



Christmas on farm

Part III

BY DICK ANGLESTEIN

(This is the third segment of a four-part holiday message from a Christmas on a small Pennsylvania farm a number of years ago.)

It was two days before Christmas and the third and final round of chicken deliveries for the father and son. The day dawned bright and cold. But neither the warm greeting of the cows during chores or the bright sunshine did little to cheer the downhearted lad after two successive days of losses.

During the customary morning stop at the old German carpenter, the father and grey, grizzled craftsman talked even more than the day before. Again, the boy knew that he and his disappointing experiences were the chief topics of discussion.

"The old man wants to see you tomorrow morning," the father said as they piled the load of boxes and crates onto the truck.

"You can ride along when I drop off his chicken tomorrow."

It had been the family's custom for many years to give the old German a holiday chicken as a little something extra for the occasional carpentry duties he performed.

Off on their deliveries, the pair went. Out the long, rutted farm lane, down the steep winding hill that bordered the hillside farm and into a nearby village. The boy checked his pockets -- no holes today. And he made certain to close the truck door at each stop.

He dutifully accompanied his father as a boxed bird was carried to each customer's door. But the edge had been taken off his enthusiasm. After a lost nickel and a box of candy on the two previous days, the little boy -- his face half-hidden by a scarf -- wanted just one more chance at a treat, but was almost afraid to seek it. The scarf helped hide his mixed feelings.

As the number of remaining customers dwindled so did the boy's hopes. Finally all that remained was the delivery to the owner of the general store at the crossroads about halfway between the farm and town. At the same time, the father would get their final store order for the holiday.

Usually gruff and grumpy, the storekeeper was in an unusually good mood. It must have been a good selling season. After taking the bird and putting their order in three large sacks, the storekeeper turned to the boy and said:

"And how about a little something extra to take along home."

"Look around and pick something out"



The downcast eyes of the boy lifted and resumed some of their former sparkle as he scanned the counters and shelves.

But the boy knew he had also received a bit of a problem with the offer. He had to decide whether to pick something the whole family could enjoy or something for just himself. His thoughts drifted back to the previous two days and his own personal desire to make up for them won out.

He selected a wooden truck that obviously was only for him and the storekeeper slipped it into a bag. The grocery sacks and toy were placed in the back of the truck and the pair started back to the farm. The boy knelt on the seat, staring out the small back window of the truck. He wasn't going to let that bag with his truck out of his sight.

All of a sudden the truck hit a hole in the road. All of the bags were jostled about but the boy watched in horror as only his bag with the toy flew out of the truck. It bounced a couple of times before coming to rest just in the path of a passing car.

The boy's heart was as broken as the toy. First, a coin he never got to spend. Then, candy he never got to taste.

And now, a toy he'd never get to play with. The father let the silence of the remainder of the ride back home 'speak' to the boy. Anything he would have said would not have gotten through to help lift the curtain of despair that had fallen again across those little eyes.

CONCLUSION -- NEXT WEEK

THE BIBLE SPEAKS
BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

WHAT SHALL WE CRY?
December 18, 1983

Background Scripture:
Isaiah 40 through 41.
Devotional Reading:
Isaiah 46:8-13.

A story in today's newspaper simply amazed me!

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court, trying to decide whether communities may include Nativity scenes in their official Christmas displays, was told Tuesday that the celebration is primarily "a secular national folk festival" and not a religious holiday. William McMahon, lawyer seeking to win back for Pawtucket, R.I., the city's authority to sponsor a Nativity scene, argued: "The city is celebrating a legitimate national holiday, not promoting religion" and called Christmas a "dominantly secular"...holiday in its contemporary celebration.

DALLAS MORNING NEWS, October 5, 1983).

My first reaction after the shock of it all was anger at the incredible statement that Christmas is a "dominantly secular holiday." But, the more I thought that the lawyer was simply reflecting what he experienced: a secular holiday quite devoid of religious significance. That is not what Christmas is supposed to be, but perhaps that is what we have let it become.

THE WAY OF THE LORD

So, maybe we need to rethink the meaning of Christmas so that we can better communicate it to the world. What is the messenger of Christmas of our world? As Isaiah asked, "What shall I cry?"

For one thing, the Christmas message is one of comfort and pardon for a weary and guilty world:

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned...(Is. 40:1,2).

To a world torn by strife, poverty, injustice, fear and the threat of nuclear holocaust, that is eternal "Good News."

Secondly, the Christmas message is a call for preparation:

In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God...(Is. 40:3).

Christmas is not delivered with the morning paper, it must be prepared for and received. Every valley of human sin must be lifted up and every mountain of human ego must be made low.

LIKE A SHEPHERD

Thirdly, the message of Christmas is one of reverence for the might and power of God: "Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him" (Is. 40:10). And the might of God stands in stark contrast to the natural impermanence of human beings: "Surely the people is grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of God will stand forever" (Is. 40:7,8).

Lastly, let us cry the love of God who, "feeds his flock like a shepherd." It was by the power of that love that Christ was born and is reborn again and again in all hearts that will receive him. That is something to cry about!

Farm Calendar

Monday, Dec. 19
Avian influenza update at 7:30 p.m. at the Adams County Extension office.
Avian influenza meeting for Lancaster County poultry producers at 1:30 p.m. at the

Farm and Home Center.
Tuesday, Dec. 20
Dairy Reproductive Health Workshop in Sullivan County.
Wayne County ag road/bridge meeting at 8 p.m. in the Extension office.

NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

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To Care For Equipment in Depopulated Poultry Houses
After depopulated poultry houses have met the requirements for the C&D Committee of the Health Task Force, you may wish to take additional steps to slow the rate of deterioration of the equipment. Dr. Forest Muir,

poultry specialist at Penn State, offers these suggestions.

— Cages - After cleaning and disinfecting, spray on a thin coat of light oil. The same oil used on eggs has been suggested. Apply with fly fogger, paint sprayer or similar equipment. Hold the nozzle a few inches below the cage bottom and apply while walking at a normal rate down the aisles. CAUTION — A CHARCOAL FILTER RESPIRATOR SHOULD BE WORN WHILE SPRAYING THE OIL.

— Feeders, Fan Blades and Grills - Wipe clean and spray with light oil as suggested above.

— Thermostats - Clean and place plastic bag over them loosely.

— All Motors and Gear Boxes - Clean and lubricate. Reduce tension on belts. It would be advisable to run gear boxes monthly to splash lubricant over all gears.

— Bearings - All non-sealed greasable bearings should be greased to force moisture out of bearings.

(Turn to Page A12)

Otis

