

## **Ricky Bobby and Grownup Jesus**

*December 24, 2007*

(The Nativity of Jesus Christ - Year A)

Luke 2: 1-20

*St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas*

Over a year ago, a movie came out called:

“Talladega Nights: The Legend of Ricky Bobby.”

The movie, Talladega Nights, pokes fun at Ricky Bobby, a NASCAR race driver, who is played by Will Farrell.

The movie also pokes fun at the stereotypes of white, small town, Southern culture.

My favorite scene in the movie Talladega Nights is the scene at the dinner table, when Ricky Bobby offers the grace before the meal.

Ricky Bobby is sitting at a table filled with pizza boxes, fried chicken and liter-sized bottles of Coke and Mountain Dew, surrounded by his family and his best buddy.

Ricky Bobby bows his head in prayer and prays:

“Dear Lord Baby Jesus...we thank you so much for this bountiful harvest of Domino's, KFC, and the always delicious Taco Bell.

I just wanna take time to say thank you for my family.

And dear Lord Baby Jesus, we also thank you for my wife's father Chip.

We hope that you can use your baby Jesus powers to heal him and his horrible leg.”

And this point, Ricky Bobby's wife interrupts the prayer and says:

“Hey, you know sweetie, Jesus did grow up.

You don't always have to call him baby.

It's a bit odd and off puttin' to pray to a baby.”

To which Ricky Bobby shoots back:

“Look, I like the Christmas Jesus best, and I'm sayin' grace and I like the baby Jesus version the best, you hear?

When you say grace, you can say it to Grownup Jesus or Teenage Jesus or Bearded Jesus or whoever you want.”

Ricky Bobby then continues his prayer:

“Dear tiny baby Jesus, in your golden fleece diapers.

Thank you, for all your power and your grace, dear baby God. Amen.”

I wonder how many of us here like the Christmas Jesus the best,  
And have come here tonight to worship tiny, dear baby Jesus, swaddled  
in fleece diapers, surrounded by cute animals.

Yet, I also wonder how many of us have come here tonight to worship  
*grownup* Jesus, who is Savior and Lord and who dies on a Cross.

In the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke, the shepherds are told  
to go to the manger,

Yet they don't linger there very long, but they return, to the real world,  
to their fields, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard  
and seen.

Sometimes I wonder if our culture has become so obsessed with  
Christmas, from Halloween until Christmas Eve, because we like  
the Christmas Jesus the best.

As long as we stay at the manger for the months of November and  
December,

As long as we keep Jesus tucked away in his diapers, all warm and  
cuddly,

As long as we like the Christmas Jesus best,

Then we never have to encounter the Good Friday Jesus or the Easter  
Jesus.

Because, as Ricky Bobby's wife observed in Talladega Nights, Jesus  
does grow up.

In Scripture, Jesus leaves the manger quickly and begins to stir up  
trouble right from the beginning.

Jesus preaches good news to the poor,

He heals those with untouchable diseases like leprosy and AIDS,

He eats dinner with prostitutes,

He talks to tax collectors and thieves.

And grownup Jesus starts a revolution.

Grownup Jesus asks us to love our enemies,  
He tells us that if someone steals our coat, we should not only give them  
our coat, but also the shirt off our back.  
And just when we think that we know exactly who is included and  
excluded from Jesus' kingdom,  
Then Jesus tells us to go back and to re-draw the boundaries that we  
have drawn - to include everyone.

You see, I believe that one of the reasons that Ricky Bobby and many in  
our culture prefer the Christmas Jesus is that the Christmas Jesus  
doesn't ask us to do anything.

As long as we keep Jesus in his manger,  
Then we never have to provide housing for the homeless,  
We never have to struggle with illegal immigration,  
We never have to talk to anyone of a different skin color.  
As long as we keep Jesus in his manger, then we never have to deal with  
the messy, bloody, smelly, disgusting parts of life.

On this Christmas Eve night, I am not that attracted to worship a baby in  
diapers.

However, I *am* attracted to worship a revolutionary God who will eat  
dinner with me, even when I can be selfish and unlovable.

I *am* attracted to worship a God who challenges me to love others, more  
than I love myself.

I *am* attracted to worship a God who will stretch out his arms on the hard  
wood of the Cross, to include me in his saving embrace.

Christmas is not just a celebration of the birthday of Jesus, with ice  
cream and cake.

Christmas is a celebration of the *life and death* of Jesus, with the Body  
and Blood of Christ.

Therefore, tonight is a moment of decision for you and for me.

Do you want to keep the Christmas Jesus tucked away in his manger,  
where on December 26th, you can redeem the gift cards that you  
have received and move on with your life exactly as it was before?

Or, do you want to let Jesus grow up in your heart, where he will ask

you to change and to die and to do things that are edgy and dangerous and uncomfortable?

Because the comfortable Cradle of Jesus Christ leads us directly to the uncomfortable Cross of Jesus Christ.

My friends, tonight I gather with you in this church to not only celebrate the Christmas Jesus,

But I gather with you in this church to glorify and praise God because the grownup Jesus has completely changed my life.

And this Jesus challenges me and gives me the power and the courage to love other people in ways that I know, without a doubt, that Jeff Fisher could never do on his own.

Jesus will change your life, too,

If you will just let the dear Lord baby Jesus out of his manger.

Let him grow up and teach you,

Let him die for you,

Let him bring you a different life.

Grownup Jesus wants to give you a new life...

Because he loves you.

AMEN.

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