

# 'Twas the week after Christmas

Dan Nelson – pastor

Calvary Chapel of the Ojai Valley

'Twas the week after Christmas and I looked with a sigh,  
At the signs of a holiday that came and passed by.  
I see some lights on the houses, still twinkling bright  
And a star on the hillside that glows in the night.  
There is still smoke in the chimneys and fire logs  
burning  
A chill in the air as the weather is turning.  
The gifts are all opened and the ham is now gone.  
I hear someone complain about the lights  
that are left on.  
People are playing with remote control toys,  
Gadgets that light up and make lots of noise.  
They're wearing new sweaters, and jackets, and  
shirts, and hats:  
Trying new skateboards, and scooters, balls, gloves,  
and bats.  
The windows are decorated with garland and snow.  
Over the door there remains mistletoe.  
Dangling ornaments still hang from the tree.  
And on the piano: the Nativity.  
But the candles are used up and there's Scotch tape  
on the wall,  
Where the greeting cards hung between the door and  
the hall.  
There is glitter on the ground that needs to be swept,  
And recycled boxes to be put where they're kept.  
The can is overflowing with wrapping paper and  
trash.  
As you get ready to clean up the soot and the ash.  
You first stop in the kitchen for a piece of leftover pie,  
But someone ate the last slice, and you try not to cry.  
As you see enough turkey and gravy to make a nice  
plate,  
Along with stuffing and yams, now you're feeling  
quite great.  
As you gobble your sweet corn, you contemplate.  
The sit-ups it takes to offset the food that you ate.  
You glance at the television to catch up on the news,  
Flipping through channels finding it tough to choose.  
With the excess of commercials, you see each offer  
twice.  
Everything that you bought last week is now half  
price!  
You rush down to the mall to catch one of the deals.  
You're feeling kind of sluggish from all those big  
meals.  
Santa is gone and the signs are all changed,  
Year-end clearance sale madness makes you slightly  
deranged.  
Returns and exchanges lined all the way to the door.  
Half-opened packages strung on the shelves and the  
floor.  
The crowds are chaotic and the sales clerk seems  
vile.  
People are frantic and impatient and can't seem to  
smile.  
"You're next!" she announces, "Have you got your  
receipt?"  
But all you find in your pocket is a half-eaten treat.  
It was an unfinished candy cane from a few days  
before,  
She glares for a moment and then quips, "Have you  
got more?"  
Her face seemed to soften and her voice quickly  
faded,  
The cashier leaned forward and disclosed that she  
was feeling sort of jaded.  
Her holiday was over before it began.  
Taking care of her family the best that she can.  
On Christmas Eve, she didn't get off until eight.  
Then rushed the family to church but got there too  
late.  
The candles were lit and the story was told.  
She sobbed as she walked to the car in the  
cold.  
Then about midnight this mother was forced out of  
bed,  
One of her children had pain in her ear and her head.  
Christmas at the hospital: love without fail,  
And back at 6 a.m. to open for the Clearance Day  
sale.  
As you listen your heart sinks deep into your chest,  
You struggle to find the words that are best.

But before you dare speak — you pause for a bit  
And pray that you'll say something that will be  
helpful and fit.  
While struggling to reply, and your brain seems to  
stall:  
A tender baritone voice rings, "Honey, we're out in  
the mall."  
He wore jeans, plaid and work boots, and had a kind  
face.  
With a child in each hand, they beamed and  
brightened the place.  
Standing there dumbfounded with nothing to say,  
You heard, "Thank you, sir. I hope you have a nice  
day."  
Then she dashed from the counter without saying  
goodbye;  
Your mind stuck on this family, and you're not sure  
why.  
An hour later you saw them in the food court  
praying.  
You couldn't help but wish that you could hear what  
they were saying.  
They seemed thankful and happy, and were reading  
from God's book.  
As they ate and exchanged gifts, you were  
trying not to look.  
But your soul was pricked and you knew that you  
were seeing something good.  
If this family could find joy and peace, then maybe  
others could.  
Their Christmas "seemed" to be a failure  
but it's clear that isn't true.  
They tapped into something real that can bless them  
all year through.  
You reflect on the grime, and the strain, in the real  
Bethlehem story.  
How God's Holy Son in a manger could somehow  
bring glory.  
Wish lists, time off, making plans just to  
please us.  
Instead of worshipping the Prince of Peace, and  
living for Jesus.  
For God so loved the whole world that he gave:  
Hurting and broken lives that he wants to save.  
Whoever believes and receives will not perish.  
Abundant life forever — God's promise to cherish.  
You dart to get home to hug the ones that you love.  
Thoughts swarm that the best Christmas gifts come  
from above.  
Hope is renewed, your soul is lifted, lasting Holy-  
Day cheer.  
Merry Christ-mas to all, and Happy New Year!

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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## **Sunday Worship:**

**9:00 & 10:45am**  
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

## **Mid-Week Study:**

**7:00pm Thursday**  
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View