

We can run across the subject of TRUTH in the strangest places. A while back, there was a major university offering a course on Donald Duck comic books. These particular comics were created by Carl Barks. From the early 1940s until his retirement in 1966, Barks produced over 400 comics about Donald Duck, his stingy billionaire Uncle Scrooge, and **three wild nephews, Huey, Dewey, and Louie.**

In one classic series, the rich uncle was nearly driven mad by his billions of dollars. Everybody is asking him for money, and Scrooge is gulping nerve medicine by the bottle. In an attempt to save his sanity, Scrooge parachutes with Donald and the nephews into a remote, village named Trala-La, a imitation of Shangri-La, a takeoff from James Hilton's novel, LOST HORIZON.

But Scrooge makes the mistake of carelessly discarding a nerve-medicine bottle cap, and the natives begin using it as money. They fight over the cap, and disrupt their idyllic existence. Scrooge brought plenty of medicine to Trala-La and because he has lots of bottle caps again finds himself the richest person around.

He decides to teach the natives a lesson by having a plane rain bottle caps on the village to devalue the currency. The caps soon threaten to bury the village and fill its lake. Scrooge turns off the cap shower, **and everybody learns that money can be the root of all evil.**

The final scene shows the three nephews asking Scrooge to pay them for accompanying him on the trip. Scrooge soon is gulping nerve medicine again. He can run but he cannot hide. **Everybody wants money from him.**

In another strip, the wind distributes Scrooge's money equally among the world's population. What do the newly rich do? Take a vacation, of course. Meanwhile Scrooge continues to tend his farm. In the end, everybody lines up to buy ears of corn from him. Spreading the wealth has failed. Scrooge is the richest man around again.

What Barks seems to be saying is that Uncle Scrooge by his very nature attracts wealth. Even if his circumstances change, he will still end up at the top financially because of who he is and the things he values.

In the Gospel of John we are told the same sort of thing about Christ. We are told that Christ is the LIGHT THAT HAS COME INTO THE WORLD. In other words, there is something about Christ's very nature--something unique that has never existed in a human being before. His very presence dispels darkness. **The Christmas season is a celebration of the light that has overcome darkness.**

The BEST way we know Christ's Nature is through his "LIGHT." In the beginning when God was creating, God separated, darkness and light. And when God introduced us to his SON, he said, "He is the light of the world, and darkness will not overcome him." Today, as we again prepare for his COMING... we are REMINDED OF... (3) Important TRUTHS about his LIGHT.

THE FIRST "GREAT TRUTH" "IN HIS LIGHT" IS—WE FIND THE REASON FOR HIS COMING. Why did he come? **To reveal God to us?** Yes, certainly. Perhaps, though, **he also came to discover what it means to be HUMAN.**

Author Alex Haley was researching his historic work, ROOTS. At one point he had a terrible sense of emptiness over his inability to 'feel' the torment slaves must have experienced as they lay trapped in chains aboard ships heading to strange new lands. One night, he says, it came to him what he had to do. He needed to thrust himself into some circumstance that could let him feel at least something of what those Africans must have felt.

He borrowed enough money to fly to Africa, and there he purchased a one-way passenger ticket back to the United States aboard The African Star, a cargo ship that sailed from Monrovia, Liberia, to Jacksonville, Florida. Because he understood the physical design of vessels from his Coast Guard career, he was able to sneak at night into one of the ship's unlocked holds. For two nights, after dinner, he crawled into the cavernous, darkened hold. He stripped to his underwear and lay on his back on some broad, thick, rough-sawed timber that had been wedged between sections of cargo to prevent shifting in heavy seas.

It was not a pleasant voyage. He had a miserable cold by the third night. By the fourth night he abandoned his Quixotic adventure altogether. He knew that he, a passenger, safe and snug on a strong steel cargo ship, eating three

meals daily could never really 'feel' the suffering of those chained so many years before in the bowels of a slave ship! **Still, the journey was important for him to touch his origins.**

We can only speculate as to Christ's reasons for making his way into the world of humanity that first Christmas. Surely, though, sharing with us a common humanity is a possibility. It's always helpful to put yourself even temporarily in someone else's shoes.

In 1974, the son of Alabama governor George Wallace told his father that he was involved in a sociological experiment for a college course. What George, Jr. couldn't tell Daddy was the nature of the experiment. He and a black co-ed were playing the role of an interracial engaged couple looking for an apartment. That was probably an eye-opening experience for young George. **It always helps to see things through another's eyes.**

Think how completely Jesus experienced what it means to be human. Born to hardworking but poor parents. Earning a living in the carpenter's shop till age 30. Brief popularity but then ultimate rejection by his own people. Physical suffering beyond what most of us can imagine. Then death. What this says is that our Lord is not some remote deity far removed from human existence "unfazed and uncaring about what we go through. Christ understands our problems. He has walked through the same valley. **He is OUR "Light"-- a "REASON TO COME INTO THE WORLD."**

BUT WHY ELSE IS HE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD? TO BE A SACRIFICE FOR YOU AND ME. The newspapers carried a story with which some of us can identify. A California State Highway Patrol Officer received a call. A woman was about to jump from a bridge. Immediately, the officer was confronted with a dilemma. The officer herself has an extreme fear of heights, and the jumper was perched on the railing of a bridge that is 443 feet above the floor of a deep gorge. Some of you can appreciate her situation.

The officer forced herself, however, to walk calmly toward the woman and sit down beside her. There, high above that gorge, they talked for two hours while the officer struggled with her own panic. **Finally, the jumper agreed to come away from the railing and get help.**

As we draw closer to Christmas, we need to remind ourselves **that love is not measured** by the size of a gift or the beauty of a verbal profession.

CHRISTMAS IS....best measured by a willingness to SACRIFIED. By that measure, love certainly did come down at Christmas. **Christ was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice—Yes, he gave up his life for us ALL!!!**

In 1933 the Morgan family, a group of itinerant revivalists, camped on the town square in Murphy, North Carolina. They hung their wash from the Confederate monument. They were asked to leave, and pleading poverty, requested permission to hold one more service. At that service, a lovely girl, with unwashed blonde hair, sang three lines of a song. In the congregation sat John Jacob Niles, a collector of mountain folk songs. After the service he gave her twenty-five cents to sing the song again. He did this three more times but each time got only the same three **lines**. She didn't know where she got them, and Niles never found the source, but he enlarged on those three lines and gave the world that lovely Christmas song, *"I wonder as I wander out under the sky. Why Jesus the Savior did come for to die."* All of us must wonder what there is about *"poor ornery creatures like you and like I"* that could inspire such love. It must be that his very nature is love. Said Jesus, *"To this end was I born and for this purpose came I into the world."* **What was the reason for his coming? To Be A Sacrifice For You and Me!!**

FINALLY, because he comes as a LIGHT, WE HAVE THE REASSURANCE OF HIS PRESENCE always in our lives. Does it matter that he is *Immanuel, God with us*? Does he really light our poor lives here and now? He does if we can come to him with the innocence and trust of a little child. *"He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. 3 And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me."* Matt. 18:2-5.

In the comic FOR BETTER OR WORSE, little Elizabeth is sitting near the Christmas tree, looking at the neatly wrapped gifts. Her father says, "Elizabeth, it's too early to open anything yet." Elizabeth replies, "I know. I was just thinking about all the kids who don't have presents to wake up to. I was thinking about kids in the hospital, kids who

are lonely . . . I was just thinking how lucky I am." **Then she pauses, looks up, and says, "Christmas is Jesus' birthday, isn't it, Daddy. I wish I could give him something."**

Her father smiles, gives her a big hug and says, *"Honey, you already have!"*

If YOU AND I can capture that kind of love and selflessness, then it can be said that HIS LIGHT dwells in our heart.

Dr. James Dobson tells about a man named Paul who was a child abuse victim. Paul grew up to be a child abuser. That's often the way it works. Both of Paul's parents were alcoholics. When Paul was seven, his mother came home from a party so drunk she fell unconscious until Paul found her the next morning lying in the snow. She contracted pneumonia and died, and Paul ran crying to his drunken father for comfort. His father beat him with his fists and screamed, "Shut up, boys don't cry like babies!" Paul's nose and two ribs were broken, and his teeth were knocked out. He and his siblings were regularly beaten by their father. Paul shot his first person when he was 12. He went to jail. Five years later, he met Jesus Christ through a Billy Graham film. Eventually he got out, married, and had a little girl.

One Christmas, finances were tough in Paul's household. Paul managed to scrounge up a few dollars he was owed and gave his wife \$8 to go to the store and buy food. She foolishly spent \$1 for wrapping paper and tape. While he and his wife fought, his three-year old daughter got into the wrapping paper and wasted it making a crude gift. When Paul saw this, he reverted to the behavior he had seen as a child, and beat his toddler violently. He cannot talk about it to this day without crying. **The next day when gifts were exchanged, the little girl ran behind the tree and retrieved her crude present, handed it to Paul and said, "Daddy, this is for you!"** He was embarrassed that he had hit her so cruelly for something she thought was a present. He slowly opened the box "and discovered it was totally empty. His temper flared once more and he said, "What have you done? There's nothing in this box. Why did you give me an empty box? When you give someone a present you're supposed to put a gift inside it!"

The tiny girl looked up at her father and said innocently, "Oh, no, Daddy. The box is not empty! It is full of love and kisses for you. I blew kisses in there for my daddy and I put love in there too. And it is for you."

Paul was crushed. He hugged his little girl and begged her to forgive him. Then he fell to his knees and pleaded for God to cleanse him of his terrible temper. He kept the box by his bed for years, and whenever he was hurt or discouraged he would reach in and pull out an imaginary kiss, place it on his cheek, and say, "Thank you, Lord."

If this were the children's sermon, I might have a box for each of you to take home this morning. If you were to open the box, it would appear empty. **Inside it, though, would be the love of Jesus Christ "a love that is still transforming lives 2,000 years after he walked the shores of the Sea of Galilee.**

If you had such a box, you could reach into it whenever you are hurt or discouraged and pull out an imaginary KISS.

I don't have such a box. Each of you has a Bible, though. Each of you has a place where you can bow in prayer. The opportunity is already present for you to experience his love and his strength in those hours of need.

REMEMBER, "LIGHT came into our world – in the form of a child, and he came just for you." So when your life is feeling dim/dark, open your heart to him and let his light SHINE and lift your spirit. **I PRAY YOU WILL OPEN YOUR HEART AND LET HIM IN!!! Amen.**