

24

GRATIS

Desember
2022

Goeie Nuus Good News

NOU REEDS 24 JAAR OUD!

AANLYN-UITGAWE
ONLINE EDITION

Posbus 1957
Potchefstroom 2520
Tel: (018) 293 1996
www.goodnewsmessage.co.za
Goeie Nuus Koerant -
Good News Newspaper



HE CAME... FOR ME!

Rev. CN Peckham

TO GOD, Christmas meant an enormous sacrifice - He gave His Son!

All heaven must have wondered at the incomprehensible and unfathomable depths of a love which would go to such lengths.

The Lord of glory took the form of a helpless Baby. God did not need to do this. He is complete in Himself. He does not need the fellowship of created beings, but His love was so consuming that He could do nothing else but save corrupt humanity. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."*

TO CHRIST, Christmas meant intense humiliation, for He *"made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."*

After being worshipped by the angels down the ages, He is contracted to the confines of a human body and is rejected, even at His birth, by the very people whom He created and for whom He was soon to die.

Yet, in the intense pain of the sacrifice and humiliation, there was vibrant joy. Joy because God's great plan of Redemption was being put into operation.

The shadow and types of the Old Testament were yielding to the Substance and Reality of Christ Himself. Man was about to be redeemed!

Said the angel to the shepherds, *"I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."* Joy in heaven, joy to earth, joy that the long-awaited salvation of man was being accomplished. **THUS TO THE HOSTS OF HEAVEN, Christmas means irrepressible joy.**

TO THE WORLD, Christmas means Redemption, *"for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is*

Christ the Lord."

Bethlehem has no meaning without Calvary. He was born to die! The enormous weight and ghastly concentration of the sin of the world would, after a few brief years, rest upon Him on the Cross.

The awful separation from His Father awaited Him, *"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"* would soon be wrenched from His dying lips. But this would result in redemption.

A Saviour is born! A Saviour from sin. It was sin which He took upon the Cross. It was sin with which God was dealing at Calvary. This then is the purpose of Christ's coming - to save men from sin!

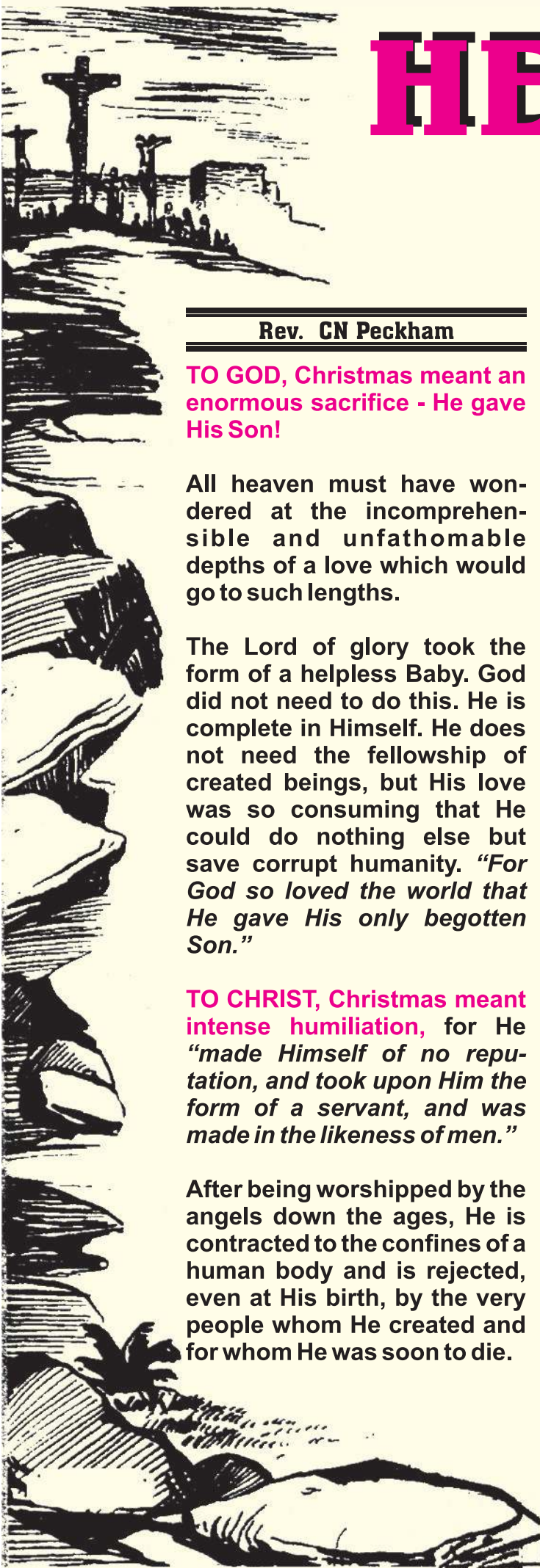
TO THE INDIVIDUAL, Christmas brings a solemn challenge. Has His coming been effective for me? The purpose for which He died was to save me from sin. Am I saved from sin? Have I seen Him as the One Who took all the evil of my soul and bore the punishment of death for me? Have I gratefully, humbly, accepted Him as my Saviour?

What a change will be wrought in my soul when I dare to trust Him to forgive and to save me!

Why, the joy which the angels heralded to the shepherds will be mine. Forgiven! What a word! Joy will well up in my soul and will ring through the courts of heaven as well!

God offers His great salvation to you at this Christmas season, to you as you read these very words.

WILL YOU TODAY RECEIVE THIS SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD AS YOUR SAVIOUR, TOO?



Maak 'n Draai by My...

Desembermaand is kuier-tyd. Vakansietyd. Feestyd. 'n Tyd waar mense en families bymekaar wil kom. Mekaar uitnoui: *Maak 'n draai by my*. Hoeveel oumense sit in die ouetehuis en soebat die kinders en ander familieleden om 'n draai by hulle te kom maak. Hulle is eensaam, het 'n vol lewe gehad, het alles gedoen vir hulle familie en vriende, het 'n behoefte aan vriendskap, want sien, ons mense is elkeen 'n “kuddedier.” In sulke tye het ons ook behoefte aan “Onse Vader wat in die hemel is.”

Jare gelede was daar 'n ouma in ons gemeente wat gedurig gesê het: Daar is nie iets soos “eensaam” nie, dit beteken net: “Daar is altyd Een saam met ons.” 'n Ander een se kinders het gesê hulle moeder wil net heeldag sit en Bybel lees. Nie lank daarna is sy oorlede. Sy wou net gedurig by haar hemelse Vader wees. In Engels is daar 'n mooi woord: Sy wou “fellowship” hê met Hom.

Elkeen het 'n behoefte om in eg menslike taal vir God te sê: “Maak asseblief 'n draai by my...” Is dit té menslik om dit vir die Almagtige God te vra? Maar die Here het 'n manier om op eg menslike vlak, in eenvoud en in liefde, met Sy kinders te ontmoet en met hulle te kuier. Dit is hoe een teoloog dit uitgedruk het toe hy probeer verstaan het hoe Adam en Eva in sonde kon val, terwyl hulle in volmaakte omstandighede geleef het: “God het elke dag by hulle kom tee drink!” In liefde saam met hulle verkeer.

En toe...? Toe kom die sondeval! Maar God het nooit Sy skepsele verlaat nie. Hy maak onder andere ook 'n draai by Moses in die woestyn en sê vir hom dat Hy gesien het hoe die Egiptenare Sy volk mishandel en slawe van hulle maak, hulle verdruk en hulle met swepe geslaan het, en dat Moses hulle moes uitlei na die Beloofde Land (Eks. 3).

Die Here was gedurig by Moses en gee hom die Wet op die berg Sinai wat Hy met Sy vinger op kliptafels geskryf het. Die Israeliete het gedurig van Hom afvallig geraak, maar Hy het getrou gebly deur die eeue heen en sal hulle elke keer weer en weer bymekaarmaak.

Toe stuur Hy Sy Seun wat genoem word Immanuel, en wat beteken “God met ons.” Want Jesus het 'n draai by ons kom maak! Die Bybel sê: “Hy, wat in die gestalte van God was, het dit geen roof geag om aan God gelyk te wees nie, [1983-vertaling: “...het Sy bestaan op Godgelyke wyse nie beskou as iets waaraan Hy Hom

moes vasklem nie] maar het Homself ontledig deur die gestalte van 'n dienskneg aan te neem en aan die mense gelyk geword; en in gedaante gevind as 'n mens, het Hy Homself verneder deur gehoorsaam te word tot die dood toe, ja, die dood van die kruis. Daarom het God Hom ook uitermate verhoog en Hom 'n Naam gegee wat bo elke naam is, sodat in die Naam van Jesus sou buig elke knie van die wat in die hemel en die wat op die aarde en die wat onder die aarde is, en elke tong sou bely dat Jesus Christus die Here is tot heerlijkheid van God die Vader” (Fil. 2:6-11).

Hy was in die gestalte van God. Toe klim Hy af en word 'n mens en word 'n slaaf en sterf aan die kruis. Sy hele “draai” wat Hy by ons kom maak het, begin Hy as 'n Baba in die krip in Betlehem, en Hy sê: “Leer van My, want Ek is sagmoedig en nederig van hart.” En, “Volg My na.” Voor die kruis, en ná die kruis maak Hy gedurig by elke mens wat in nood verkeer 'n draai wanneer hulle Hom vra. Want Hy het vir *almal* gesterf. Elke stam en taal en volk en nasie.

Toe Petrus se skoonmoeder siek was aan koors, (dalk op sterwe gelê het), het Hy 'n draai by haar gemaak, haar hand aangeraak, moontlik Sy hand op hare geplaas in besorgdheid, en haar opgewek en gesond gemaak.

Toe Petrus en ses van die ander dissipels later ná die opstanding wou terugkeer na die beroep as vissers, het Hy, na Sy opstanding, 'n draai by Petrus (die leier) gemaak en hom met liefde teruggewen (Joh. 21). Want sien, Hy het God se liefde aan die mensdom kom vertoon. En liefde is die grootste gebod van die Wet van God (Matt. 22:37-40).

Op 'n keer het Hy by Martha en Maria 'n draai gaan maak, nadat hulle broer Lasarus gesterf het. In hulle droefheid het Hy met medelye by die graf geweene en saam met hulle getreur. Die Jode kon sê: “Kyk hoe lief het Hy hom gehad.” Hulle het Sy liefde en medelye in Sy trane gesien. Hy het Lasarus daarna uit die graf uit opgewek.

Neem die Nuwe Testament, en in die besonder die Evangelies, en lees met 'n oog wat let op die mense se nood - die van gelowiges en sondaars. Hy roep *almal* na Hom toe. Hy kom maak 'n draai by elke individu. Elkeen wat Hom nodig het en wat Hom aanroep.

In my jonger dae het ek 'n vriend gehad. 'n Aangename, menslie-

wende persoon. Wanneer hy iemand ontmoet met wie hy goed oor die weg kan kom, sal hy vra: “Wanneer kom kuier jy by my?”

Dit het dikwels gebeur vanweë sy geaardheid. Dit beteken hy hou van jou en wil graag met jou kuier. Op so 'n menslike noot kan ons ook vir Jesus vra: “Kom maak asseblief 'n draai by my.” Jesus het mos vir Sy dissipels gesê: “Julle is *My vriende* as julle alles doen wat *Ek julle beveel*” (Joh. 15:14).

En wat van Abraham? “En die Skrif is vervul wat sê: En Abraham het God geglo, en dit is hom tot geregtigheid gereken, en hy is 'n vriend van God genoem” (Jak. 2:23; Jes. 41:8; 2 Kron. 20:7). Dan skryf Johannes: “Want so lief het God die wêreld gehad, dat Hy Sy eniggebore Seun gegee het, sodat elkeen wat in Hom glo, nie verlore mag gaan nie, maar die ewige lewe kan hê” (Joh. 3:16). En Jesus het ook gesê: “Groter liefde het niemand as dit nie, dat iemand sy lewe vir *Sy vriende* gee” (Joh. 15:13).

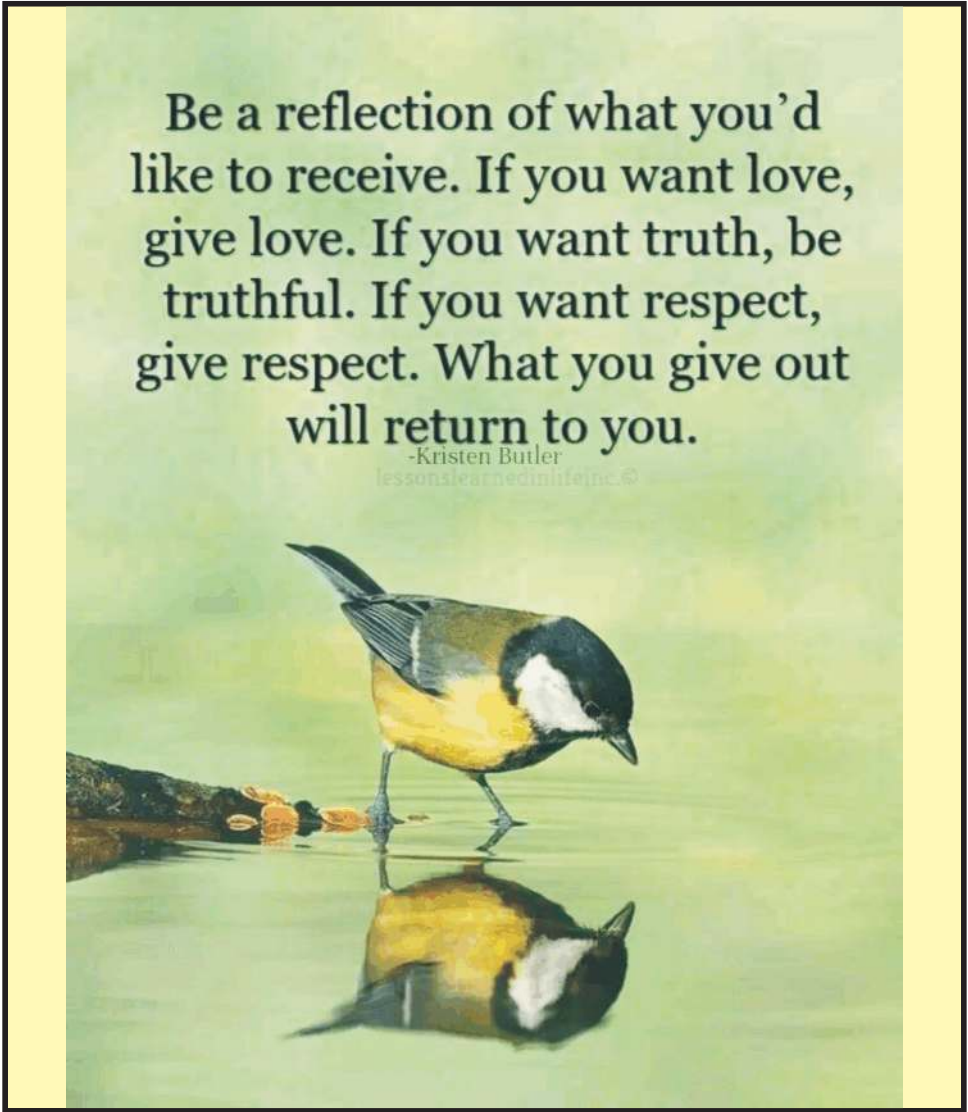
Wil jy ook 'n vriend van Jesus wees? Nooi Hom in jou hart in. En nooi Hom dan: “Kom maak asseblief by my 'n draai.” Wanneer Hy kom, kom Hy met alles wat Hy is en wat Hy vir jou kan bied, want Hy is lief vir jou! Hy kom met vergifnis van sonde sonder om jou te veroordeel of jou te straf, want selfs vir die vrou wat in egbreuk betrap is, het Hy gesê:

“Ek veroordeel jou ook nie. Gaan heen en sondig nie meer nie” (Joh. 8:11).

Hy kom met Sy liefde; Hy kom met Sy begrip en medelye vir jou; Hy kom met Sy genade; Hy kom met Sy barmhartigheid; Hy kom met Sy hulp en Sy troos vir jou in nood; Hy kom om jou te verlos van die baie aanslae en pyn en veroordeling wat deur Satan toegedien is; Hy kom om jou te seën, en soms kry jy 'n lied in jou hart wat Sy Teenwoordigheid bevestig!

'n Geliefde broer in Jesus sê vir my hoe hy alleen bly, en dikwels in die nag nie kan slaap nie. Dit is pikdonker. Hy is alleen in die nag. Eensaam. Niemand naby hom nie. Sy vrou al oorlede. Kinders ver. Sy gedagtes draai na sy eie pyn. En die verlange, so groot! Dan sit hy 'n CD op wat Jesus verheerlik, en weldra aanbid hy Jesus. Dan is Jesus daar by hom, en is hy nie meer alleen nie. Dink ook aan die lied: “Welk 'n *Vriend* het ons in Jesus...” En, “*There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother*” (Spreuke 18:24).

Wil jy nie vir Jesus vra: “Kom maak asseblief 'n draai by my.” Vra Hom vandag nog om jou *Vriend* te wees!” “Die offers van God is 'n gebroke gees; 'n gebroke en verslae hart sal U, o God, nie verag nie!” (Ps. 51:19). ©Dr. J J Venter



GELOOF SONDER VLERKE!

En sonder geloof is dit onmoontlik om God te behaag; want hy wat tot God gaan, moet glo dat Hy is en 'n beloner is van die wat Hom soek.

Deur die geloof het Noag, toe hy 'n goddelike waarskuwing ontvang het aangaande wat nog nie gesien was nie, met eerbiedige vrees die ark gereed gemaak tot redding van sy huisgesin, waardeur hy die wêreld veroordeel het en 'n erfgenaam geword het van die geregtigheid wat volgens die geloof is.

Deur die geloof het Abraham, toe hy geroep is, gehoorsaam weggetrek na die plek wat hy as 'n erfenis sou ontvang; en hy het weggetrek sonder om te weet waar hy sou kom.

Deur die geloof het hy as vreemdeling gaan woon in die land van belofte soos in 'n vreemde land en in tente gewoon met Isak en Jakob, die mede-erfgename van dieselfde belofte. Want hy het die stad verwag wat fundamente het, waarvan God die boumeester en oprigter is.

Deur die geloof het Sara self ook krag ontvang om bevrug te word; en toe sy oor die leeftyd was, het sy gebaar, omdat sy Hom getrou geag het wat dit belofte het. Daarom is daar ook gebore uit een vader, en dit 'n verstowene, kinders soos sterre van die hemel in menigte en soos die sand aan die strand van die see, wat ontelbaar is.

Deur die geloof het hulle almal gesterwe sonder om die beloftes

te verkry, maar hulle het dit uit die verte gesien en geglo en begroet, en het bely dat hulle vreemdelinge en bywoners op aarde was. Want die wat sulke dinge sê, verklaar dat hulle 'n vaderland soek.

En as hulle bly dink het aan dié vaderland waaruit hulle weggetrek het, sou hulle geleentheid gehad het om terug te keer. Maar nou verlang hulle na 'n beter een, dit is 'n hemelse. Daarom skaam God Hom nie vir hulle om hulle God genoem te word nie, want Hy het vir hulle 'n stad berei.

Deur die geloof het Abraham, toe hy op die proef gestel is, Isak geoffer; ja, hy wat die beloftes ontvang het, het sy eniggeborene geoffer, aan wie gesê is: In Isak sal jou nageslag genoem word - want hy het gereken dat God mag het om selfs uit die dode op te wek; daaruit het hy hom ook, om so te spreek, terug ontvang.

Deur die geloof het Isak vir Jakob en Esau geseën met die oog op die toekoms.

Deur die geloof het Jakob op sy sterfbed altwee die seuns van Josef geseën; en hy het aanbid terwyl hy leun op die knop van sy staf.

Deur die geloof het Josef aan die einde van sy lewe melding gemaak van die uittoeg van die kinders van Israel en bevel gegee aangaande sy gebeente.

Deur die geloof is Moses ná sy geboorte deur sy ouers drie maande lank weggesteek, omdat hulle gesien het dat die seuntjie

mooi was; en hulle het nie die gebod van die koning gevrees nie.

Deur die geloof het Moses, toe hy grootgeword het, geweier om die seun van Farao se dogter genoem te word, omdat hy verkies het om liever sleg behandel te word saam met die volk van God as om 'n tyd lank die genot van die sonde te hê, en die smaad van Christus groter rykdom geag het as die skatte van Egipte, want hy het uitgesien na die beloning.

Deur die geloof het hy Egipte verlaat sonder om die toorn van die koning te vrees, want hy het volgehou soos een wat die Onsienlike sien.

Deur die geloof het hy die pasga gehou en die besprenkeling van die bloed, sodat die verderwer hulle eersgeborenes nie sou aanraak nie.

Deur die geloof het hulle die Rooi See deurgegaan soos oor droë grond, terwyl die Egiptenaars, toe hulle dit probeer, verdrink het.

Deur die geloof het die mure van Jérigo geval nadat daar sewe dae lank omheen getrek was.

Deur die geloof het Ragab, die hoer, nie saam met die ongehoorsames omgekom nie, omdat sy die spioene in vrede ontvang het.

En wat sal ek nog meer sê? Want die tyd sal my ontbreek as ek van Gideon, Barak en Simson en Jefta, Dawid en Samuel en die profete sou verhaai, wat deur die geloof koninkryke oorweldig het, geregtigheid uitgeoefen, beloftes

verkry, bekke van leeu's toegestop, die krag van vuur uitgeblus, die skerpheid van die swaard ontvlug, krag uit swakheid ontvang het, dapper gewees het in die oorlog, leërs van vreemdes op die vlug gedryf het. Vroue het hulle dode deur opstanding teruggekry, en ander is gefolter en wou geen bevryding aanneem nie, om 'n beter opstanding te kan verkry.

Ander weer het die proef van bespottings en gëselings deurstaan, ook van boei en gevangenis. Hulle is gestenig, in stukke gesaag, versoek, deur die swaard vermoor. Hulle het rondgeloop in skaapvelde en in bokvelde; hulle het gebrek gely, hulle is verdruk, mishandel - die wêreld was hulle nie werd nie - hulle het in woestyne rondgedwaal en op berge en in spelonke en skeure in die grond.

En alhoewel hulle almal deur die geloof getuies ontvang het, het hulle die belofte nie verkry nie, omdat God iets beters oor ons beskik het, sodat hulle nie sonder ons volmaak sou word nie.

DAAROM dan, terwyl ons so 'n groot wolk van getuies rondom ons het, laat ons ook elke las aflê en die sonde wat ons so maklik omring, en met volharding die wedloop loop wat voor ons lê, die oog gevestig op Jesus, die Leidsman en Voleinder van die geloof, wat vir die vreugde wat Hom voorgehou is, die kruis verdra het, die skande verag het en aan die regterkant van die troon van God gaan sit het.

HEBREËRS 11:6 - 12:2 (OV)

A Clean Heart for Christmas

In Psalm 51:10, we read, *“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me”* (King James Version). As we celebrate this time of Jesus's birth, let us ask God to reveal to us if there is anything in our hearts that shouldn't be there, like envy, hatred, fear or doubt, so that He can renew a right spirit within us.

In the *Passion Translation* it goes a step further when it says... *“Keep creating in me a clean heart. Fill me with pure thoughts and holy desires, ready to please You.”*

We can ask Him to replace these

wrong things with characteristics like love, kindness, a giving mentality, and thankfulness. He wants to place pure thoughts and holy desires in our hearts. This is not something that we need to do ourselves. God fills us with these things when we ask Him to. It is not a one-time thing. We constantly need to ask God to clean our hearts and fill us with His thoughts and desires. This is why Jesus was sent to the Earth, to cleanse our hearts from all the dirt of this world.

Let's be different this Christmas! Let's stand out! Let us shine “Jesus” to the world!

- Cathrine Venter, 079 842 2588.

Total Surrender

When American evangelist J Wilbur Chapman was in London, he had an opportunity to meet General Booth, founder of the *Salvation Army*, who at that time was past 80 years of age. Dr Chapman listened reverently as the old general spoke of the trials, the conflicts, and the victories he had experienced. The evangelist then asked the general if he would disclose his secret for success. “He hesitated a second,” Dr Chapman said, “and I saw the tears come into his eyes and steal down his cheeks.” Then he said, “I will tell you the secret. **God has had ALL there was of me.** There have been men with greater brains than I, men with greater opportunities; but from the day I got the

poor of London on my heart, and a vision of what Jesus Christ could do with the poor of London, I made up my mind that He would have ALL of William Booth there was. And if there is anything of power and success in the *Salvation Army* today, it is because **God has all the adoration of my heart, all the power of my will, and all the influence of my life.**”

Dr Chapman said he went away from that meeting with General Booth knowing “that **the greatness of a man's power lies in the measure of his surrender.**”

“So then, any of you who does not forsake (renounce, surrender your claim to, give up, say good-bye to) all that he has, cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:33, AMP).

I Hear His Whisper...

“My Beauty is all Around You”

All around you are signs of My love, wisdom, creativity, and beauty. Those who look with expectancy will discover them.

My joy can be heard in the laughter of children.

My whispers stir the rustling leaves on an autumn day. The light of My Face radiates

through every sunrise, and I paint the sunset skies with colours of My love. My promises of breakthrough crash upon the waves.

In voice, music, the gliding of a writer's pen, an artist's stroke, and the movement of dance - each facet of creative expression releases a part of Me. In the breath you breathe, the dreams

you dream, the compassion received through the comfort of another, you will find traces of My love. They are everywhere you look.

Taste and see that I am good!

I not only surround you, I fill you. I have poured My glory into vessels of flesh and blood. The expressions of your amazement

and joy, as you ponder My love, delight Me!

This is how life with Me is meant to be - captivating, delightful, and exciting. I am the majestic Lord of all creation. Come, find Me in the wonder...

- I Hear His Whisper, Brian Simmons and Gretchen Rodriguez

A LOVE THAT LIFTS YOU UP

A friend relayed something so beautiful to me that I just have to share it.

Elmien lives in Oudtshoorn, in the Southern Cape. Adjoining her property is a Juvenile Prison. On Tuesday, 22 November, the youth chapter of a Christian Organization as well as a member of *The Gideons*, a well-known, worldwide Organization that spreads copies of the Bible, attended a special event at this facility.

Each of the young women received a Bible and a gift of toiletries. They were treated on cake and chocolate, but, best of all, two inspirational messages. "It's never too late to start making good choices" was the deeply encouraging theme of the day. And then the Gospel was presented by The Gideons' representative. And, as we all know so well, the Lord says, "So is My word that goes out from My mouth: it will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

The very next day, when Elmien returned home after work, she parked right at the prison wall that separates the two properties. And then she heard singing from behind the wall. She stood there, rooted, listening as the lovely song of Josh Groban floated straight to her heart:

"When I am down
and oh my soul so weary
When troubles come



and my heart burdened be
Then, I am still
and wait here in the silence
Until You come
and sit a while with me
You raise me up
so I can stand on mountains
You raise me up
to walk on stormy seas
I am strong,
when I am on Your shoulders
You raise me up
to more than I can be. "

You may not be incarcerated in prison, but oh, how many heart-aches can trouble our lives and inhibit our spiritual growth.

Beloved, run straight into your Father's arms and sob out your grief. Then, wash your face and take hold of His hand. Go nowhere unless He goes before you.

- Helen du Plessis, 083 332 0895

OUDERDOM...

Ek hanteer ouderdom anders. Baie ouerwordende mense voel hulle lewe is betekenisloos - sonder doel... Hulle wakker-word in die oggend word begroet met 'n gevoel van nutteloosheid.

Ek koppel die lewe beslis aan seisoene, presies net soos dit in die natuur is. Ja, ek is verby die lentetyd in my lewe, die tyd van groei en antwoorde soek. Ook die somertyd met al sy drange en stormagtigheid is vir my verby. Die herfstyd was vir my goed: ek kon reflekteer op my verlede en rustig baie belangrike koers-aanpassings maak.

En nou, nou is ek aan die begin van die winter in my lewe. Volgeprop van al my kennis en ervaring op vele terreine kan ek nou rustig oor alles nadink en dit versigtig met ander deel. Ek sê, "versigtig", want ek waak daarteen om nie beterweterig te wees, en te wil inmeng met ander se sake nie.

Jy kan tog nie vrugte verwag van 'n jong wingerdloot nie? Los hulle om self hulle ranke uit te stoot, en lei hulle liggies deur jou voorbeeld, sodat hulle gesond kan groei en hulself kan vestig.

Grasie. Ek wil met grasie oud word. Ja, stylvol, en vol deernis en begrip. Ek gebruik my stem en woorde deesdae al meer om op te bou en te motiveer. Ek bemoedig en ek troos. Ek vertel my stories en laat ander mense lekker lag.

Die doel van ouer word, is om tyd

aan God se voete deur te bring en Hom voltyds te loof. Ek sê sommer met my wakker-word al, "Dankie, Here". As ek my lekker uitrek, sê ek dankie vir my gesondheid. My eerste koppie koffie drink ek dankbaar dat ek koffie het, en ook dat ek dit kan proe.


Met ons kompleks se tuin wat so 'n lushof is, sê ek dankie vir die skoonheid van die natuur. Ek gooi kossies vir die voëltjies in hulle bak wat aan die boom hang, en verluister my aan hulle geluide. Hoe vrolik sing hulle tog nie?

Ek asem die vars oggendlug in, en sê dankie vir gesonde longe as ek lekker diep in my kampstoel gaan sit. Ek geniet die son wat liggies my vel verwarm, en prys die Here vir Sy aanraking. Die wind wat deur my hare speel, is Sy vingers. Dit laat my glimlag.

Verwelkom die winter in jou lewe, want die tyd vir uiterlike groei en besig wees, is verby. Nou bly net wortelgroei oor, en dit vind ongesiens plaas. Net jy en God weet daarvan. Die stilte is 'n seën, want dit skep die geleentheid vir gesprekke met God. Leef intens bewus van Sy Teenwoordigheid. Toets elke gedagte wat jy koester aan Hom. Bid gedurig, sommer met oop oë, en dank Hom vir elke klein gawe aan jou.

Doelloos en nutteloos? Nee, eerder afgesonder en uitverkore, want dan word elke dag wat ons leef, een tree nader aan God ons Vader!

- Phillip Kotze, Facebook



Kersgedig

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In die stilte van die najaar
Wanneer woel en werskaf wel bedaar
Bedink ons die wonder van Gods Gawe -
Uniek en van oneindig' waarde -
Immanuel woon in by ons.

Hy verdryf satansmag
Kom vestig heerlikheid en prag
Verskuif berge van siekte en dood
Kom gee ons ons daaglikse Brood
En vestig die nuwe eeu met glansryke krag!

Ons harte word weer eens bekoor
Deur die lied van die engelekoor!
Ons besing Sy lof en jubel saam
As ons nederig dink aan die enig' Naam:
Jesus: Redder en Verlosser!

Maak Hom ook j   Immanuel
Jou inwonende Heer
Hy buig Hom nou tot jou neer
Verlig jou binneruim
Verhelder jou bewussyn
En openbaar Sy liefde, rein.

LOVE GOD ABOVE ALL

"If you love your father and mother more than you love Me, you are not worthy of being Mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than Me, you are not worthy of being Mine."

Christ calls us to a higher mission than to find comfort and tranquillity in this life. Love of family is a law of God, but even this love can be self-serving and an excuse not to serve God or do His work.

"If you refuse to take up your cross and follow Me, you are not worthy of being Mine."

To take up our cross and follow Jesus, we must lay down other cares and priorities - only then can we pick up our commitment to Christ. **We should be totally committed to God and willing to face anything, even suffering and death, for His sake.**

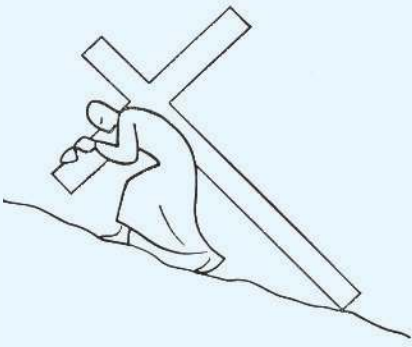
"If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give it up for Me, you will save it."

This verse is a positive and nega-

tive statement of the same truth: clinging to this life may cause us to forfeit the best from Christ in this world AND in the next. The more we love this life's rewards (leisure, power, popularity, financial security), the more we discover how empty they really are.

The best way to enjoy life, therefore, is to loosen our greedy grasp on Earthly rewards and thus to be free to follow Christ (Matthew 16:25). In doing so, we will inherit eternal life and begin at once to experience the benefits of following Him.

[Matthew 10:37-39, Life Application Bible, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1988].



GOD MET ONS

"...en hulle sal Hom Immanuel noem. ' Die Naam beteken God by ons" (Matt. 1:23 NV).

Kersfees herinner ons daaraan dat God by ons is om ons gebrekkige liefde te suiwer. Kersfees leer ons die waarheid van selfopofferende liefde. Christus het na Sy eiendom gekom en Sy eie mense wou Hom nie aanvaar nie. Desnieteenstaande het Hy aan almal wat Hom aanvaar het, die reg gegee om kinders van God te word. Daar was vir Hom geen plek in die herberg nie. Nogtans waarborg Hy 'n plek in die huis van Sy Vader vir elkeen wat Hom liefhet en volg. Hy was verag en deur die mense verlaat. Tog nooit Hy almal wat vermoed en belas is om by Hom rus te kom vind. Hy het die vermo   gehad om van die kruis af te kom en almal uit te delg wat Hom bespot het. Maar Hy sterf aan die kruis ter wille van my en jou sonde. Die haatdraende w  reld gun Hom nie Sy lewe nie, maar Hy belowe met hemelse liefde en genade die ewige lewe aan almal wat in Hom glo. Dit is die taal van Immanuel, God by ons. Daar is soveel liefdeloosheid en haat in die w  reld vandag. Dit vertroebel die verhouding tussen mens en God, en mens en mens. Maar Kersfees kom s   telkens vir ons dat die liefde sal se  vier! Omdat God liefde is, het Hy Sy Seun gestuur. As God ons s   liefhet, moet ons ook mekaar liefh  . Kom ons bely opnuut ons liefde hierdie Kersfees: aan God, aan ons ouers, aan ons lewensmaat en aan ons medemens. D  n word dit waarlik 'n Christusfees. Dankie, God van liefde, dat U toegelaat het dat U liefde in Jesus Christus gestalte vind. Gee aan ons meer liefde deur die werk van die Heilige Gees.

Ons liefde vir God word getoets deur die vraag of ons H  m of Sy gawes soek - Ralph W Sockman.

[Uit: Elke M  re Nuut, Solly Ozrovech, CUM, 1999].

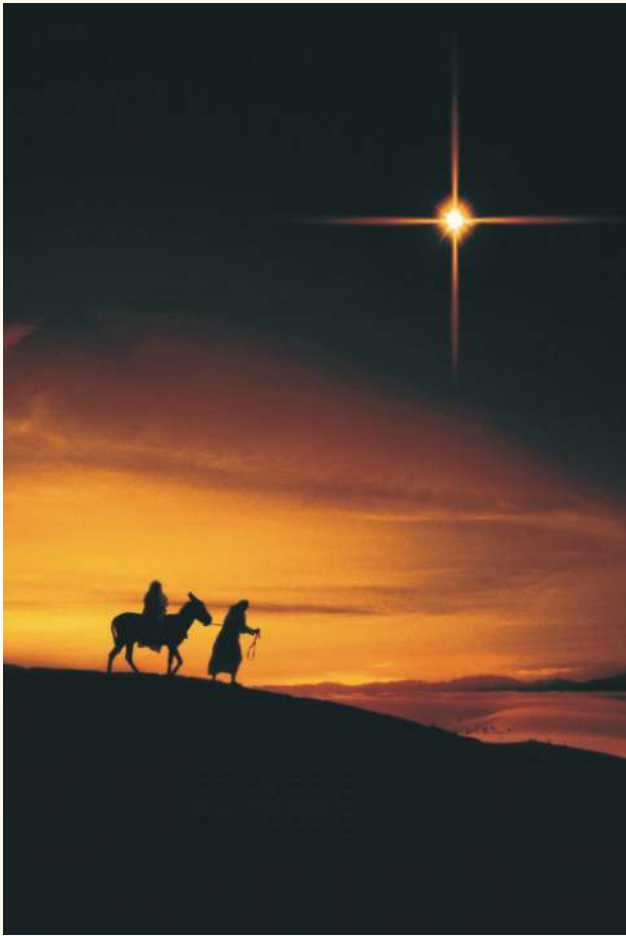
Immanuel

Vierhonderd jaar profetiese stilte is verbreek
God het nou deur Sy Seun gespreek
Die geboorte in die stal
word aangekondig deur engelgeskal...

Herders word gewaar
die teenwoordigheid
van 'n magtige hemelse skaar'
wat jubel en sing
en aan die Verlosser van die wêreld
hulde bring...

Manne uit die Ooste
word deur 'n ster gelei
na die krip
waar 'n Kindjie in liefde gedy
Om die heerlikheid
en genade van God te openbaar
Die Son van Geregtheid
aan die mensdom te verklaar...

Laat ons voor die Almag van Immanuel bewee
'n dieper respek toon vir die lewe
'n fyner begrip vir ander se nood
'n groter honger na die Ewigse Woord...
© Huguene Venter



IS DAAR NOG 'N TOEKOMS?



JA!
EK KOM WEER!
JESUS CHRISTUS

ASSESSING YOUR SPIRITUAL TEMPERATURE

AND TO THE ANGEL (messenger) of the assembly (church) in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the trusty and faithful and true Witness, the Origin and Beginning and Author of God's creation: I know your [record of] works and what you are doing; you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth! For you say, I am rich; I have prospered and grown wealthy, and I am in need of nothing; and you do not realize and understand that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Therefore I counsel you to purchase from Me gold refined and tested by fire, that you may be [truly] wealthy, and white clothes to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nudity from being seen, and salve to put on your eyes, that you may see. Those whom I [dearly and tenderly] love, I tell their faults and convict and convince and reprove and chasten [I discipline and instruct them]. So be enthusiastic and in earnest and burning with zeal and repent [changing your mind and attitude]. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears and listens to and heeds My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will eat with him, and he [will eat] with Me.

He who overcomes (is victorious), I will grant him to sit beside Me on My throne, as I Myself overcame (was victorious) and sat down beside My Father on His throne. He who is able to hear, let him listen to and heed what the [Holy] Spirit says to the assemblies (churches) (Revelation 3:14-22 The Amplified Bible). Laodicea was the wealthiest of the seven cities of Asia, known for its banking industry, manufacturing of wool, and a medical school that produced eye salve. But the city always had a problem with its water supply. At one time an aqueduct was built to bring water to the city from hot springs. But by the time the water reached the city, it was neither hot nor refreshingly cool - only lukewarm. The church had become as bland as the tepid water that came into the city. Lukewarm water is unpalatable. The church in Laodicea had become lukewarm and thus distasteful and repugnant. The believers didn't stand for anything. Indifference had led them to idleness. By neglecting to do anything for Christ, the church had become hardened and self-satisfied. The church was destroying itself. Are you lukewarm in your devotion to God? Some believers falsely assume that lots of material possessions are a sign of God's spiritual blessing. Laodicea was a wealthy city, and the church was wealthy too.

What the Laodiceans could see and buy had become more valuable to them than what is unseen and eternal. Wealth, luxury, and ease can make people feel confident, satisfied, and complacent. But no matter how much you possess or how much money you make, you have nothing if you don't have a vital, living relationship with Christ! Laodicea was known for its great wealth - but Christ told the Laodiceans to buy their gold from Him. The city was proud of its cloth and dyeing industries - but Christ told them that they were naked and should purchase white garments from Him. Laodicea prided itself on its precious eye salve that healed many eye problems - but Christ told them to get medicine from Him to heal their eyes so they could see the truth! Christ was showing the Laodiceans that true value was not in material possessions, but in a right and holy relationship with God. Their (our) possessions and achievements were (are) valueless compared with the everlasting future of Christ's Kingdom! Because the Laodicean church was complacent and rich, they felt fulfilled, but they didn't have Christ's Presence among them! He knocked at the door of their hearts, but they were so busy enjoying worldly pleasures that they didn't notice He was trying to enter. The pleasures of this world -

money, security, material possessions - can be dangerous, because their temporary satisfaction makes us indifferent to God's offer of lasting satisfaction. If you find yourself feeling indifferent to church, to God, or to the Bible, you have begun to shut God out of your life! Jesus is knocking on the door of our hearts every time we sense we should turn to Him. He wants to have fellowship with us, and He wants us to open up to Him. He is patient and persistent in trying to get through to us - not breaking and entering, but knocking. He allows us to decide whether or not to open our lives to Him. Do you intentionally keep His life-changing Presence and power on the other side of the door? [Life Application Bible]. Although very wealthy, this rich church was in actual fact a very poor church in God's estimation! No virtues are recorded, only sins and weaknesses (lukewarmness, spiritual conceit, no conscious need of God, spiritual poverty and spiritual blindness). The church of Laodicea typifies the last days' churches - popular, self-satisfied, worldly churches! [The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible, NIV] "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23, 24 NIV).

Die Verhaal van “Stille Nag”

KERSAAND - in die jaar 1818 - het Franz Grüber, die korrelis van 'n kerkie in die klein dorpie Oberndorf, Bavaria, 'n ontstellende ontdekking gemaak: Die orrel wou nie speel nie!

As gevolg van 'n besonder swaar sneeuval 'n paar dae vantevore, was dit onmoontlik om iemand in die hande te kry om die orrel te herstel. Daar was niemand in Oberndorf wat dit kon herstel nie. Alle aanduidings was dat daar geen musiek op Kersfees sou wees nie! Grüber kon hom beswaarlik 'n Kersfees sonder musiek voorstel. Hy is inderhaas na sy predikant, Joseph Möhr, aan wie hy die slegte nuus meegedeel het. Hy het Möhr versoek om 'n nuwe Kerslied te skryf wat maklik sonder die begeleiding van 'n orrel gesing kon word.

Later, terwyl Möhr besig was om die Kersverhaal in die Bybel te lees... “Dat vir julle vandag in die

stad van Dawid gebore is die Saligmaker...” het die woorde soos 'n hemelse loflied in sy siel opgewel. Tot laat in die nag het hy daarvoor gesit en peins.

Die volle betekenis van die woorde het eindelijk sy siel aangegryp en hy het 'n gedig oor die wonderlike verhaal geskryf. Vroeg die volgende oggend het Grüber die pasgeskrewe woorde geneem en 'n melodie daarvoor gekomponeer.

Die mense het by die kerk vergader. Daar was 'n man wat wysies op die kitaar kon tokkel. Grüber het hom gevra om te begelei terwyl hy en Möhr die nuwe lied vir die gemeente gesing het.

Die mense van Oberndorf het dadelik van die nuwe lied gehou... en só het Joseph Möhr en Franz Grüber aan die wêreld een van sy mooiste en mees geliefde Kersliedere geskenk. Dit was nie lank

nie of die Tiroomse Sangers het die lied na Amerika geneem.

Vir jare het dit onder die titel “Lied van die Hemel” bekend gestaan. Vandag word “Stille Nag, Heilige Nag” in bykans al die tale van die wêreld gesing.

O, mag die ware betekenis van Kersfees ons almal se harte so aangryp soos vir Joseph Möhr! Mag ons tyd neem om na te dink oor die heerlike werklikheid van die bekende Kersverhaal. Christus, die Here, het in die wêreld gekom vir u en vir my...

“Hy het na Sy eiendom toe gekom, en tog het Sy eie mense Hom nie aangeneem nie. Maar aan almal wat Hom aangeneem het, dié wat in Hom glo, het Hy die reg gegee om kinders van God te word. Die Woord het mens geword en onder ons kom woon. Ons



net Sy heerlikheid gesien, die heerlikheid wat Hy, as die enigste Seun van die Vader het, vol genade en waarheid. Uit Sy oorfloed het ons almal genade op genade ontvang” (Joh. 1:11,12,14,16). - Oorgeneem

what goes around comes around

One day a man saw an old lady, stranded on the side of the road, but even in the dim light of day, he could see she needed help. So he pulled up in front of her Mercedes and got out. His Pontiac was still sputtering when he approached her. Even with the smile on his face, she was worried. No one had stopped to help for the last hour or so. Was he going to hurt her? He didn't look 'safe'; he looked poor and hungry. He could see that she was frightened, standing out there in the cold. He knew how she felt. It was that chill which only fear can put in you. He said, 'I'm here to help you, ma'am. Why don't you wait in the car where it's warm? By the way, my name is Bryan Anderson.' Well, all she had was a flat tyre, but for an old lady, that was bad enough. Bryan crawled under the car looking for a place to put the jack, skinning his knuckles a time or two. Soon he was able to change the tyre. But he had to get dirty and his hands hurt. As he was tightening up the lug nuts, she opened the window and began to talk to him. She told him that she was from St. Louis and was just passing through. She couldn't thank him enough for coming to her aid. Bryan just smiled as he closed her trunk. The lady asked how much she owed him. Any amount would have been all right with

her. She already imagined all the awful things that could have happened, had he not stopped. Bryan never thought twice about being paid. This was not a job to him. This was helping someone in need, and God knows there were plenty who had given him a hand in the past. He had lived his whole life that way, and it never occurred to him to act any other way. He told her that if she really wanted to pay him back, the next time she saw someone who needed help, she could give that person the assistance they needed, and Bryan added, 'And think of me.' He waited until she started her car and drove off. It had been a cold and depressing day, but he felt good as he headed for home, disappearing into the twilight. A few miles down the road the lady saw a small cafe. She went in to grab a bite to eat, and take the chill off before she made the last leg of her trip home. It was a dingy-looking restaurant. Outside were two old gas pumps. The whole scene was unfamiliar to her. The waitress came over and brought a clean towel to wipe her wet hair. She had a sweet smile, one that even being on her feet for the whole day couldn't erase. The lady noticed the waitress was about eight months pregnant, but she never let the strain and aches change her attitude. The old lady wondered how someone who had so little could be so giving to a

stranger. Then she remembered Bryan... After the lady finished her meal, she paid with a hundred dollar bill. The waitress quickly went to get change for her hundred dollar bill, but the old lady had slipped right out the door. She was gone by the time the waitress came back. The waitress wondered where the lady could be. Then she noticed something written on the napkin. There were tears in her eyes when she read what the lady had written: 'You don't owe me anything. I have been there too. Somebody once helped me out, the way I'm helping you. If you really want to pay me back, here is what you do: Do not let this chain of love end with you.'

Under the napkin were four more \$100 bills. Well, there were tables to clear, sugar bowls to fill, and people to serve, but the waitress made it through another day. That night when she got home from work and climbed into bed, she was thinking about the money and what the lady had written. How could the lady have known how much she and her husband needed it? With the baby due next month, it was going to be hard... She knew how worried her husband was, and as he lay sleeping next to her, she gave him a soft kiss and whispered soft and low, 'Everything's going to be all right. I love you, Bryan Anderson.'

Love That Sacrifices

During World War II, an enemy submarine approached a fleet of ships in the North Atlantic. The captain of one vessel spotted the white mark of a torpedo coming directly at his ship. His transport vessel was loaded with literally hundreds and hundreds of young soldiers on the way to the European front. He realized they would not have time to maneuver to avoid the torpedo. He grabbed the loudspeaker and cried out, "Boys, this is it!" Nearby, though, a little escorting destroyer also observed the torpedo.

The captain of this destroyer ordered, "Full speed ahead." His ship steamed into the path of the torpedo. The destroyer was blown up; it sank very quickly. Every man on it was lost. The captain of the troop transport ship sadly commented, "The skipper of that destroyer was my best friend."

Now one verse in the Bible has an even deeper meaning for that captain: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend" (John 15:13).

A Christmas Miracle

And Many More Answered Prayers

On the eighth day of December 1948, I was just a baby boy of 17 months. I fell from a three-storey window, and landed on the sidewalk. I was then carried to the hospital where I was pronounced dead.

My grandmother had arrived by the time they were carrying me to the morgue. She told the orderly to unwrap me because I wasn't dead. She said she saw a light shining over my head and saw my toes moving. Indeed I was alive and they rushed me back upstairs.

HE WILL NOT LIVE TO SEE CHRISTMAS

I was very sick and needed brain surgery, but they couldn't do anything to treat me yet because of my fever. On 13 December, 1948, they performed brain surgery. Drs. Duffy Sr., Duffy Jr., and Willis performed the surgery. They all told my parents, "He will not live to see Christmas."

On December 25, Dr. Willis came

out of the delivery room crying. He told my dad that he just delivered a perfectly healthy little boy that died in his arms for no reason. He also told Daddy to take me home, for I would not live long and I deserved to go home.

PRAYERS WERE ANSWERED

The newspaper picked up the story and all of New Bern began to pray for me. My parents and grandparents prayed for me too, and the prayers were answered. I survived. The doctors still did not believe that I would live to be a teenager, but I outlived the doctors. To this day there is only one nurse who had nursed me back to health still alive. Every time she sees me she breaks down and cries.

At age 18 I wanted to join the Army. My doctor told me, "There's no way you'll be able to." He explained that any chance blow to my head could cripple or kill me. I prayed that the doctor would release me and the Army would take me. This happened. I served

my country for three years including one year in Vietnam. People all over prayed for me and I was protected.

MORE ANSWERED PRAYERS

I prayed for a wonderful girl to be my wife and my prayers were answered again. I thank God for her every day. For a year we tried to have a baby, but couldn't. I felt like a failure. We continued to pray and after our seventh anniversary we had a son. My son and my wife almost died the night he was born. People prayed. Sidney survived with no complications.

The doctor told me that it would be impossible for us to have any more children safely. We prayed. Two years and one week later, Rachel was born. Our prayers were answered. Still today I thank God for two wonderful children.

A SECOND CHANCE

At age 52 I had a heart attack. A doctor performed open-heart surgery on me to bypass four

arteries.

While under anaesthesia, I saw a light at the end of the hallway. I got up and walked to it. There was a door there and I opened it and walked in. It was an operating theatre. There I could see my daddy and my mother. (They are both dead now.) They were standing around the table and there was a bright light. There were angels around the room too. I looked on the table and there was a little baby on it. The baby was me. I looked up at my daddy. He looked right at me and said, "It's not your turn, then or now. So, go back."

STILL HERE NOW

I am still here now - loving God. I believe in the power of prayer. I've seen it work. I believe in miracles. I thank God in heaven for His help, guidance, and for giving us power through prayer.

-Robert Smyer

<http://christianity.about.com/od/lossanddying/a/roberttestimony.htm>

CHRISTMAS JOY

The message of Christmas is a constant one. In the midst of the ever-changing world, the vacillations of man and the rise and fall of governments, our hearts cry out for stability.

The message of Christmas inseparably involves Christ. Cancel Christ out of Christmas (Xmas) and you are back to the human, the transient, the instability of a decaying world and world systems, accentuated by the excesses of what is called the "Festive Season".

Christless Christmases have been the excuse and reason for more sin, revelry and unrighteousness than is possible to assess. How many lives, characters, homes and friendships have been ruined in the revelries generally indulged in at Christmas-time. The excuse often offered is: "It is only Christmas once a year."

A Christless Christmas is a dangerous and treacherous thing. The true Christmas, with the emphasis on Christ, is a "Joy to the world". In a strife-torn world it is "Peace on Earth". Amidst the hatred and distrust between individuals and the peoples of the

world, it is "goodwill toward men".

What is very attractive to man about the true Christmas message is its immutability. No season, age, country, tongue or circumstance can change it. Its effectiveness has been proven over a period of more than 2 000 years. It is not seasonal but perennial, not national but international, not selective but universal, not temporary but eternal... To all who believe on Him, the CHRIST of Christmas, He is the LIFE, JOY and PEACE for time and eternity!

May your Christmas be Christ-focused, because then it will be a happy Christmas!



Christmas Is Costly

It cost Mary and Joseph the comforts of home during a long period of exile in Egypt to protect the little Babe.

It cost mothers in and around Bethlehem the massacre of their babies by the cruel order of Herod.

It cost the shepherds the complacency of their shepherds' life, with the call to the manger and to tell the good news.

It cost the wise men a long journey and expensive gifts and changed lives.

It cost the early apostles and the early Church persecution and sometimes death.

It cost missionaries of Christ untold suffering and privation to spread the good news.

It cost Christian martyrs in all ages their lives for Christ's sake.

More than all this, it cost God the Father His own Son - He sent Him to the earth to save men.

It cost Jesus a life of sacrifice and service, a death cruel and unmatched in history!
-Selected

THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS

“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places. All these are the beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:6-8).

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust. Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust: His truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee” (Psalm 91:1-7).

Over the last two thousand years, Matthew chapter 24, which is found in God's Holy Word, has captured the imagination of the followers of Jesus Christ. This chapter, which is set at the Mount of Olives, records Jesus having a discussion with His disciples regarding the condition of the world in the days leading up to the end times. The vivid description from our Saviour indicates that in the perilous times of the earth's final age, the world will be fraught with danger. Matthew 24:6-7 describes **wars and rumours of wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in diverse places**. Although Jesus was describing the events that would transpire at the end of the world, it almost sounds as if He's providing a synopsis for an episode of *“World News Tonight”* in 2022. Our Saviour then warns in verse 8 that the world's condition will worsen, stating, **“All these are the beginning of sorrows.”**

WARS, FAMINES, AND EARTHQUAKES

Without a doubt, wars and rumours of wars have been almost incessant throughout the past two thousand years. Even at this moment, there's a prolonged conflict between Russia and Ukraine, while North Korea makes threats against the United States and its allies, and rumours abound that China could soon invade Taiwan. The possibility of nuclear war has also sparked fresh anxiety in recent weeks, even as concern mounts that the

world could be on the verge of a third global war.

Famine remains a threat, too, especially in the Horn of Africa, where historic drought has decimated crops and animal herds and left an estimated twenty-one million people food-insecure. According to the *World Food Programme*, South Sudan, Yemen, Ethiopia, and Nigeria are the countries most at risk, which prompted the organization to warn that action is desperately needed to **“prevent starvation, death, and the total collapse of livelihoods.”**

What about earthquakes? The world is constantly shaking. As I write this newsletter on 26 November 2022, there have already been forty-three earthquakes today. Over the last thirty days, there have been **9 993** earthquakes. These temblors are so frequent that most are only reported if they are particularly noteworthy. Sadly, such was the case in Indonesia when a 5.6 magnitude quake hit West Java and left at least 318 people dead while injuring 7 729 more. The earthquake also destroyed 58 049 houses. It is shocking and dismaying that one earthquake can inflict so much damage in such a brief amount of time. Nevertheless, all of these earthquakes are leading up to the most severe earthquake the world will ever see when the vials of God's wrath are poured out upon the earth. This is described in Revelation 16:18, which declares, **“And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.”**

HUMAN PESTILENCE

Of all the problems Jesus warned about in Matthew 24, **pestilences** are especially relevant to this present age. The dictionary defines pestilence as **“a deadly or virulent epidemic disease.”** Despite the modern advances of mankind and all of the scientific breakthroughs of the last one hundred years, we still contend with pestilence today. In fact, in these strange times there are multiple pestilences at once.

Between 2014 and 2016, a deadly outbreak of the Ebola virus terrorized much of Western Africa. In total, there were 28 616 infections and 11 310 deaths in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. On 30 September 2014, the first-ever case of Ebola infection in the United States was reported in Dallas, Texas. At the time, this news sent shockwaves through-

out the country as people began to fret about the possibility of a widespread outbreak. Thankfully, God was merciful at that time, and although there were a handful of other cases in the United States, the deadly Ebola virus was contained.

In 2022, Ebola is back and is plaguing the African country of Uganda. Officials in the United States are already conducting exercises to prepare for the possibility that Ebola could again surface in this country. **“It might be just a matter of time. That is why every minute right now is being spent to ramp up the preparedness and response in anticipation of that single event occurring. But the more that we put our time and effort into this stage of the crisis, the better off we'll be when we do get that first case,”** said Lori Tremmel Freeman, who is the chief executive officer at the National Association of County and City Health Officials.

Needless to say, an Ebola outbreak is the last thing that the United States needs right now. The American people are still weary from the Covid-19 pandemic, which wreaked havoc in more ways than one and led to the current economic crisis we must now endure. An Ebola outbreak could be the proverbial straw that breaks the camel's back, so let us hope and pray that God is merciful again.

As for Covid-19, the virus still exists, and it is highly unlikely that it will ever be eradicated. However, we have learned a lot about the virus over the last two years, and we know that terrible mistakes were made in 2020. In the early days of the pandemic, much of Europe, the United States, Australia, and other countries went on lockdown. As a result, businesses closed their doors, unemployment soared, the supply chain collapsed, and people were forced to stay home from work and school. None of these restrictions stopped the virus from spreading. In February 2022, a study published by Johns Hopkins University revealed that the lockdowns of 2020 had a deeply detrimental impact on society. **“We find no evidence that lockdowns, school closures, border closures, and limiting gatherings have had a noticeable effect on Covid-19 mortality,”** the study declares. The study further went on to say that lockdowns **“contributed to reducing economic activity, raising unemployment, reducing schooling, causing political unrest, contributing to domestic violence, and undermining liberal democracy.”** In

other words, the harm inflicted by the lockdowns far outweighed any benefit.

In late November 2022, the liberal news outlet known as *The Washington Post* published an article with a startling admission. According to the article, the majority of the people dying from Covid-19 infections are people who have been vaccinated against Covid. **“It's a continuation of a troubling trend that has emerged over the past year. As vaccination rates have increased and new variants appeared, the share of deaths of people who were vaccinated has been steadily rising. In September 2021, vaccinated people made up just 23% of coronavirus fatalities. In January and February this year, it was up to 42%...”** the article informs. By August 2022, 58% of people who died from Covid had been vaccinated. **“We can no longer say this is a pandemic of the unvaccinated,”** admitted Cynthia Cox, who is vice president at the Kaiser Family Foundation.

ANIMAL PESTILENCE

Between RSV, the flu, Covid, and the common cold, many people are under the weather right now. However, serious pestilences do not affect just humans but animals, too. Avian bird flu has been especially bad this year and has hampered the supply of poultry and eggs at the supermarket. As of November 2022, more than 50 million birds have been wiped out in the United States this year. This outbreak has become **“the worst U.S. animal-health disaster”** in history, according to *Reuters*.

Bird flu has also spread across Europe. The outbreak is so bad there that the government in England has ordered that all poultry and captive birds be kept indoors from 7 November 2022. In total, nearly 50 million birds in Europe have been lost to the flu this year. To make matters worse, bird flu is spreading in Japan, too. The first cases of the disease were reported there on 28 October 2022, and almost three million chickens have been culled since that time. Between the United States, Europe, and Japan, more than **100 million birds** have been lost to avian flu this year. This is a mind-boggling number!

What most people may not know is that humans can be infected by avian flu if they come in close contact with sick birds. Although bird-to-human transmission is very rare, when it does happen, the fatality rate is about **60%**. Given the prevalence of bird flu right now, scientists are worried

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THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS

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that the virus could mutate and become more transmissible to humans. These worries prompted *The Guardian* to publish an article with the headline, “Bird flu is a huge problem now but we’re just one mutation away from it getting much worse.”

As if that’s not bad enough, *MIT Technology Review* reported in November 2022 that a tick-borne illness called theileria is killing cattle in the United States. The illness causes severe anemia in cattle, which can lead to their death and also causes cows to lose their calves before they are born. One veterinarian in Virginia reported that theileria was detected at forty nearby farms in 2020. “We’re having a hard time getting the USDA to pay attention to this because they don’t believe it’s

causing a lot of problems. And that’s like, ‘Wow, you have no idea how many problems it’s causing and how widespread it could be,’” veterinarian Melinda McCall warned. How bad could it get? It should be noted that theileria disease has been circulating in Australia since 2012. It now afflicts 25% of all the cattle there.

We will likely continue to see more pestilence in the days ahead as we move closer to the coming of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. How should we respond to this reality? We should continue to trust in God for salvation and believe that He is able to deliver us from whatever trouble might come. Psalm 91:1-3 declares, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge

and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust. Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.”

In closing, we are certainly living in a time of great heaviness. Because of the difficulties humanity faces today, many have become discouraged. This is especially true among young people. A recent survey of 1 055 members of Generation Z, aged 18 to 24, reveals that 42% have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder. These conditions include anxiety (90%), depression (78%), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (27%), post-traumatic stress disorder (20%), and others. Of those diagnosed with a mental disorder, 57% take medication for their condition. The pandemic certainly didn’t

help matters. However, I strongly suspect that part of the problem is that much of Generation Z has little interest in the things of God. A survey published in March 2022 reveals that Generation Z “is the least religious generation yet.”

No matter what happens, I can say with confidence that we always have hope in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1-2 tells us, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” **If you have not yet repented of your sins and dedicated your life to God, I urge you to do so now!**

- Samuel David Meyer
<http://lasttrumpetnewsletter.org>

The Glasses

Mother's father worked as a carpenter. On this particular day, he was building some crates for the clothes his church was sending to some orphanage in China. On his way home, he reached into his shirt-pocket to find his glasses, but they were gone!

When he mentally replayed his earlier actions, he realized what had happened: the glasses had slipped out of his pocket unnoticed and fallen into one of the crates, which he had nailed shut!

His brand new glasses were heading for China! The Great Depression was at its height and Grandpa had six children. He had spent \$20 for those glasses that very morning. He was upset by the thought of having to buy another pair.

“It's not fair,” he told God as he drove home in frustration. “I’ve been very faithful in giving my time and money to Your work, and now this.”

Several months later, the Director of the orphanage was on furlough in the United States. He wanted to visit all the churches that had supported him in China, so he came to speak one Sunday at my grandfather's small church in Chicago.

The missionary began by thanking the people for their faithfulness in supporting the orphanage. “But most of all,” he said, “I must thank you for the glasses you sent last year.

“You see, the Communists had just swept through the orphanage destroying everything, including my glasses. I was desperate! Even if I had had the money, there was simply no way of replacing those glasses. Along with not being able to see well, I experienced headaches every day, so my co-workers and I were much in prayer about this predicament. Then your crates arrived. When my staff removed the covers, they found a pair of glasses lying on top!”

The missionary paused long enough to let his words sink in. Then, still gripped with the wonder of it all, he continued: “Folks, when I tried on the glasses, it was as though they had been custom-made just for me! I want to thank you for being a part of that.”

The people listened, utterly amazed and grateful for the miracle that was just related by the missionary.

But the missionary surely must have confused their church with another, they thought. There were no glasses on their



list of items to be sent overseas.

Sitting quietly in the back, however, with tears streaming down his face, an ordinary carpenter realized that the Master Carpenter had used him in a most extraordinary way!

[Dunamis July/Aug. 2000].

‘n Baie geseënde Feestyd word u toegebid. Mag die goedheid en genade van ons liefdevolle Vader u hierdie Kersfees met vreugde vervul. Mag u diep in u hart die heerlijkheid beleef van Immanuel - God met ons!

Mag die nuwe jaar u met voorspoed en seën inwag en mag die rus en vrede van Jesus Christus soos ‘n goue koord deur u dae loop om dit te versier te midde van ‘n tyd van storms en ellende.

Mag u in hierdie rustelose, ingewikkelde wêreld geseën wees met die vrede en innerlike vreugde wat slegs Christus kan gee!

- Redaksie, Goeie Nuus