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Christ, Consumerism, and Christmas

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Christ, Consumerism, and Christmas

Abstract

"Maybe the greatest advertising gaffe occurred when the Savior of the world somehow got wrapped up in our consumerism in the first place."

Posting about receiving Christ at Christmas from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/christ-consumerism-and-christmas/>

Keywords

In All Things, Christmas, consumerism, holidays, Jesus

Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Christ, Consumerism, and Christmas

 [all in allthings.org/christ-consumerism-and-christmas/](http://allthings.org/christ-consumerism-and-christmas/)

Aaron Baart

As the holiday season approaches every year, there are certain conversations that are becoming as perennial as the holidays themselves:

- Do they really have to start decorating for Christmas in the stores *this* early?
- Are you going shopping on Black Friday or not (there really seems to be an all or nothing approach to this one)?
- Argh, my calendar is *so* full this time of year with so many parties and get-togethers.
- When Christmas is over, I'm going to need a vacation from all this vacation.

And, of course, there are the Facebook culture-war tirades that always start showing up around mid-November about why Jesus and overt Christian themes need to be removed from Christmas. Whether it's the *holiday* tree at the White House, this year's saying on the Starbucks cups, or the new politically correct way that Wal-Mart greeters should speak to us as we enter their stores, the voices pile on as we collectively reminisce about a time not so long ago when Christmas was still Christmas.

But it hit me the other day while reading someone's Facebook post on this year's favorite topic of conversation — the Starbucks cup — that maybe the real crime against Christ and Christmas hasn't occurred when one more business decides to become a little more politically correct in their advertising this year. Maybe the greatest advertising gaffe occurred when the Savior of the world somehow got wrapped up in our consumerism in the first place. In other words, what if Jesus is actually *relieved* every time his name gets removed from one more cultural liturgy or marketing ploy? What if (and I say this tongue-in-cheek, of course) Jesus doesn't give a rip about Starbucks cups or that he really does hope you have a happy holidays?

On one occasion, Jesus showed up at a scene where the religious and the commercial had assumed they could make perfectly compatible bedfellows. It didn't go so well. In fact, this is the one story of the Bible where Jesus appears to become more angry than in any other. The fact that merchants were co-opting religious practices designed to cultivate intimacy between the worshiper and his father, and were using them for material gain, provoked a greater ire in Jesus than his own beatings, betrayal, and crucifixion. So he fashioned a whip, caused a huge scene, and quoted Scripture to remind everyone present that "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. But you have made it a den of robbers" (Mark 11:17b).

Perhaps what the Christian community should spend more time reflecting on this season isn't the threat we face by an increasingly secular culture that wishes to shed the name of Jesus from its consumeristic practices. In fact, perhaps we actually owe them a word of thanks for precisely that which we are currently offended by. After all, the Son of God went to great lengths to bypass a whole lot of pomp and circumstance in his lowly arrival on earth. He came to meet us in the worst of who we are and in the places we most desperately need a Savior, not a Wal-Mart entrance. He didn't need a slogan, a campaign, or even a crib. And I don't think he needs a store-front banner or holiday cup today either. Truth be told, perhaps there are a lot more holiday traditions stuck to the tar baby that has become our cultural practice

of Christmas that could use a little shedding if we really desire to put the Christ back in Christmas, allowing us to receive him as he really came, not merely as we'd have him be.