

## THE TRUE JOY OF CHRISTMAS

By John F. Hall

My wife, Paula and I like to decorate the inside and the outside of our house for Christmas. Paula put our small Nativity scene on a low table in the foyer. We purchased the Nativity scene the first year of our marriage, 58 years ago. It was made in Italy. It has



a night-light but the bulb was burned out. We have another Nativity scene in our living room. It is nice with separate statues of Mary, Joseph, Jesus, and the three Wise Men, shepherds, sheep, a cow and a donkey. It fits under a coffee table in the center of the room. It is not lighted. The first outside decoration that I put up is a lighted Nativity Scene. I have it in a porch swing. The porch swing rests on four 16-inch concrete blocks. I cover the swing with white cotton batting and a sheet of angel hair, to make it look snow. It has

statue of Joseph, Mary, the Baby Jesus, a small lamb, and a five-foot tall lighted angel playing a flute. The night light bulb in the Baby Jesus was burned out. So I drove to Cadiz, Kentucky to purchase replacement bulbs. I wrote about that Journey in a story called, "One Second From Eternity." I believe it was Christ that spared my life that day. Living on a hill, the Nativity scene can be seen on my front porch, from the main highway. My friend, Richard Hornbeak calls me a venerable weaver of tales. In this story, I weave in what others have written about Christmas.

I will start with a short piece written by Dianne Cogar called, "Something to Ponder at Christmas Time." These are her words: "As the Christmas season's upon us and children beam with glee, and angels keep a watchful eye, let's pray on bended knee. Let's give our hearts to those in need and lend a helpful hand...so others who have much less are hopeful that God does have a plan. Let's show each other the power of prayer, so prayer will see us through. Let's show the Lord that all he teaches will fuel our wisdom tool. As we give praise to God above, remember to praise each other... and fill the air with song and joy, dear sister and dear bother." Had I lived one hundred years ago, I would have been a lamplighter, because I like to put a little joy and light in this dark world. Nat Simon and Charles Tobias wrote a song called, "The Old Lamplighter." These are their words: "He made the night a little brighter wherever he would go, the old lamplighter of long, long ago. His snowy hair was so much whiter beneath the candle glow, the old lamplighter of long, long ago. You'd hear the patter of his feet as he came toddling down the street. His smile would hide a lonely heart you see. If there were sweethearts in the park. He'd pass a lamp and leave it dark. Remembering the days that used to be, for he recalls when things were new, he loved someone who loved him too. Who walks with him alone in memories? He made the night a little brighter, wherever he would go. The old lamplighter of long, long ago. Now if you look up in the sky, you'll understand the reason why the little stars at night are all aglow. He turns them on when night is here. He turns them off when dawn is near. The little man we left of long ago. He made the night a little brighter wherever he would go, the old lamplighter of long, long ago." In 2 Corinthians, Chapter 4, Verse 6, are these words: "For God Who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to bring to light the knowledge of the glory of God on the face of Jesus Christ."

Dennis and Valerie Rousseau wrote a poem called, "Jesus You're My Guiding Star." These are their words: "Jesus, You're my guiding star shining brightly from afar...You light my path when it is dim, restoring my soul when life seems grim. You'll my beacon in the night that gives strength and hope to fight. Your quiet counsel gives me rest...when I am weary from life's tests. Jesus, you're my ray of hope that calms my feet and helps be cope, and when anxiety plagues my heart...Your healing words make stress depart. Thank you, Savior, for mercy and grace, that by Your death my sins are erased. Your resurrection has given me... Salvation and life eternally."

Clay Harrison wrote a short piece called, "The Greatest Gift." These are his words: Christmas is the gift God gave us when He sent down His Son, to come and dwell among us until Love's work was done. He was a blessing in a bundle born in a manger bed, and angels lit a brand-new star to shine above His head. It was the gift that keeps on giving as centuries come and go, for we know that He's still living and our hearts are aglow. As we celebrate His birthday, each in his own way. We send greetings to all nations proclaiming Christmas Day. Families are closer when the holidays draw, remembering lost loved ones who are no longer here. In peace times, and troubled times as well, we worship the Lord above, for Christmas is the greatest gift since God sent us His Son with love."

I enjoy looking out my living room window and seeing the Nativity scene, lit up on my front porch. Maybe some traveler on the distance highway might see my lighted Nativity scene. Rosemarie Freitag wrote a short piece called, "Nativity Scene." These are her words: "The Christ Child of Bethlehem resting on the hay, bringing peace and love to men, showing us His way. Blessed Mother, meek and mild, sheltering in the stall, cradling her tiny Child come to save us all. Humble Joseph, pure and chaste, gazing at the sight. To the stable he made haste on this natal night. Lowly shepherds tending sheep worship and adore, cattle to the manger creep, lowing at the door. Wise Men traveling from afar journey to the site, following the lustrous star, guided by its light. Angels herald in the sky the advent of the Hosts of seraphim on high their alleluias sing. Happy Birthday, Baby Jesus. From Your humble bed of hay, grant Your peace and good will to us on this Holy Christmas Day."

In John, Chapter 12, Verse 46, are these words: "I came into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in Me might not remain in darkness." I believe that the true joy of Christmas is found in our faith, our family, and our friends. I'll end this story with a short piece by Frances Wolfe called, "Christmas is Jesus." These are her words: "Christmas is Jesus who came down to earth in the form of a baby, came to offer new birth. Christmas is music with singing and praise. Christmas is sharing, in numerous ways. Christmas is holly, with tinsel and lights. Christmas is joyful with bright colored sights. Christmas is giving, when God gave His Son, to offer redemption, for the wrong we have done. We need to accept Him, this gift from above. For Christmas is Jesus, God's promise of love." John F. Hall

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