

IN THE MARGINS: Pa-Rum-Pa-Pum-Pum

By Tony Martin

Editor

I'll start with a confessional. Sometimes, Christmas music gets on my nerves. But before you call the grinch squad on me, I'll explain. And I will use The Little Drummer Boy as a jumping off place.

I love Christmas carols. Love 'em. I might listen to them year round. But some of the secular stuff can really wear thin. White Christmas? Good with that. I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day? Check – I like it.

But Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree? Santa Baby? *Mariah Carey*? The whole Bob Dylan Christmas album, which is like some sort of surreal fever dream? No thanks.

Then there's The Little Drummer Boy. More carol than secular. And for some reason I've done a deep dive with this one recently.

Don't look for him in scripture. You won't find him. If you look for the little drummer boy in the context of the lyrics (aside from the pa-rum-pa-pum-pums), you can piece together enough clues to tell you that he showed up at the same time as the wise men. (And for a special treat, listen to this song as performed by Pentatonix.)

Check this out.

Our finest gifts we bring ... to lay before the king ... so to honor Him ... when we come.

Here are the wise men. Traditionally, there were three of them, based on the three gifts. They brought good things.

Expensive, even priceless things.

And then there's the little drummer boy.

Little baby ... I am a poor boy too. I have no gift to bring that's fit to give our King. Shall I play for you on my drum?

The wise men brought their finest gifts. The little drummer boy had nothing of material value. He just played his drum.

I played my best for Him. Then He smiled at me ... me and my drum.

I wonder how the little drummer boy felt? I hope he didn't feel unworthy. Because what he gave Jesus was sufficient because he gave with a pure heart.

This raises a couple of questions:

- What are you afraid to give God because you don't think it's good enough?
- What do you do when you see others do things for Jesus? What's your response?

File those away. We'll come back.

Let me take you somewhere else – specifically, Mark 12:41-44.

⁴¹ *Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts.* ⁴² *But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.*

⁴³ *Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.* ⁴⁴ *They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."* (NIV)

Can you see any parallels to the widow and the little drummer boy?

Maybe the widow thought what she gave wasn't fit for God, but she gave anyway. It was all she could do.

The rich people threw plenty into the treasury. Jesus and His disciples were watching this, and then the little widow hobbles up to the treasury and drops those two coins in.

If you were there, what would you think? How would you feel? I'd feel humbled at best, and unworthy at worst. Giving doesn't come naturally to me. I can be a stingy, self-centered, worldly old dude. I like stuff, and I don't part with it easily.

God help me.

Both the widow and the little drummer boy had so little to give, but they both had hearts that longed to worship with all they have.

Let's break this down, in conclusion. Actually, I'll just ask that you and I answer these questions:

1. What are you afraid to give because you don't think it's good enough? Are you so mired in your sense of unworthiness that you don't think you have anything to offer?
2. Have you been holding back anything from God? I'm not just talking about the *things*. I'm talking about your heart, your will, your whole life.
3. What are some ways you can give to God?
4. Have you ever seen God multiply something you thought was very small?
5. What's something you've been thinking specifically about to give Jesus for His use? Want to be encouraged? Want to be a hope-giver? That's my thoughts.

Where is your heart today?

I play my best for you.

I give you all I have.

God bless the little drummer boy. God bless us.