

Clutching the Jesus Figurine

Jeannie S. Williams, writing in *Chicken Soup for the Christian Soul*, tells of clinging fiercely to her last shreds of sanity and dignity amidst the chaotic mass of holiday shoppers.

Christmas was fast approaching, but the joys of the season were alien to her that year. Her parents' impending divorce after 36 years of marriage mocked all her childhood memories of holiday celebrations made rich with family togetherness and traditions.

She was in no mood to confront the greedy, grasping and empty materialism of the department stores, but her children needed gifts, too.

As Jeannie wandered the aisles of one store, she came upon a Nativity set, its little characters strewn across the floor. As she stooped to pick it up, she heard a mother in the next aisle scolding her daughter. Evidently, the child had picked up something off the floor and popped it into her mouth.



The little girl protested that she had not put the object into her mouth; instead, she was kissing it. "It" turned out to be a little figurine of the baby Jesus, probably the same figurine that went with the scattered Nativity set Jeannie held in her hands.

Curious, Jeannie crept around the aisle to take a look. The little girl and her mother were obviously poor, but the little girl's face shone as she held the Christ child figurine up to her mother. She implored her mother to buy it, but this only made the woman angrier. She yelled at the girl to put the figurine down.

Jeannie turned away, not wanting to see the child get publicly scolded. But all went silent. When she turned back, she saw the mother on her knees, enfolding her child in her arms and fighting back the tears.

The little girl tried to comfort her crying mother, assuring her that she didn't really want the little figurine. The mother tried to explain that she wanted very much to buy it for her daughter, but they just couldn't afford it this year. Suddenly, the child's eyes lit up as she said, "Mommy, I don't need the baby Jesus doll, really. My teacher from Sunday School says that I've got Jesus living in my heart!"

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As the mother and daughter left, Jeannie sprinted to the front of the store to pay for the Nativity scene. She asked the clerk to catch the mother and child on the way out and give them the little Jesus doll.

If you were ever to visit Jeannie's household at Christmastime, you would see on the mantel a lovely little Nativity scene that is missing its star attraction (that pun is intended), the figurine of the baby Jesus. You might think it's incomplete in some way. But if you ask Jeannie Williams where Jesus is, she will be quick to tell you that He is in her heart.

Jeannie's story is a simple truth, but it is the central message of the Christmas season. It is a time to look within and examine our lives, for being willing to reach out with Christ's love to others, and to those who will open their hearts to the indwelling Christ.

Has that happened in your life? Have you consciously prayed, "Come into my heart, Lord Jesus, be born in me today?" That is the true way to celebrate Christmas.

So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith (Ephesians 3:17 NIV).

– Beecher Hunter