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**Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas**

(Luke 2:11 KJV)

*For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*

I

n 1944 Hugh Martin wrote a song for the MGM musical Meet me in St. Louis. And I’m sure the song is familiar to most of you. It’s called “Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas.” In the movie Judy Garland’s character sings that song to her little sister who’s upset about the prospect of moving to New York—hoping to cheer her up she sings, “Next year all our troubles will be miles away but until then we’ll have to muddle through somehow so go ahead and “Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas Now.”

It’s interesting the song Hugh Martin wrote actually ended up going through a number of revisions because it seems that people found it very depressing, disheartening, disappointing, and discouraging when he initially wrote it. Judy Garland and later Frank Sinatra both convinced him to modify some of the lyrics to make it a little merrier. “We’ll have to muddle through somehow” was actually changed to; “Hang a shining star upon the highest bow” moreover, it’s certainly a familiar and probably a more desirable and meaningful song to many people.

I do think though that Hugh Martin may have been on to something when he initially wrote a song that didn’t focus so much on present happiness but instead on the hope for a better future. Furthermore I’m guessing many of you can think of someone who doesn’t have a lot of reason to be Merry this Christmas. In fact maybe that someone is you? Do I have a witness? Let’s face it! When you lose a job, or lose a child, or lose a parent, or face sickness or surgery or the stress that comes from kinfolk and co-workers—it can be hard to feel very Merry at Christmas.

Let’s be honest with ourselves that we are all guilty of saying, “Merry Christmas!” We all say it especially during the month of December. But do we really know what it means when we say “Merry Christmas?” Or has it become an innocuous, seasonal version of “Have a nice day?” The “Merry” part is easy. Who doesn’t want to be merry, particularly as winter sets in? When we interject the word Christmas that’s where the meaning gets trickier. It’s obviously a reference to Christ. But it has a deeper meaning.

The Old English origin is “Cristemaessea” reference to the mass. So a Merry Christmas was a wish for a joyful Eucharistic celebration as the focal point of the day. Going a step further, the word mass has its origins in the Latin—“missa”—the same root as the word “mission.” And that is Christ’s constant charge to us to go forth—to be on a mission—his mission—to join our lips and our lives in the prayer of the angels: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” So this Christmas, let’s refocus our attention on where it belongs and that’s on the birth of Christ the incarnation of God.