

## "Thanksgiving, no time for stories"

November 17, 2002

At Christmas, many people prefer the story "Miracle of 54th Street" over the story of Jesus of Nazareth. Chris Kringle's story truly is one without strings attached. The Santa-thing wraps up nicely after the holiday and together with the decorations it is packed in the attic or sent back to the North Pole. On the other hand, Jesus' story doesn't leave after Christmas. It demands to be continued.

At Easter there is another convenient tale to cling to. That good old bunny brings colorful symbols of life. How different from the continuing story of the Carpenter from Nazareth who talks about horrendous suffering and death! The bunny fable also wraps up nicely after the holiday and the props are stowed away in the attic waiting for next year. The Carpenter from Nazareth never quits, even after focusing on death, his story continues! Most amazing of all, His story takes on new life and just goes on forever and ever!

Finally, at Thanksgiving, even the Jesus story comes to a halt. No, this time a more pleasant one does not replace it, but there is just no time for stories. People want to relax and think of nothing. All that really matters is eating and drinking and just not bothering with all the anxieties of life. Watching the football game with family or friends is anxiety enough. This time the turkey is the only one that suffers. Thank God that we finally are able to celebrate a holiday where there is no need for a replacement story. Why do we replace these stories?

*Diagnosis:* If you recognize the described behavior as that of yourself, you are in serious trouble. You have the modern disease of life-avoidance. Who said that we need reasons for these seasons? The American Heritage Electronic Dictionary explains the word reason as: The basis or motive for an action, decision, feeling, or belief. Maybe it is time to go back to square one.

*Action:* All the activities that make me so tired and pathetic miss any worthwhile motivation.

*Decision:* The decisions I make daily ... what to eat, when to buy the new car, what Christmas party to skip . . . maybe are not so important.

*Feeling:* Numb is the word ... apathy ... the result of an overdose of most everything; from bad news to food to all the useless battles I try to fight.

*Belief:* I am really afraid that when I give myself a chance to think about it, the Jesus of Nazareth story may become real. Maybe confession has some use after all. If it is only admitting to myself that I am going nowhere and nothing makes me feel right.

*Prescription:* Let me begin by taking my eyes off myself and giving thanks ... giving thanks to the One who has given me everything ... to the One who died for me and offers me the possibility of eternal life.

Happy Thanksgiving