



Post-Christmas Letdown

- What goes up must come down!
- Depressed, disappointed, deflated, unfulfilled, numb, etc.
- Imagine the letdown Joseph and Mary felt!

Matthew 2:13-14 (NLT)

After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother,” the angel said. “Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” ¹⁴That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother.

A Tale of Two Kingdoms

- A King is born, but a king is already here
- There is only room for one King
- Conflict is inevitable
- “The earthly city glories in itself, the Heavenly City glories in the Lord.”
-Augustine of Hippo, 4th Century

I. Herod represents a worldly king

- Wealth
- Power
- Manipulation
- Fear
- Control

When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all of Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

Matthew 2:3-4 (NRSV)

Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may pay him homage.

Matthew 2:8 (NRSV)

48 Laws of Power, by Robert Greene (National Bestseller)

- Law 3: Conceal your intentions
- Law 12: Use selective honesty and generosity to disarm your victims
- Law 15: Crush your enemy totally
- Law 17: Keep others in suspended terror

“It is much safer to be feared than loved.”

—Niccolò Machiavelli

2. Jesus represents the heavenly king

- Love
- Humility
- Compassion
- Forgiveness
- Empathy

Isaiah 9:6 (NRSV)

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Acts 5:31 (NRSV)

God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

James 1:17 (NRSV)

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

“Rats and roaches live by competition under the laws of supply and demand; it is the privilege of human beings to live under the laws of justice and mercy.” –Wendell Berry

The Science of Goodness: Christmas Gifts that Keep on Giving

1. God has designed us with a _____
 - Helping others triggers activity in the same portions of the brain that turn on when people receive rewards. Helping others brings the same pleasure we get from gratifying personal desire.
 - *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.* John 13:35 (NRSV)
2. We are wired to be able to achieve _____
 - For at least 99% of human history, humans lived in small, stable bands of related hunter-gatherers. These bands were highly egalitarian and achieved cooperative advantages. In short, they were peaceful!
 - *Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.* Psalm 34:14
3. Human beings also have a _____
 - Just as revenge is a built-in instinct, so is forgiveness and reconciliation. Instead of trying to change human nature, changing the world encourages adaptive forgiveness.
 - Unforgiveness increases risk of cardiovascular disease and weakens the immune system. Forgiveness heals the body.
4. _____ and _____ are gifts from God.
 - In experiments, keeping a gratitude journal leads to benefits such as feeling more joyful, enthusiastic, interested, attentive, energetic, excited, determined and strong.

And I will give you a new heart...I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart.
Ezekiel 36:26