

Along the track

A Christmas Blessing

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

Today in the City of David a Saviour has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord! Luke 2:10-11

Christmas doesn't happen automatically; it needs our participation. In a very real sense, we have to help make the joy of Christmas continue to happen.

In what ways will we bring the joy of Christ into our family, our workplaces, our neighbourhood, our local church community? This Christmas will I be even more encouraging of others, more supportive of their hopes and dreams, refraining from criticising or being the pessimist? Being positive, encouraging and looking on the bright side can be a wonderful gift.

The gift of showing appreciation of others, not only for what they might do but for who they are to you is often the greatest gift we can give – to them and to ourselves. It is so easy to take for granted what others in our lives do for us each day, to take for granted what they are for us simply because they are there so faithfully and constantly. Acknowledging what a great gift they are to you is a way of making Christ's loving presence come alive. An expensive gift is not necessary – just a few words or a note can make a profound difference.

I still remember one card our family received every year for quite a number of years – the picture on the front each year may have been different but the message inside was not:

I didn't ask for wealth or fame (I knew you wouldn't mind). I asked for priceless treasures rare of a much more lasting kind. I prayed that God would be near to you at the start of each new day, to grant you health and blessing and friends to share your way. I asked for happiness for you in all things great and small, but that you'd know God's loving care I prayed for most of all.

Christmas celebrations can help us grasp something of how deeply we are loved by God. We feel that in the love of our parents, our partner, our children, our brothers and sisters, we feel that love in our celebrations, in all those moments of wonder in our life. We can feel it too in the most menial and ordinary, the everyday greetings and acts of kindness - in all these we are being loved by God. Christmas is a reminder that we are asked to pass that love on to others.

Celebrating Emmanuel, God being with us isn't just about Bethlehem, the Stable and the Crib – it is about the Incarnation, how Jesus became one of us so that we become like Him, so that the grace and life of God might flow through us and inspire us, so that we too might bring that love into our world. When we wish each other a Happy Christmas, it is more than wishing joy but wishing for those things that will make us truly happy, for those things that will bring us peace.

So this Christmas

May God always be near to you and you near to God.

May you always be grateful for the gift of your life and for the hidden treasures it contains.

May the bonds of love for one another be strengthened as you gather with your family and friends around the table.

May the wonder and awe that fills the eyes of children lead you to a renewed awareness and appreciation of whatever you too easily take for granted.

May you be blessed with good friends and may you be a good friend to others.

May you always be ready to forgive.

May the coming year be one of good health for you.

May you experience the peace which only Christ can give.

Regards
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