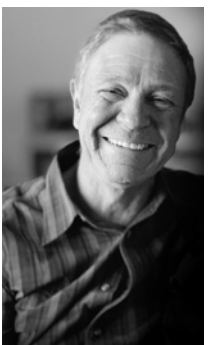




MERRY CHRISTMAS
& Happy New Year

THIS
CHRISTMAS
LET US PRESS
IN AFRESH TO
HIS PRESENCE



FROM
JOHN'S
HEART
TO
YOURS

There have been many stories of sad losses and huge difficulties over the past years as we all faced different consequences of the fallout in the world.

As if Covid was not enough, the world is facing wars and rumours of wars and not in my memory has there been a time of such instability, infighting and division in governments and nations.

Of all these things we have been warned and no doubt it is time to look up and read the times.

I can remember back in the nineteen seventies and eighties how the arrival of the "Day of the Lord" was announced with great confidence and the date would come and go. It seems there is still no shortage of predictions as to

when He will return, despite Jesus saying that only the Father knew when it would be.

All we can say, is that it is closer now than ever before!

I don't think further thoughts of escapism are going to bring peace to our souls, nor another favourite end time theory, of which there are many.

I am fully persuaded that this Christmas, we have all we need in order to know His peace that passes understanding and for us to already live in His presence, which we also

know will be for eternity, no matter what transpires.

I visited last night with a couple in hospital. She lost her father to Covid just a year ago and in real terms her mother is no longer with us as a consequence of what appears to be early onset dementia.

The reason we were visiting in hospital was to see her husband who is paralysed from the chest down following a recent motor bike accident which almost took his life.

We were in the intensive care ward, and she calmly went about feeding him, massaging his arm which is not working and putting boots on his limp feet so that he does not get a dropped foot.

They looked lovingly at each other so many times during the visit, so grateful that he was still alive.

She on the other hand, was diagnosed with breast cancer a few months ago before his accident, but the head covering hiding her hair loss as a result of ongoing chemotherapy, was not enough to even dent the glory of the Lord shining out of that face.

She rushed home afterwards to make sure she was in time to get her four young daughters to bed. One of them, adopted, has severe cerebral palsy and needs permanent attention.

I can't hide my tears as I write this.

Those of you who know them, know of whom I am speaking and will understand what I mean when I say that it is only their remarkable faith and the presence of the Lord with them that makes this possible.

In the midst of all this trauma, they tell me of how good God has been to them and of the little miracles along the journey. They wear the face of Jesus in the presence of all these setbacks and talk of His goodness despite it all.

Nobody has an answer as to why a God-fearing family should have been so attacked. We lamely quote Job but it's a feeble attempt

to explain how the enemy got at blood washed believers who are serving Jesus faithfully.

Many people run away from the Lord in times of difficulty. They did not.

As I hear them discuss the hope of graduating from a hospital bed to a wheelchair and how he is going to convert the car so he can drive, yet still trust for recovery of the spinal nerves, I realize that in the Presence of the Lord all is well.

God really can work all things together for His glory and the Jesus I saw in them last night is alive and well.

Circumstance cannot rule us ever!

So, this Christmas, let us press in afresh to His Presence.

Look for the daily miracles and remember what Paul said to the Romans:

³⁸ And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. ³⁹ No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38–39 NLT)

Can we ever be grateful enough for the salvation we have received in Christ Jesus?

Will 'thank you' ever be sufficient?

When the childhood joy of Christmas fades and you find yourself just going through the motions, I plead with you, remember the glorious Saviour who came to earth, who lived among us and then shed His blood for our sin that we might be born again into an eternal

Kingdom, to live in the Presence of an eternal King.

¹⁶ Always be joyful. ¹⁷ Never stop praying. ¹⁸ Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. (Thessalonians 5:16–18 NLT)

May you have a very blessed and joy filled Christmas in the Presence of the Everlasting King, born a child, raised a son, but with the government on His shoulder, now an everlasting Father.

The very Prince of Peace!

John



KINGDOM CLIP DEC 2022

TONY FITZGERALD

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree!

Germany is credited with starting the Christmas tree tradition as we now know it in the 16th century when devout Christians brought decorated trees into their homes. Some built Christmas pyramids of wood and decorated them with evergreens and candles if wood was scarce. It is a widely held belief that Martin Luther, the 16th-century Protestant reformer, first added lighted candles to a tree. Walking toward his home one winter evening, composing a sermon, he was awed by the brilliance of stars twinkling amidst evergreens. To recapture the scene for his family, he erected a tree in the main room and wired its branches with lighted candles.

Today we bring that bare tree into our homes and towns and within hours it is decorated and surrounded with gifts.

Some years ago while preparing a Christmas message, I saw the Christmas Tree as a picture of a different tree that would form a cross and stand on a hill to hold the greatest gift ever given. That wooden cross released the gift of Salvation to all humanity, the door to abundant gifts for all. I have never seen a Christmas tree the same again.

Whether your tree this year is surrounded by much or little, and the year has brought joy or sorrow



or a mixture of both remember the tree two thousand years ago was used to release Father's gifts of love, joy, peace and much more that will never cease.

Have a blessed Christmas celebrating with family & friends

Tony & Marilyn



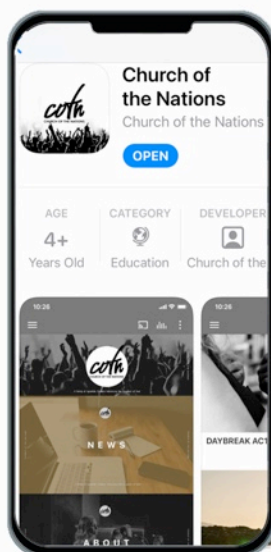
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