

# Hope In God...



We have been recently reminded of the fact that we live in a broken world. A very broken world. It seems sin, pain and tragedy cuts a little deeper during the holidays, doesn't it? Sometimes these things overshadow holiday joy completely. Some make futile attempts to temporarily forget the hurt and the brokenness – to pretend that it's not really there. "Let's think happy thoughts about pretty packages and snow and things that won't really heal the hurt, but might suffice as a bandage. For a moment."

In reality, the truth found in the Christmas story shouldn't lead to despair or depression at all, but rather to hope and joy. But for many, the message "peace on earth and good will toward men" means making some attempt at working up some kind of inner tolerance which says "Let's all just get along with each other." While an admirable goal, it's only part of the story. The angel started his message to the shepherds by declaring he had "good news of great joy."

That news – the birth of a Savior. That Savior – the hope of nations.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set free those who are oppressed."

What is breaking our hearts? What is being suppressed so we can get through one more Christmas? What past memories spoil the joy of the present? That's why He came. It wasn't just so we would have a sentimental picture to grace the front of Christmas cards. It wasn't for the obligatory nativity set that's never front and center, and is sometimes removed all together to make room for gifts and the shiny stuff.

Whether broken by circumstances, broken by sin, broken by others, broken for others or just plain broke, Jesus was born to die for us.

For some reason, this year it seems like there is a daily showing of the Christmas movie "Elf" on some television station. Some folks love the movie, others hate it. In the end, it's about a group people desperately trying to work up enough "Christmas spirit" to get Santa's sleigh off the ground. Good News flash: we don't have to do that. We have a hope that's steadfast and not dependent on how we feel. Let's switch from "Santa Clause is coming to town" to some of the Christmas carols we sing, sometimes perhaps without thinking.

*"No more let sin and sorrows grow, or thorns infest the ground. He comes to make His blessing known, far as the curse is found"*

*"O come Thou Dayspring come and cheer our spirits by Thine advent here. And drive away the shades of night and pierce the clouds and bring us light...make safe the way that leads on high and close the path to misery."*

*"Hail the heaven born Prince of Peace! Hail, the Sun of Righteousness. Light and life to all He brings, risen with healing in His wings. Mild He lays His glory by, born that man no more may die. Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth!"*



*"How silently, how silently the wondrous Gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His  
heaven. No ear may hear His coming, but in this  
world of sin, where meek souls will receive Him,  
the dear Christ enters in."*

*"And ye, beneath life's crushing load, whose  
forms are bending low. Who toil along the  
climbing way with painful steps and slow. Look  
now! For glad and golden hours come swiftly on  
the wing. Oh, rest beside the weary road and hear  
the angels sing."*

*"Why lies He in such mean estate where ox and ass are  
feeding. Good Christian fear for sinners here the silent Word  
is pleading. Nails, spear, shall pierce Him through, the cross be  
borne for me, for you. Hail, hail the Word made flesh. The babe,  
the son of Mary."*

These are some of the least recognized and often skipped verses of familiar carols. The truth is rich. Whether you are tired of Christmas or just tired. Sick or sick of it. If your wounds are too deep for words and you can't pretend happiness another day; if you've given up on yourself or someone else. It is the season for giving. We can give God our wounds, our broken hearts or broken lives, our concern for those dear to us and their broken hearts and broken lives. We can give him our fears and anxiety. We can give Him our disappointments and yes, even our disappointment with Him. What does God want for Christmas? Certainly He doesn't want these things. He must want our prayers and our service and our sacrifice. But He invites us to give all of these things to Him. He simply wants us, with all our flaws and brokenness. The Christmas message is for those times when we can't get there by ourselves. It is a message of peace, yes. Joy, yes. But dear friends and family, never forget it is a message of hope.

So this Christmas our prayer is voiced by David.

*Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you in turmoil within me?  
**Hope in God**; for I shall again praise him,  
my salvation and my God.  
Psalm 42:11*

From the Anderson home to yours,  
Merry Christmas

Bernie, Renee  
Jonathan and Cori

