

One Solitary Life

This is a popular poem about the life of Jesus Christ. Although the author is frequently cited as "unknown" the poem is actually attributed to James Allen Francis.

He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant. He grew up in another village, where he worked in a carpenter shop until he was 30. Then, for three years, he was an itinerant preacher.

He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a home. He didn't go to college. He never lived in a big city. He never traveled 200 miles from the place where he was born. He did none of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but himself.

He was only 33 when the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for his garments, the only property he had on earth. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave, through the pity of a friend.

Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today he is the central figure of the human race. I am well within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned--put together--have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that one, solitary life.*

*Attributed to James Allen Francis.

If I decorate my house perfectly with streamers,

strands of twinkling lights and shiny balls,

but do not show love to my family,

I'm just another decorator.

If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of mince pies,

preparing gourmet meals and arranging a beautifully adorned table,

but do not show love to my family,

I'm just another cook.

If I work at the soup kitchen,

sing carols on the Church steps and give all that I have to charity,

but do not show love to my family,

it profits me nothing.

If I decorate the tree with baubles and fairy lights

and attend a myriad of pre-Christmas parties

but do not focus on Christ,

I have missed the point.

Love stops the cooking to hug the child.

Love sets aside the decorating to listen to loved ones.

Love is kind, though harried and tired.

Love doesn't envy another's home

that has coordinated Christmas china and table linens.

Love doesn't yell at the kids to get out of the way,

but is thankful they are there to be in the way.

Love doesn't give only to those who are able to give in return

but rejoices in giving to those who can't.

Love

bears all things,

believes all things,

hopes all things,

endures all things.

Love never fails.

Video games will break,

pearl necklaces will be lost,

golf clubs will rust,

but giving the gift of love will endure.