

Something for the Heart: *A Charlie Brown Christmas*

I caught the end of Charles M. Schulz's beloved *A Charlie Brown Christmas* the other night. While technology has certainly advanced since this classic first aired in 1965, somehow this simple cartoon never gets old. It has been 46 years since *A Charlie Brown Christmas* first bemoaned the commercialism of the Christmas season. Since then much has changed in the United States.

- ✓ Personal Consumption Expenditures have increased from 450 billion dollars in 1965 to 10.86 trillion dollars in 2011.
- ✓ The number of television sets on which to watch this Christmas classic has risen from 52 million in 1960 to 250 million in 2007.
- ✓ The average household income in 1965 was \$6,450. In 2011 it is \$49,945.
- ✓ In 2011, 412 billion dollars was spent on advertising in this country (I couldn't find the corresponding numbers for 1965 – but you get the idea)
- ✓ In the 1960's the average TV show ran for 51 minutes, with 9 minutes of advertising. Today the average show is 42 minutes, nearly doubling the amount of advertising per show.

So if Charlie Brown was concerned about commercialism in 1965, he's certainly not feeling any better about it in 2011. How to respond to this constant barrage of "commercialism" during what is supposed to be a holy season? Perhaps the simplest response is the best – the one given by Linus when Charlie Brown cries out "Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?"

"Sure Charlie Brown. I can tell you what Christmas is all about," says Linus. He then takes center stage and recites from Luke 2 (the King James version, of course, because that is the *only* way to read the Christmas story!)

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them,

"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

"That's what Christmas is all about Charlie Brown."

Yup – sometimes the simplest response is the best response. Have a blessed Christmas.

Quick Quips

Actually, Lucy, my trouble is Christmas. I just don't understand it. Instead of feeling happy, I feel sort of let down. ~ Charlie Brown

Look, Charlie, let's face it. We all know that Christmas is a big commercial racket. It's run by a big eastern syndicate, you know. ~ Lucy Van Pelt

Christmas is doing a little something extra for someone. ~ Charles Schulz