



So, it was on this day almost 100 years ago now, that the first Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade took over the streets of New York. In 1924, the flagship location in Manhattan had done so incredibly well in its business that it grew to an entire city block. And,

*To showcase the opening of the 'World's Largest Store' and its 1 million square feet of retail space at the start of the busy...shopping season, Macy's decided to throw...a parade on [that holiday] morning...*

*To match the nursery-rhyme theme in [its] window display, floats featured Mother Goose favorites such as the Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe, Little Miss Muffet and Little Red Riding Hood. Macy's employees dressed as clowns,*

*cowboys and sword-wielding knights. A menagerie of animals on loan from the Central Park Zoo—including bears, elephants, camels and monkeys—offered a circus-like atmosphere as four bands provided the soundtrack to the festive march. Bringing up the rear of the parade was a float bearing the guest of honor...sitting in his reindeer-driven sleigh on top of a mountain of ice.*

Of course, it wasn't called a Thanksgiving Day parade, then. It was, instead, the "Christmas Parade," because the idea was to further draw in more customers for the weeks ahead of December 25. Now, it may seem rather odd to mention such things in the church, as we are meant to be in the midst of Advent. It's supposed to be its own season, more than worthy of special attention in the grand scheme of the entire church year. It is without question the most overlooked time in our worship life, as if something rather big is on the horizon or something.

However, we recognize that we are human. We know December 25 is coming sooner than we may like, not just to ensure the season of Advent receives its due recognition, but because so much needs to be done before then. We know that the whole world around us, Macy's and everywhere else will bombard us with everything Christmas, and have already been doing so for weeks. There's no way to avoid it. Not to mention, we don't ask our siblings in Christ to refrain from putting up their trees and lights and stockings until December 24 even. The church knows our cultural reality. So, instead of complaining about it, as it happens so often from the pulpit this time of year, perhaps there's still a little Advent-something to take from it all.

Because, after the first parade put on by Macy's in New York City, the live animals from the Central Park Zoo did not go over so well. The roars from some of the monstrous creatures, understandably, frightened the children lining the streets. So, they would be replaced by the massive balloons instead. Evidently, the one with the most frequent appearance in a variety of ways has been none other than the beloved *Peanuts* character of Snoopy, who will grace audiences with his presence on television screens throughout this country and beyond in the coming weeks as his cherished Charlie Brown goes through his annual struggle of wondering what this whole chaotic season is supposed to be about.

With that in mind, it's more than safe to say that there will always be some of the spectators who get up so incredibly early to be part of the festivities in the Big Apple, who brave the thousands upon thousands of people; some of them most certainly wonder what this whole chaotic season is supposed to be about. Perhaps, Advent has something to say about that. The prophet Isaiah encouraged children of God long ago to "walk in the light of the Lord." And yes, during this overlooked season, we in the church recognize that that light of the Lord has already

come in Jesus Christ. The parade of peace and joy and hope has already happened. The Messiah marched into our hearts and insisted on staying there forever.

And yet, this season of Advent begs us to realize that it's not quite finished. Yes, at some point that Messiah in Jesus Christ will return in bodily form again, but in the meantime, God encourages us to not only bask in the glory and enjoy the light of the Lord, but to walk in its eternal parade still going on in humanity. But it's not so much about walking down the middle of some city street and showing off how blessed we are with Jesus Christ in our life. It's not about following the lead of the beloved Snoopy in trying to put together the best decorations to impress neighbors and family and friends. It's not about any kind of festive pomp and circumstance.

Perhaps, this season of Advent, instead, encourages us to go to the sidewalks of our humanity, to the edges, where people deep-down wonder what this whole chaotic season is supposed to be about. Because I have a feeling that is where Christ yearns to be, and not on some float towering over us. I have a feeling that during this season, this Messiah insists on being with the Charlie Browns of the world, who wonder if Christ could possibly come for them. Those who wonder if they did enough this year to impress not just their neighbors and family and friends, but the Lord who must have these incredibly high expectations if he's coming from the towering floats of heaven itself. There's no way this Messiah thinks they are worthy of being on that holy parade route. Except, God more than insists that we are all worth the light of the Lord. Even on the days when we are not so sure we can "walk in [that] light of the Lord," we can rest assured that that light of peace and joy and hope has been unleashed in the depths of our heart, and no matter how chaotic these weeks may get, it is never, ever going out within us. For that Greatest News of all, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!

*Image: from The New York Times (1999)*

*Source: [The First Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade - HISTORY](#)*