

# Learning from Lynyrd

Since Black Friday, we've been in peak-consumerism mode. It probably won't end until after New Year's Day.

Ironically, while Thanksgiving and Christmas are rooted in Christian tradition and outlook, there is little left of Christianity's influence on those holidays. These days, Thanksgiving is less about giving thanks to the Almighty and more about preparing for Christmas by hitting the Black Friday sales. Christmas itself is now the day when in a brief flurry of activity families tear into piles of presents and then sit around the rest of the day wondering what to do with themselves or just playing with what they got.

To give you an idea of how much things have changed, consider the fact that the Sunday after Thanksgiving this year was the start of Advent, which marks the beginning of the time of preparation for the Christmas feast day in the Christian tradition.

Not long ago, Advent would have been seen by Christians as a time of fasting, prayer, and quiet. Trees would not have gone up, decorations wouldn't have happened, franticness would have been avoided. In fact, within some Christian traditions, Advent was a time when married couples would even abstain from sex as a means of fasting from the pleasures of the world in order to better prepare their minds, souls, and bodies for the Christmas celebration. And that celebration, when it finally happened, would have been joyously extended over a much longer period than a day – think 'twelve days of Christmas'.

Alas, it seems that consumerism has consumed most of the traditions of the past. Whether one is Christian or not, these days it seems that there is a universal sense of the overwhelmingly exhausting nature of the holiday season. Yes, it is fun and exciting, but we're almost glad when it's all

over.

Maybe we need more simplicity. And here is where I am reminded of Lynyrd Skynyrd's 'Simple Man':

"Mama told me when I was young  
'Come sit beside me, my only son  
And listen closely to what I say  
And if you do this it'll help you some sunny day'

'Oh, take your time, don't live too fast  
Troubles will come and they will pass  
You'll find a woman and you'll find love  
And don't forget, son, there is someone up above'

'And be a simple kind of man  
Oh, be something you love and understand  
Baby be a simple kind of man  
Oh, won't you do this for me, son, if you can'

'Forget your lust for the rich man's gold  
All that you need is in your soul  
And you can do this, oh baby, if you try  
All that I want for you, my son, is to be satisfied'

'And be a simple kind of man  
Oh, be something you love and understand  
Baby be a simple kind of man  
Oh, won't you do this for me, son, if you can''

There are some real gems in those lyrics that are worth tucking away and living by these days. While this season is essentially over, maybe next season we'll do things differently.

