



“Bless His Heart, Sometimes, He Just Don't Get It”

(Without Mirrors We Often Get Pronouns Wrong - An Everyday Christmas Message)

By Bill Marianes¹

A Southern phrase I love says: “*Bless his heart, sometimes, he just don't get it.*” I love that it starts with a blessing. Indeed, generally, when someone starts by blessing your heart, get ready for the other shoe to drop.

I have heard this phrase a lot, so I started to wonder about the pronoun. Is it just “*he*” we’re talking about who is so dense or blind or in the darkness that he doesn’t get it? Or might the pronoun be too narrow? Might it really be “*me*” or “*I*” or “*we*” who doesn’t get it.

OK, let’s start at the beginning. “*In the beginning God made heaven and earth...Then God said ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.*” The first recorded words of God in Genesis 1:1, 3 were his creation of the light. So essentially everything begins in darkness and then God brings the light. A short time later in Genesis 1:26, we get to the big “pronoun moment” in the creation story: “*Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.’*”

Wait. What? Why didn’t our Father, the creator of everything, say I will make men in My image and likeness? Who is this “Us” and “Our”? The Orthodox Study Bible (page 5) teaches us: “*The Holy Trinity also made man. God the Father is speaking to God the Son (St. John Chrysostom), and He uses the personal pronouns Us and Our. These pronouns indicate the three distinct Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit... Man is not one in nature with the Holy Trinity. But he was made in the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity; and he was made male and female. Therefore, the dignity of each man and each woman is this image and likeness.*” (emphasis added)

To make clear that Christ was there at the beginning, we learn from John 1:1-2: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.*” And, of course, “the Word” and the “He” is the eternal Son of God. He didn’t just appear in the New Testament on the day we now celebrate as December 25th. He was actually there at the beginning, and has been there for all times, and will be there forever and ever.

So there we are. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whose birth we now commemorate and celebrate on a specific day in December actually made a referenced appearance from “the beginning ...” of all times. In so doing, even Holy Scripture challenges us to rethink pronouns, not only in the context of creation, but in the context of calling and ultimately judgment.

We often realize that when we look in the mirror, we can visibly see ourselves and how others see us. Yet there is a deeper dimension of who we are. That which is unseen by others in our hearts, or unknown to them because we keep it a secret. We choose to keep some of ourselves in the darkness.

In John 1:5 we learn: “*And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*” The word “comprehend” meant both “understand” and “overcome.” (Orthodox Study Bible, page 1421) Perhaps, one of the messages of the celebration of Christ’s birth on this earth, is to truly let the light overcome the darkness in our lives.

So what does Christ being with God from the beginning, and us letting the light shine, have to do with the title of this stewardship sound bite of the proverbial “him” that sometimes just doesn’t “get it?” In Matthew 7:1-3 we learn, “***Judge not, that you not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?***” (I love the modern day image of a “plank” in one’s eye, even though the obviously the contextual meaning is different.)

Instead of judging what the “other guy” doesn’t get, let’s take a brief moment to explore what “we/I/me/you” might not get. Christmas is a time of peace, love, family and sharing. It is a season of celebration. But what are we celebrating? (No, I will not devolve into a diatribe about the unspiritual and unhealthy preoccupation with gift giving instead of focusing on Christ’s birth. You’ve got that, right?)

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who was with us from the beginning, on one historic day came down to be with us in person to teach, to preach and to reach. So how are we doing with that? Have we taken the time to “get” what he asked us to learn and do? Have we prayerfully reflected on all of the many gifts our Father has given to each of us and consider sharing them with others? Have we contemplated the unimaginable good that we are capable of accomplishing, if only we stopped worrying about what the “other guy” didn’t get and instead focused on the light we can bring into this world?

What if Christmas was every day? What if we could daily re-create the great feelings of love, and peace, and joy and helpfulness that we experience during the Christmas season? What if every day, we changed our pronouns of judgment of the other guy, and instead looked into the mirror at who we were, and reflected on what God has called us to do, and then just got on about doing it? Indeed, we could become living icons of Christ’s presence every day of the year and every day of our all too short lives on this earth.

While our Lord has been with us since the beginning of time, we have the unique opportunity to use the occasion of his human birth to re-commit to making a difference. You see, I believe that stewardship is what you do with all of the gifts God gave you. What you do with them every day of your life. It’s all about you, so don’t worry about what others do, or don’t do, with their gifts. Instead, let us focus constantly and consistently on giving thanks, and daily celebrate our Lord’s continued presence. And with His help, we will conquer the darkness that exists in our world today.

So my brothers and sisters, I want to give you a Christmas gift today and every day of your life. Actually, I want to help you give yourself and everyone around you a daily Christmas gift. Just look

into the mirror of your soul and see who you are and what you are good at, which is likely what you have been called to do. And then find someone else with whom you can share the light. Your light. And the Light of the world.

Just as we are told that a star lit the night and brought the faithful to celebrate a new birth, let your light shine to celebrate Christ's life every day. Live your stewardship calling and what God has called you to do. So let's just flip those pronouns around and, "bless your heart," just get on with truly celebrating Christ's birth and presence each and every day. The only thing standing in the way of every day being Christmas day is you, and me, and not that other guy or gal.

To help you with this task, let me humbly suggest that you take your favorite image of Christmas and place it all around you. On your mirror at home. Below your computer screen at work. Next to your speedometer in your car. As the screen saver on your cell phone. Not just one day or month. Instead, keep Christmas alive every day. And in so doing keep Christ alive in your life just as he has been alive and in our midst since "the beginning."

Merry Christmas every day and may God bless you on your journey as you discover and live your stewardship calling. My prayer for you is that you "SOTPAETJ" (stay on The Path and enjoy the journey). God bless.

¹ By day, Bill Marianes is a partner in the Atlanta office of a large international law firm. By calling, he is a stewardship evangelist who seeks to inspire people and Parishes to live their stewardship callings. To learn more about how you and your Parish can better live your respective stewardship callings and improve your stewardship ministries, visit his free stewardship resource www.stewardshipcalling.com. You can watch his "Igniting the Flame of True Christian Stewardship" program, learn about strategic planning as an invaluable Parish process and tool, and view other extensive materials that help Parishes reorganize themselves to become ministry-based and stewardship driven, and re-energize the faithful to live their true Christian stewardship callings. You can contact Bill at Bill@stewardshipcalling.com or sotpaetj@gmail.com. Copyright © Bill Marianes 2014