

The Sermon

Every year around the end of November I start to get a little stressed. As do most people I suppose.

A Swedish tradition says that a proper household should make seven different cookies for Christmas. There certainly is a lot to get stressed about.

This is not what I get stressed over though. No. What freaks me out is that I sooner or later must come up with a brilliant idea for my Christmas Eve Sermon!

The Sermon of Christmas Eve. Uh. It gives me goosebumps just to say the word. It is by far the sermon of the year that most people from the congregation will hear, and of course I want it to be as good as possible.

This year was no different. Late November I got stressed, but luckily something happened on the First Sunday in Advent that made me all calm.

I listened to a song. A Christmas song. And something in the fourth verse just resonated with all my stress and put it all into perspective.

The song I listened to, was the Danish Christmas song “Sikken voldsom trængsel og alarm.” In translation, “What a heavy bustle and alarm.” Do you know it?

Well, the fourth verse in translation goes like this:

*If you're not a lazy frame of bones,
you rise early when the yule bell tones.*

*Streets are icy, shining cold and flat,
church is glowing in the silent night.*

*Inside singing, peace, and joy are found,
warming every heart that gathers 'round.*

*Sermon does not have to be the best
with a bad we simply take a rest.*

Rest. People are not coming to church on Christmas Eve to listen to me talking. They are coming to get a pause for all the stress around Christmas. Why, oh why, have I stressed with my sermon for so many Christmases! This room – maybe its hymns too – is all people need.

Anyway. Despite seemingly not having to write a sermon, I decided to do so any way. And I wrote something upon the rest of the song. But if you are stressed, please feel free to take a rest instead of listening.

The rest of the song. The fourth verse actually is not the only verse that got my attention. The last verse did so too. Because

as the title of the song states, Christmas is full of ‘heavy bustle and alarm’.

Yet it does not mean that we do not like Christmas. Rather opposite. It is the only thing we know that we do not want to change. So argues the song at least in its final verse:

*You who gave this feast so bright and dear,
you know best what brings us joy and cheer;
still I hope that - ere my days are through -
you will grant this little favour too:
Turn the spinning heavens as you will,
turn the world completely upside still,
shake the earth itself, both harsh and cruel -
only leave untouched my old, loved Yule!*

We love yule. We love Christmas. And no stress – no “heavy bustle and alarm” – can change our minds about Christmas. I find this to be oh so true. And remarkable. Because how come? What is it with all the “heavy bustle and alarm” that we like so much?

I guess there might be many answers to this question – and thanks heaven for that – but for me one of the main reasons for sure is that Christmas awakens something childish within us:

*Children skip around with lively cheer,
Grandpa joins them, smiling ear to ear.
Come and sing along with every tongue -
brothers, we were children, we were young.*

Christmas. Christmas is magical. And one of the most magical things with Christmas is that it makes all of us into children – even grandpa join the dancing! Become a child.

And not only the various traditions around Christmas does this: All the baking, all the decorations, all the presents, all the food. Because all of this is merely pointing towards what truly makes us children: The Gospel.

In the Gospel of Christmas, we are told that God came to us as a father all to take care of us as parents takes care of their children.

What is so great about being a child, one might ask? Well, this Christmas I experienced two stories that answered just this question.

The first story is from a day in December, when I picked up my sons from school. He said that he was happy we had a chimney. Because it meant that Santa could come visit us.

Arriving home though he discovered that our fireplace was covered with glass. How could Santa enter!

I almost went out and got my screwdriver, but then my wife told my son that Santa would always bring with him a screwdriver allowing him to remove any glass and obstacles.

My son was satisfied. Christmas was saved.

Now adults would probably have questioned the logic and seen a lot of issues in the above solution. But children do not. And sometimes it is a relieving thing we as adults could learn from:

Give logic a break. Give practicalities a break. Sometimes we should simply allow ourselves to participate in the dance without letting age – or logic – be an issue.

Because when all come to all we do not have the answer for everything. We might think that we have. But truly, we do not.

And instead of trying to always come up with solutions and answers, ways to improve and the like, it is healthy to once in a while just raise one's shoulders and succumb to the unanswered.

Not because one does not care, but because some things sometimes are better left unanswered. Yes, some things in our world – faith not least – even has no answer.

The other story I want to share with you I was told by a friend of mine who works as a teacher. She once had a class where all the children suddenly started to argue and worry: How would Santa enter apartments in a skyscraper. That was the question.

They all turned to my friend, the teacher, for an answer. She had no clue what to answer. Then one of the students spoke up. She lived in a skyscraper and had once asked Santa in a mall about this.

Santa carefully took forth a key from his inner pocket and told her that on Christmas Eve this particularly key could open every door – and every heart – throughout the world.

The class was satisfied. My friend, the teacher, was relieved. And again: Christmas was saved.

We have reached the ending of my sermon meaning if you took the pleasure of a well-deserved rest, this is the time to wake up. If you listened to my sermon, I hope you enjoyed.

And I hope you will have a magical, a miraculous, a joyous Christmas. May you become as children – give in to the wonder – and enjoy simply having to be

And from the bottom of my heart, I wish all of you a very merry Christmas.

Amen.