

Is the ‘Hipster Nativity Set’ Really That Offensive?

The “Hipster Nativity Set” is making news today. It features Mary and Joseph taking a selfie with Jesus inside a manger with solar panels on the roof. The wise men are riding Segways and carrying Amazon packages. A shepherd is posting the birth on Instagram.

This bothers me greatly.

It’s not that someone reimagined the nativity in today’s culture—we must constantly adapt the medium to communicate our unchanging message effectively. Paul became “all things to all people” so he could share Christ with everyone (1 Cor. 9:22).

What bothers me is the way the Hipster Nativity Set turns the miracle of Jesus’ birth into something so commonplace and commercial. Mary is depicted with her sweater falling off her shoulder. The wise men are wearing hipster outfits. The whole thing makes me wonder: If the birth of Jesus can be treated with such irreverence, is anything off limits today? That’s a discouraging thought.

So here’s an encouraging rejoinder: to the Christ of Christmas “belong glory and dominion forever and ever” (1 Pet. 5:11). Nothing we do can remove one iota of Jesus’ glory from Him. His divinity and majesty are in no sense dependent on our fallen minds and culture.

Jesus came at Christmas to begin redeeming our broken world, a mission He continues through us. As the “body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:27), we are His hands and feet, the instruments of His saving mission today.

But there’s a condition: For Jesus to continue His ministry today, He must work in the same power that enabled His

ministry 20 centuries ago.

I recently reread Jim Cymbala's powerful book *Fresh Power: Experiencing the Vast Resources of the Spirit of God*. Jim has been a friend for many years. His ministry in Brooklyn has inspired Christians across the world to believe God for all He can do to transform a church and a city.

Jim quotes the great Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon: "Without the Spirit of God, we can do nothing. We are as ships without wind or chariots without steeds. Like branches without sap, we are withered. Like coals without fire, we are useless." Then Jim warns us not to fall into what he calls "Old Testament Christianity"—trying to serve Jesus without submitting to the indwelling power of His Spirit.

Christmas, with all its materialistic distractions, can be a challenging season to focus on Jesus. But Christmas, with its historical connection to the birth of Christ, can also be a wonderful season to proclaim Jesus. Both facts should move us to seek more of the Spirit's power than ever before.

It is not enough simply to believe that the Holy Spirit lives in you. As Vance Havner noted in his classic devotional *Day by Day*, "It is not what we have but what we know we have that determines our actual wealth. Many a poor man has had an oil well on his farm and didn't know it."

What should we do? Havner says: "All things are ours in Christ, but we must make what is ours factually our very own actually. Appreciating what is yours will never make you rich, but appropriating it will."

So claim this fact: Jesus is "the same Lord over all (who) is generous toward all who call upon Him" (Rom. 10:12). Have you asked Him to do in your life all He wants to do in the world?