

There are moments that the words don't reach
 There is suffering too terrible to name

Alexander has spent a lifetime using words to sort out his influence, struggle, and objectives, but now, words fall flat and useless. There are moments that the words don't reach. The music is slow, pointed, and meaningful; quite the opposite of most of the musical's fast-paced excitement. What the couple is now experiencing is completely counter to what is familiar, expected, and knowable. By the end of the song, after Alexander has reflected on his role in tearing his family apart, wrestling with his own lowliness, and his acceptance of his own unworthiness to be a husband and a father, you hear:



THE PERFECT ENDING

The most hotly debated production piece for the Grinch animated television special was how to craft the ending. Geisel was adamant about not making the ending either too preachy or too saccharine. Maurice Noble, the background artist, stepped in and suggested that the Whos should join hands creating the symbol of a star, and then the “star moved up and joined with the Grinch, and he was transformed,” to which Geisel responded, “Perfect!”³ Although several critics panned the special saying it “fell a trifle short of expectation,”⁴ the Grinch television special would become one of the most beloved Christmas classics even to this day.

There are moments that the words don't reach
There's a grace too powerful to name...
Forgiveness... can you imagine?

It's heart-wrenching. It's both real and truly unimaginable. Forgiveness is truly a grace too powerful to name... and it is also our calling as followers of Christ. Jesus's last words to the disciples were, “forgiveness must be preached in [my] name,” and the Whos seem to have taken this to heart.

What led the Whos to receive and welcome the Grinch? Would you have done the same thing if you were in their shoes? Why or why not?

Recall a time when you experienced the power of forgiveness.

What does it mean that the Whos, not the Grinch, ultimately decide how the story ends? What does this say about the way we practice forgiveness in our lives?



AT THE TABLE

At the end of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* we see that the Grinch, the outsider, the other, the one who should be feared and excluded, was the one who is now at the head of the table, carving the roast beast, as they all sit together in table fellowship.

Not only does it seem that all things are forgiven, but the Whos have given the Grinch a seat of honor! The last panel of Seuss's story has a wreath behind the Grinch as he carves the roast beast, and it almost looks like a halo. The Gospel isn't explicit in Seuss's story, but this simple final drawing reveals something holy has been experienced. Something beautiful has taken place, and how perfect it is that enemies are now around the same table sharing a meal, with the least of these at the head of the table. We mistakenly think that the point of Seuss's story is that Christmas isn't about presents. The true insight of this story is the joy of reconciliation.

Joy is the steadfast assurance that God is with us. God is with us yesterday, today, and tomorrow. One of the most profound things about our Advent discipline is peace, hope, love, and joy's relationship with time. Advent is a season when we prepare for something that's already happened. One of the things that I love about Christianity is its complete and appropriate disregard of linear time. For example, folks have asked me, "If Jesus died and was raised in roundabout AD 33, what about the people who died in AD 32? Were they just out of luck?" No. Paul says that God was pleased to reconcile all things through Christ. The experience of time is part of creation. Time is simply God's way of making sure everything doesn't happen at once.

All things were reconciled. Time is part of that "all." The cross works both forward and backward. When we gather around the Communion table, our faith reveals that we gather with the saints and the heavenly host. Why was Jesus born when he was? Scripture says, "When the fulfillment of the time came, God

sent his Son, born through a woman, and born under the Law" (Galatians 4:4). Jesus was born when time was full. Time itself needed to be unburdened. This points to the mystery of joy; joy is timeless. Chris Wiman edited a fantastic book of poems on joy, and I love what he wrote in the introduction: "To define joy as present tense is to keep it fastened to time, and that doesn't feel completely right. It might be truer to say that joy is a flash of eternity that *illuminates* time, but the word 'eternity' does sit a bit lumpishly there on the page."⁵

Love is an expression of the past....

Peace is our work in the present....

Hope projects us into the future....

**Joy in its timelessness brings
all three together at once.**

Joy is a "flash of eternity," and when placed in the context of our Advent discipline, it makes perfect sense. Love is an expression of the past. We gather because of God's love in the person of Jesus two thousand years ago. Peace is our work in the present. Putting down the sword and working toward reconciliation. Hope projects us into the future, ultimately when there will be a new heaven and a new earth. Joy in its timelessness brings all three together at once. Peace, hope, and love, the past, present, and future, all proclaiming that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is always with us—eternal joy.

Advent is not a time of waiting for gifts. Advent is a time of waiting to recognize that the Giver is the gift. The gift is the

THE HEART THAT GREW THREE SIZES

invitation into God's story. It is a story of how the human and the divine have come together in Christ and in the body of Christ, the church, and how through this union humans are empowered to love as God loves. Sam Wells says this beautifully:

In earthly human friendship it is impossible to know everyone, still less to care or genuinely to love more than a limited number or range of people. Yet Jesus is the good shepherd, who knows all of his sheep and calls them each by name; he lays down his life for them. He is prepared to leave the great mass of them to seek and find just one. He has other sheep, "not of this fold," whom he knows just as well. . . . In other words, in the life of the kingdom it is possible to love all with the intensity with which one might aspire on earth to love one; and that love and attention do not disclose deep flaws but evoke profound awe.⁶

God is the gift, and the gift is an invitation to participate in God's story. Through Christ, God dwells within each of us. We are, the church is, the body of Christ, the place where God's story of love continues, the place where God's story of love is offered to the world. God is love, so when we learn to care, when we learn to share our gifts with the world, when we learn to seek out and welcome the lost sheep searching for truth, when we make room for those society has forgotten or have found unlovable—that is when we experience the very heart of God. When we do these things we create a place for God to dwell.

The Whos seem to understand this profound truth of the beauty of Christmas, even though their celebration seemed noisily

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hidden behind trinkets and treasures. At the end of it all both the Grinch and the Whos got it right. They both sat at the same table, gave the least of these the seat of honor, and though not explicitly, revealed the timeless truth that God is with us.

Why do you think Dr. Seuss chose a meal as the final scene of How the Grinch Stole Christmas?

How does the promise of Christ, God with us, expand our own capacity to love?



THE ANGEL OF JOY

Peace offers the framework through which our holy imaginations can perceive a hope in which the revelation of love is disarming, convicting, and comforting. Joy, on the other hand, is wholly other. Peace is an artful, humble, and active intention. Hope is a destination toward which we strive. Love is something that must be given and received. Joy is not something we can do. Joy simply is found. Again, Chris Wiman puts it well, saying, "[Joy is] the place that is most us yet remains beyond us."⁷

**Joy is not something we can do.
Joy simply is found.**

“Don’t be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David’s city. He is Christ the Lord,” the angel announces (Luke 2:10-11). Two parallel lines, the human and the divine, coming together, in the place that is most us yet remains beyond us. It would take an angel to announce joy because I’m not sure we have the words to do it. We often think of joy as being happiness, but happiness is to joy as black and white is to color. Joy certainly isn’t sadness, and yet there is a depth to a joyful experience that sometimes only sadness knows.

My wife, Christie, and I experienced joy earlier this year. I have rarely mentioned this publicly because we have been both embarrassed and ashamed, but I think it cuts to the heart of what Joy is. Earlier this year we took the family to Walt Disney World. One night the kids were swimming at the pool, and I brought back pizza for us to eat. Everyone got out of the pool, and we took our youngest child Robert’s life jacket off so that he could sit at the table. We started mapping out what our next day was going to be. Eventually the kids finished their pizza and wanted to go back into the pool, so one by one they peeled away from the table as Christie and I kept talking. I’m not sure how long it was, but we heard Robert crying, his face was pale, and a woman named Amanda was holding him. Immediately we knew what had happened. We forgot to put his life jacket back on, and we didn’t know how long he had been in the pool without it. She said that she saw him get in and she thought he was playing, but then realized that he wasn’t as she scooped him out of the pool.

That night we felt a great joy. Amanda happened to be in the right place at the right time and all at once there was shock, embarrassment, grief over what if, and relief that everything was OK. It was like the soul exhaling. I don’t tell you this to suggest that we were somehow favored by God in that moment. But I can say that every time I see that child smile, as the apostle Paul says in Romans 8, “the Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words” (Romans 8:26b NRSV).

Joy is the soul exhaling. “I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news” is all of creation taking in a breath and holding it until the baby Jesus breathes his first, and then all at once all of creation exhales and the greatest joy of all creation finds its place that is both within us and beyond us. Peace, the framework, hope, the vision, and love, the activity of God have all been pointing us to that intersecting line of the human and the divine that offers joy to the world, now and forever.

Joy is something we can’t do or achieve; it’s something we receive. How can you recognize joy when you have it?

How is reconciliation at the heart of Christmas? What can you do to make reconciliation a part of the way you celebrate Christmas this year?