

Message of Jesus Proclaimed Unexpectedly

Like most families, ours has certain traditions for Christmas. Since we live in Orlando, often we will take advantage of the special Christmas programs at some of the theme parks. Over the years, we have enjoyed the Christmas processional at Epcot, where they read the Christmas story from the Bible and have local choirs involved and sing Christmas carols. It's a beautiful, traditional experience.

Some of the other theme parks, such as Universal, tend to go the politically correct route by calling their festivities "holiday traditions" and titling their program "Naughty or Nice." I'm simply speculating, but I'm sure they focus more on the naughty than the nice.

When I learned about SeaWorld's Christmas celebration, it was a pleasant surprise. While it includes a lot of things that are extra-scriptural, such as Santa Claus and Christmas trees, it also includes some very respectful presentations of the Christmas story. Without being religious or proselytizing, the program allows the gospel message to speak for itself with the simple story from the New Testament in which the Christ child was born in a manger in Bethlehem to become the Savior of the world.

Last weekend we took our family, including our 4-year-old grandson, Cohen, to SeaWorld and enjoyed several shows. The Shamu show included a gospel singer singing about "the miracle" of Christmas. But the best show was called "O Wondrous Night."

The program contained creative renditions of most of the traditional Christmas carols, like "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing," "The First Noel," "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and

“Away in a Manger.” Performers danced and sang with the excitement of a Christmas presentation at an African-American church.

I posted a clip on Facebook showing the singing, the dancing and the creative way they told the story through the eyes of the animals, with puppets as the performers. Any church would have been proud of such a program had they had the budget. With the crescendo, real animals were brought in as the singers danced and sang their way through a medley of choruses.

The message of the gospel came through loud and clear, and the crowd loved it, giving a standing ovation.

Throughout our time at SeaWorld, we noticed people did not seem self-conscious about using the word *Christmas* or saying “Merry Christmas,” and it made me wonder why a predominantly Christian nation has attempted to neuter this happiest of all holidays.

If you plan to be in Orlando or if you live within driving distance, I urge you to take advantage of this very special presentation. The cost of a day’s admission during the Christmas season turns into an annual pass and allows my family and me to enjoy the very special exhibits and animal shows several times throughout the year.

The program runs through Dec. 31.

If you have attended SeaWorld’s Christmas celebration or if you’ve seen other wonderful shows that glorify the real meaning of Christmas, please share them in the comments below. And let SeaWorld know you appreciate this even-handed treatment of the traditional Christmas story by sending an email to @.

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