

**Daily Meditation 12/26/2021**

## **Themes of Christmas**

Good morning.

Today we're dealing with the themes that are found in the Christmas story. And there's so many. They go on and on. And one of those themes is an avenue for entering into the wonder and marvel of the Christmas story.

Now, it is a story. And this freaks out some left-brain theological types. But it shouldn't, because all great religions are based on stories and mystical experiences, as Father Bede Griffiths says. And these become stories.

Consider, for example, one of the oldest scriptures in the world, and one of the most profound and wise and beautiful. And I'm thinking of the Upanishads. These are not historical and factual, they are wisdom, they are insights about living, and living fully, and living deeply, and living decently.

So, I think it's a gift. It's a plus that the Christian Bible, if you will, has both factual information--the words from Jesus' mouth--and a collection of the interpretations of the words of Jesus, including new words that the original community put into Jesus' mouth.

And remember, too, then, of course, these beautiful stories are put together sometime later. But that, too, is an issue: about how much later?

So I kind of figured it out. Jesus died around the year 30. And all the writings of New Testament run from about the year 50 (that would be Paul and the Gospel of Thomas) to about the year 95. So that's about 45 years of development and of people coming forward, and people interviewing other people and sharing stories--encounters with the risen Christ, for example, that Paul had. (Paul that never met Jesus.) And that Paul himself says 500 other people had, and he interviewed a lot of them--including, of course, the first generation who hung around Jesus, such as Peter and James and Thomas, and those. And of course, Mary Magdalene.

So, if you just take that 45-year period and subtract it from 2021, we're talking about around 1980. Between 1980 and today, all these stories got written down by the early Christians.

Now, I'm grateful to the Jesus Seminar and their left-brain approach to distinguish between the exact words of Jesus and those that were gathered and interpreted and put into his mouth, including the stories that develop.

It's both/and! It's wonderful to know, more or less, quite exactly what came from Jesus' mouth. But it's also very wonderful to know it came from the mouths of those who knew him or heard about him, from those who knew him or meditated on these mysteries--for decades, perhaps--and wrote their own version of things.

So I think that there's a danger of saying, "Well, it's all myth and stories, and that's not worth anything." There's a danger at that end. And this is typical modern consciousness: if something doesn't have a date and a time it's not real. Well, that's silly. And it's typical left-brain patriarchal thinking to think that stories and myths are not important. Rollo May, the great psychologist, his last book was on the power of myth, and how he says all morality is based on myth. It's based on stories. It's not based on anal retentive information.

So, there's so much to celebrate in these rich, rich stories.

And the people who put them together were obviously profound artists, so that's part of what we're talking about, too. It's the role of art in humanity, in our survival, in our liberation and redemption.

And, again, those who are stuck in just the scientific mindset are missing a lot of life. And we do ask them not to dump that narrowmindedness onto the rest of us. We ask that these stories catch fire, and they are powerful! And this is the basis of ritual. And it's the basis of feast days, like Christmas. And it's twelve days of Christmas. It includes Christmas and Epiphany.

So, I think all this is worth meditating on as we gather still in the season of Christmas.

And I have this wonderful painting by M.C. Richards about *doxa*. *Doxa* is one of the themes in today's meditation. *Doxa* means glory. And I just love this picture because it's simple angels singing *doxa* to the shepherds. Shepherds, simple shepherds. And *doxa* is that glorious word for glory.

And it always bespeaks the Cosmic Christ as distinct from just the historical Jesus. And we need both. A true Christian perspective flies on two wings--the wing of the historical Jesus and the wing of the Cosmic Christ. And they gather, and we gather, with that capacity to fly and to soar and to survive together in the spirit of teachings of Jesus, and in the spirit of the Cosmic Christ, which hopefully is alive and well in all of us.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.