

I'm dreaming of a real Christmas

By [Roger Lovette](#)

December 21, 2014

By this time of the year most of us have inundated by Christmas stuff. Shopping, cards, decorations. I see these houses with so many lights and do-dads that you can hardly get in the front door. I don't think even Santa will be able to navigate through all those lights. Christmas is not presents nor cakes nor chestnuts roasting on an open fire or even family members coming from all over. Christmas is not even church services where we all go to enormous lengths to say "ta-da" to this holy time. I love all these things, but they aren't the real Christmas.

Christmas is mystery at its heart. An angel coming to a 16-year-old girl. A virgin of all people. A baby born in a barn to poor peasants. In Bethlehem? Shepherds having their lives turned inside out. Wise Men from Iraq or Afghanistan standing that windy starry night open-mouthed at what they saw. It's leaving a hundred-dollar bill for that tired woman wiping that counter at the Waffle House. It's standing by a piano in a nursing home and having a little tiny woman who knows nobody or even where she is—singing clear and sure every word of "Silent Night." Christmas is mystery—never predictable. It is out of our control and the wonder of it all just sneaks up on us.

It really is a partridge in a pear tree, and two turtledoves, and three French hens, and golden rings, and swans, and jumping ladies and lords. Crazy stuff.

Once in the Christmas doldrums I told a counselor I was having a hard time with this season. He told me we expect too much and when we don't get the big OK—whatever that is—we are just disappointed yet another time and we shuffle toward yet another year with little wonder. Same old, same old. The wise man told me to take one small moment and build my whole Christmas around that. Forget all the frantic stuff. He told me to keep my eyes open and that the real Christmas might find me instead of the reverse.

I thought it was strange advice until Christmas Eve, standing in the balcony of a crowded candle-lit church—my sermon in hand and hoping none of the candles

lining the pews would topple over or catch fire to someone's sleeve, worry that the Advent candles might not all burn—it all faded away. Out of the silence a little boy in a choir robe moved down the long aisle quietly singing “This little light of mine.” And Christmas came. At the center of it all was God.

So let us keep our eyes wide open. Let us be surprised by the tiniest and most important of things. Discovering mystery—however it comes—now that is Christmas.

*Originally posted at [Head and Heart](#)*