



JOINT TASK FORCE CIVIL SUPPORT

CHAPLAIN'S DEVOTIONAL / 17 December 2012

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The Forest and Its Trees

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We have all heard the adage, “He/She can’t see the forest for the trees.” When used, it refers to our human tendency to focus on the small or inconsequential things in life while ignoring the bigger picture and/or those things of far greater import. For example, I was concerned more as a child about ensuring my G.I. Joe action figures didn’t have any scratches on them and about protecting them from dirt and mud than I was about simply having fun. Needless to say, I spent a great deal of time discontented about the condition of my action figures!

Have you ever done anything like this? Have you ever been overly concerned with trivial things? At some point, I dare say we have all been guilty of placing too much emphasis on some things and too little on others. Even Mary and Joseph—the mother and adopted father of Jesus—failed “to see the forest for the trees.” In Luke 2:47, we read about how the adolescent Jesus thoroughly impressed the learned people at the temple with his astute questions and wise answers. When Mary and Joseph—who were frantically searching for Jesus at the time—found him in the temple doing these wondrous things, we are told that even they were initially astonished (Luke 2:48a). Their young son, who should have been making mud pies in the backyard and running around with his friends, was instead teaching and learning with adults. Mary and Joseph should have been proud! But they were not; the trees of the forest got in their way. Mary, instead of praising her son and encouraging him, remarked, “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been terribly worried trying to find you” (Luke 2:48b). Fear gripped Mary to such an extent that she ignored the incredible work in which Jesus was taking part. In that moment, she missed the significance of who Jesus was and what He had come to do. She forgot that He was no ordinary child. She failed to recall His extraordinary birth and the divine calling upon His life.

As Christmas approaches, I am reminded of how often I fail to focus on the centerpiece of this most import Christian holiday. Although I know I should place my attention on the miraculous birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, I am nonetheless prone to worry about timelines, family get-togethers, gifts, and Christmas decorations. But these are only the trees in a much larger forest—that forest being the fulfilled prophecy of Immanuel (“God with us”). Would you join me in seeing the forest this year? Let us commit to a new adage. May people say of us, “He/She can’t see the trees for the forest.”

God bless, and Merry Christmas.