

Good evening everyone! And Merry Christmas!

Before I begin, I must warn you all that I have been in Kentucky for school for the last several months, and at my Christian college, a popular question to first ask a new friend is what denomination are you? I was asked this several times, and when I answered Lutheran, it was followed by one of the following. “What’s that?” “Those still exist?” And “Where are you from again?”

That being said, if I get a little loud or excited during this sermon, blame the Baptists and Pentecostals I’ve been hanging around. And a “hello” to all my friends watching on the live stream. (Hey guys!) If at any point you feel like I’m yelling at you during this sermon, just make sure you’re paying attention.

Christmas has always been my favorite time of year. The decorations, the togetherness, and all the holiday flim-flam that comes with it. Especially the music.

And it helps that my birthday is during this Most Wonderful Time of the Year. As a child, I hated that my birthday was so close to Christmas, because of the literal son of God constantly upstaged me, and there was always the classic. “This is for your Birthday and Christmas.” Like, imagine pulling that one on somebody born in June.

But now that I’m older Christmas has become a very special time to me for a lot of different reasons, and I can honestly say it is one of the times I feel closest to God. Extra church services, movies, and decorations all depicting the Nativity scene.

It probably helps that it’s the one time the pop station is playing songs that sing about Jesus’s birth, the likes of Carrie Underwood and Micheal Buble prompting millions of people around the world to sing about the Messiah, even if they don’t believe in Him.

Now I love all Christmas music, and I have yet to get sick of it, but there is one song that will always have an extremely special place in my heart. The Little Drummer Boy is a song that has had many renditions through the decades, For King and Country, Pentatonix, the Harry Simeone Chorale, but the first version I ever heard was the rendition sung by Bing Crosby, and David Bowie. My mother showed me this version because I've been a fan of David Bowie since I was like five years old. Yeah, I'm pretty cool.

Now the Little Drummer Boy is unique because it is a classic Christmas song, about Jesus, that's not actually a hymn. It was written in 1941 by Kathrine Kennicott Davis and was later popularized by the stop-motion television movie of the same name. That movie, I learned was also released on my birthday, December 19th 1968.

For those of you who have never heard the song, or seen the film, it tells the story of a poor boy, in Bethlehem, who is instructed by the three wise men to see the Messiah.

*"Come they told me, pa-rum-pa-pa-pump."*

He follows them to the place where the baby lies, and after the Magi present their extravagant gifts, it's the little boy's turn. He walks up and laments as he has nothing to offer the King of all Kings. Nothing, except his drum.

*"I have no gift to bring, that's fit to give a King".*

Now what is so amazing about this song, is that the image of this little boy is so ingrained in our pop culture, you can often find him in ornaments, pictures, popcorn buckets and large nativity displays. And he never even existed.

Most other Christmas songs, even the ones that aren't hymns, could in some way *have* happened. Or are based on something in the Bible that did.

Go tell it on the Mountain, the Shepherd did.

We three Kings very clearly tells the story of the magi.

Silent Night, Mary Did you Know, Do you Hear what I hear, Little town of Bethlehem.

All of these songs have some basis off of something that is stated in the Bible.

But not, the little drummer boy.

Now I'm not saying, there is no possible way it didn't happen. If some little boy walked right up to that manger 2 thousand years ago and banged on his drum, thats great for him. Not sure how Mary felt about that but, ya know it *could* have happened. Mrs. Davis took a very lucky guess if so.

But, it didn't. Nowhere in the bible is this theoretical child mentioned. He's given a backstory in the TV movie, but then again so was the Grinch.

Christmas music, for myself and for others tends to make us very emotional. Not just for notalgic reasons but the lyrics remind us of the gift the birth of Jesus truely was. A marvelous gift.

So why, what is it about this song that has made it so beloved it is ingrained into our culture, even though it is an entirely fictional story?

I want to take a step back here, and show what it is exactly the little drummer boy in the story does. He does not give the baby Jesus his drum. For one, an infant has no use for musical instruments, and for another. That drum is so much more than just his drum.

In the movie, it was a gift from his father before his parents were killed, but I want us to think bigger than that.

If the little drummer boy was real, this drum would have been his means of survival. Playing music for money, possibly hoping to earn his way to be a drum player for some army march. This drum is all he has.

*“I am a poor boy too.”*

So the drummer boy, plays this little rhythm for the baby, and the baby smiles, and everyone goes “oh how cute.” and that’s it. The boy goes on his merry way of being poor, and Jesus grows up to be the wise teacher and eventually dies and rises again.

That’s the end of the story if you take the song literally.

But this song is fiction! So what is the point of singing about some lowly little beggar boy who happened to be musically inclined? The whole story has no grander scope or scheme. The little drummer boy doesn’t magically end up being one of the disciples, or one of the men crucified with Jesus. You can think that if you want, but it’s not stated in the lyrics. This story has no greater significance in the timeline of Jesus’ life. If Jesus was a normal baby, he wouldn’t even have remembered this encounter!

Because it’s not about that boy. This is not a song about some fictional boy way back in ancient Isreal.

This song is about you.

No, not just you Dad.

This song is about every Christian on God’s earth, and beyond.

We all have a drum. And in this case, the drum is not a metaphor for our sin. It is not something we surrender to Jesus and leave behind because it is shameful.

No, the drum is our life. Our vocation, our passions, our hobbies, our joy, our love. It is good.

Something that provides for us, that keeps us going. A gift.

Take a moment, and think, what is your drum? Music? Art? History? Lord of The Rings?

Accounting? Mathematics? What is that thing that God gives you that defines you as who you are?

Is it your love for children, your compassion for the elderly. Your talents at cooking or your knowledge of how to fix a broken heater?

For me, it is horses. It is my excitable personality. It is my voice, able to speak in front of crowds.

It is my friends and my family. It is my love for animals and children.

So that, that is the drum. But we, are separated from that. We are the boy. We are poor.

Let's go through this part by part. And I want you, no matter who you are to imagine yourself as the little drummer boy. Small and insignificant following the three wise men into the stable.

*"Come they told me, a newborn king to see, our finest gifts we bring, to Lay before the King."*

We see all these other Christians, who seem to have it all together. They're involved with their church, they devote all their time and money to evangelism. They never swear, or drink, or let their perfect Christian mask slip for one second.

I can tell you right now. I am not one of those people.

"Little Baby, I am a poor boy too."

Poor in spirit, poor in faith, poor in forgiveness and poor in love.

We are starving, starving due to our separation from God.

And we are filthy, clothed in rags, and smeared with our sins.

People in Jesus's time, especially the poor shepherds and such crowding into a barn, were not clean compared to modern standards. I am someone who has spent a lot of time in a barn and I can promise you, it does not smell good.

We always say "I'll never wear this shirt to the barn, don't wear white to the barn." Then you end up in a situation where you accidentally do, and you are quickly reminded why you don't wear nice clothes to a barn. There is hay in my pocket right now!

No matter what you do, You get filthy. My hands and my face are all covered in dirt, without even mucking out a stall. I love laughing with my friends about how the heck we got dirt on our eyebrows.

And it is so easy to let our sin cover us like this. To ignore it. To laugh it off. Or to be so ashamed of it, we are too afraid to show ourselves to God. And so we hide everything we are from Him, even though He sees everything.

As Christians, we are clothed in our own hypocrisy. I don't know anyone in the world more hypocritical than Christians! Because we have all the answers! We have all the teachings, we follow the good Shepherd, and we still don't listen!

So there you are, dirty, cold, tired, hungry, and you hear everyone talking about the Messiah who was just born, and how they're going to worship him like He deserves. And you think "Well I certainly have nothing to offer him, I can barely feed myself!"

But you're curious, so you go to see what all the fuss is about.

*"I have no gift to bring, that's fit to give our king."*

You stand in a crowd, trying to look into the manger to see why this little baby is *so* important and You've just seen the Magi bestow these glamorous beautiful gifts onto the Lord, and suddenly you are shoved into the open space, and everyone is staring at you.

The crowds, the kings, the strong carpenter, and a small teenage girl, who looks absolutely exhausted, but smiles at you anyway.

They all stare at you, waiting for you to give the baby his present.

This is like the most prestigious baby shower ever and you are a snotty dirty kid with like a hairy jolly rancher stuck in your pocket.

What can you do? You're panicking, ready to be yelled at and thrown out, ready for God to strike you down for not supplying sufficient tribute. Your legs are shaking as you step forward, and you trip just a little.

The drum at your side hits against your hip. You're passion, your livelihood, your happiness. Everything that you are.

*"Shall I play for you?"* You ask the baby.

I always feel so moved at the next line. "Mary nodded." The Mother of God gives her approval. There is only so many women in the bible who get to share their point of view. Mary is the most profound and beloved. And she doesn't have to lead an army or drive a tent stake through someone's skull. She was so good and cherished by God that she was chosen. And she looks at you, and she smiles, and nods her head, encouraging you.

*"The ox and lamb kept time, I played my drum for him, I played my best for him."*

And as Christians, that is all we can truly do. We could build, a thousand temples, and sing a million hymns. Donate all our money to charity, and it still wouldn't be enough. We on our own do not deserve heaven.

So there we stand, dirty, sinful, run raw by this world, held down by our hypocrisy and our shame and our lust and our anger! And we offer up this one thing we got right, this one pure love that we carry that sin still manages to corrupt, and causes us to be greedy, and doubtful, and prideful, and forlorn, but still we Play!

But what good would that do? What other millions of Christians possess the same talents that we do, how many thousands do it better than us? He is the King of all, the King of All Kings, he is God and requires nothing from us! If all humans were to be wiped from existence, he would still reign as God of the universe. What do we as poor beggar children covered in filth have to offer

him? He should smite us, kick us from his sight, turn his back on us and declare that we failed, for what can we offer the Son of God?

*“Then he smiled at me.”*

At that moment, I see two images.

I see the baby, laughing in his manger. Smiling because He enjoyed the gift given out of the pureness of our hearts.

And I see us on our day of Death, standing before Jesus on a throne, and he smiles at all the good we had done. “Well done my Good and faithful servant.”

John 3:16 says:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life.”

A statement we’ve heard before. God loved everyone, so he sent Jesus to save us from our sins.

At school, a speaker said this to us, and I realized that I have to tell you, because some of you may not know it.

If it had just been You. He would have done it anyway.

“For God, so love { }, that he gave his only son.”

That is the true power of God’s love. All the suffering, all the pain he endured, he did not do it for popularity points!

He did not do it so that everyone would say “How generous of him, we must follow him and sing his praises immediately.”

HE DID IT FOR YOU.

If I, if you if they were the ONLY ONE who loved Jesus, who believed in him, who would be saved by him. He would do it again. And again. And again. He would suffer as he did, and then some of it meant we have a chance of being saved from our own sin.

So that is the story of the little drummer boy, of us, coming to God, to Jesus, full of sin and anger and hatred with nothing to offer him that is of any monetary value.

Except, our love, our joy, our life.

And he smiles at us. He smiles and calls us his. And we are saved, and we reside in heaven with him. Forever and ever. Amen.

So I ask you this Christmas season, to stop trying to hide from God. I promise you can't and you look rather ridiculous trying.

Do what you are passionate about, do it for Jesus, and do it for all of mankind, for there is no other creature on the earth blessed with the gift of passion.

And when you listen to the Little Drummer boy, imagine what a glorious day it will be, when you are called home to be with the Lord, and He smiles at you with pride, and with love.

Thank you all, and Merry Christmas.