



NON-PROFIT



TAX-EXEMPT

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” MARK 16:15

December 2021

FROM US TO YOU

In this crazy, mixed up world we live in today, Christmas brings back memories of a softer, sweeter time. We are nostalgic about the days when people had more respect for God, when Department stores played Christmas carols that gloried Christ, not Santa Clause, when parents read the Christmas story to their children from the Bible, and when people felt an inner joy glorifying God for that special day, the birth of Christ. *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved”* (John 3:16-17 KJV). Unfortunately, that kind of joy is not the reality of the world we live in today. For Satan is running this world at the present time. That will not be for much longer. For he doesn't have much time left (Revelation 12:12). Nevertheless, Christmas is a sad time for those who feel left out because they don't have the peace and love of knowing Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. They don't know what those who love Christ have, *“...the peace of God, which transcends all understanding... in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:7 NIV).

The inner warmth and glow in the heart that only comes from God is something that those who don't know Christ have never experienced. They only know the temporary satisfaction that carnal things provide; a new car, appliance, a new set of golf clubs, etc. Consequently, there is a growing segment of society that either cannot legally obtain such worldly things or is not satisfied with what they have. It eats away at them spiritually, because carnal things do not satisfy. That's why Jesus said, *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (Matthew 6:19-21 NIV). Christmas time is a season in which the devil is especially active. Murders, accidents, burglaries, and assaults often increase. The first year that we were married in 1980, we were burglarized at Christmas time. The police said it was done by amateurs because the thieves used a crowbar on the door. We had planned to spend Christmas with Anne's family. However, we couldn't leave the apartment as we had a broken door. So, Anne's family came to us, presents and all, and everyone was crammed into our small apartment.

Unfortunately, society permeates the attitude that Christmas is a time of self-indulgence starting with the myth of Santa Clause. Tiny tots are taught to believe that Christmas is a time they are supposed to get what they want. That is the wrong message to start life! So those who are suffering through hard times economically, see others getting good things at Christmas and it builds up a resentment in them that leads to crime. About a decade ago there was a

blackout in a certain city. That resulted in looters brazenly emptying out an appliance store. Television cameras filmed them as criminals proudly walked out of the store, carrying their loot. One of the men looked directly into the camera and with a grin on his face, exclaimed, “This is like Christmas!”

Anne remembers the best Christmas event of her childhood. She was a teenager. The church her family attended had a tradition each Christmas Eve. They piled hay on the floor of a pick-up truck for those who chose to sit down. Then they drove around to the homes of elderly and handicapped people who were not able to attend the church. Anne remembers how they all went into the people's homes spreading true Christmas cheer, singing Christmas carols that glorified God. The New York December chill made everyone's bodies cold, but their hearts were warm with excitement. Then they returned to the church for steaming mugs of hot chocolate and games. Anne doesn't remember what she got for Christmas those years. But the joy of sharing the love of Christ with those who needed some was something she will always remember and cherish.

The holiness of Christmas is undervalued these days because people don't appreciate the cost of our salvation. That's because sin is a word you hardly hear about through most medias. It is laughed about in entertainment and seldom mentioned in most churches. Whatever is socially correct is what folks keep hearing about. So, people don't realize how far sin separates us from God, and how much it costs to repay. People get the idea that good works washes away sin. It does not! As the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus, *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV).

Isaiah wrote, *“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away”* (Isaiah 64:6 NIV). The only way we can escape spending forever in Hell and the Lake of Fire (Luke 16:24, Mark 9:47-49, Revelation 20:14) is through repentance of sin (Matthew 4:17) and accepting the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. Larnelle Harris used to sing a song that expounds on this theme. Here are the words to [“Much Too High A Price.”](#)

“Your love endured the cross, despising all the shame. That afternoon when midnight fell. Your suffering cleared my name. And that sin-swept hill became the open door to paradise, because you paid so high a price. You paid much too high a price for me, Your tears, Your blood, the pain. To have my soul just stirred at times, yet never truly change. You deserve a fiery love that won't ignore Your sacrifice. Because You paid much too high a price.” This Christmas season let's screen out all the noise and idolatry and put the holiness of Christ back into Christmas.

Have a nice Christmas everyone, *Eric and Anne Kaestner*



Behold Your King

By Anne Kaestner

My favorite Christmas carol is “O Holy Night” when it is sung with a Holy Spirit anointing. I have heard the song sung by many artists and I was disappointed with most, even singers who are considered big “stars” in this world. For, as Jesus stated, *“No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money”* (Luke 16:13 NIV). However, when it is sung as it was intended to be sung, I feel as if God is in the room with me. I sense a serenity, a peace and an inner joy bubbling up within me that nothing in this world can match or destroy. Oh yes, the devil will attack chronically. Yet it is overshadowed with a sense of confidence that no matter what happens, God will prevail in the end. *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose”* (Romans 8:28 NIV). It reminds me of scripture like Paul’s words of encouragement to the suffering Roman church. In those days, the church was mightily persecuted. For Caesar was considered their god and leader, and king. No other being was supposed to be higher or more worthy of worship than he was. Consequently, they were forced to make a choice of whom they would worship. Paying their taxes and obeying righteous laws was no problem. Jesus said, *“... ‘Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s’...”* (Mark 12:17 NIV). And the apostles had taught them to obey the laws of the land as long as they did not conflict with the laws of God (Romans 13:1-5).

However, this was different. The Christians knew that no one was to come before God in their hearts. As the commandment said, *“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me”* (Exodus 20:2-5 NIV). And they knew that, *“...there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time”* (1 Timothy 2:5-6 NIV). So, the church was persecuted. Christians were crucified, fed to lions, attacked by wild beasts, and stoned to death. Parents were made to watch while their children were tortured if they did not renounce Christ. To be a Christian in those days could get you imprisoned or executed. Paul had the job of encouraging them. He wrote to them saying, *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:35-39 NIV).

The book of Revelation is a futuristic account of what the Bible tells us will happen to everyone who is left behind after Jesus comes back for His righteous church at the time of the Rapture (1 Corinthians 15:52-55). The books kept by a special type of angels called the “watchers” will be opened. They will have a record of everything everyone has done on this earth, including every sin that has been committed. And those who have sins that have not been paid for

will be thrown into the Lake of Fire, which is in Hell. They will burn there forever. You see some of the Lake of Fire every time a volcano erupts and spews hot liquid fire out of its top. The apostle John described what happened in Heaven when God saw that *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23 NIV). All were destined for Hell and would not enjoy the glories of Heaven that were seen in the throne room of God. However, there was a scroll of the names people for whose sins were already paid. Yet no one had been worthy to open the scroll. And John described what happened. He says, *“...I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?’ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals’”* (Revelation 5:1-5 NIV).

John had seen the desperation of the situation and how hopeless it seemed to be. However, that all changed because someone was found worthy to break the seals and open the scroll and look at the names which were written in it. Then John describes the person who appears metaphorically as a lamb that had been slain. *“He came and took the scroll from the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. And when He had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth’”* (Revelation 5:7-10 NIV). Obviously, the lamb was Christ. That’s what John the Baptist proclaimed when he saw Jesus, *“...Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29 KJV).

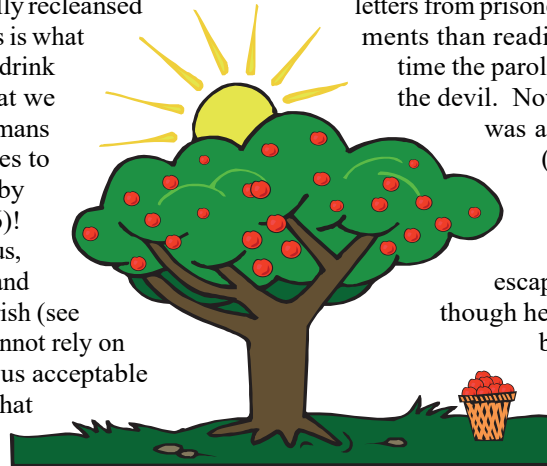
It’s why *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12 NIV). Mohammad didn’t pay for your sin. Buddha didn’t pay for your sin. The Pope didn’t pay for your sin. No one but Christ loved you enough to do that! And no one but Christ can save you! During the Christmas season nativity scenes abound. Mary and Joseph are seen looking on as the baby Jesus rests on a pile of hay in a manger. It is easy to conclude that the manger was turned into a crib because, since they had to stay in a barn (see Luke 2:7), that was the safest and most comfortable place for a baby to be. However, there’s a more important reason than that! A manger is a feeding trough for animals, especially sheep and cattle. Remember what Jesus said to His disciples. After handing them some bread, He said, *“... ‘Take and eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is My blood...’”* (Matthew 26:26-28 NIV). Jesus was placed in the manger for us, for we are His sheep (Isaiah 53:6 and John 10:7-15), and He was to become our spiritual nourishment! But eating and drinking from the body of Christ must be a continual endeavor (2 John 1:9). When Jesus was on earth He had lots of followers. They saw Him as a source



through which they could attain the things that they wanted (Matthew 4:24). Yet there came a day when *“Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me’”* (John 6:53-57 NIV). What was Jesus saying? Was He talking about cannibalism? Of course not!

The Lord was telling His followers that it was not enough for them to just tag along behind Him. He had to become their total sustenance! They had to depend on Him to guide them by faith (Romans 3:22). He had to be their light in a dark place (2 Corinthians 4:6), their strength when they were weak (1 Timothy 1:12 and 1 Peter 4:11), their compass when they were lost (Psalm 23:2-3), their bread when they were hungry (John 6:35), and their living water, from which they would never thirst again (John 4:14). So, what was the response of the crowd? *“From this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him”* (John 6:66 NIV). Even after we are Born Again (John 3:3) and cleansed from our sin (John 15:3), we are still living in the devil’s domain (Matthew 4:8-10 and Ephesians 2:2). Therefore, we are continually being recontaminated. That’s why the only way that we can survive in this depraved, sinful world (see Psalm 14:2-3, 53:1-3) is to be perpetually recleansed through Christ (John 13:8-10, 15:3-4). This is what Jesus was talking about when He told us to drink His blood and eat His flesh. He meant that we must unceasingly crucify our old nature (Romans 6:6 and Galatians 2:20) that constantly tries to resurface in our hearts, and we must live by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7 and Hebrews 11:6)! Unless we receive our nourishment from Jesus, we will not produce good fruit (John 15:5), and unless we bear good fruit we will surely perish (see John 15:2, 6 and Romans 11:21-22)! We cannot rely on good works or human endeavors to make us acceptable to God. For it is not what a person does that makes him a sinner. It is his heart that is corrupt! Jesus gave an example of this in Matthew 5:27-28. Evil actions are the symptoms of sin, not the disease itself. Despite what mankind wants to believe, the human *“...heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked...”* (Jeremiah 17:9 KJV).

If the tree is bad, the fruit that comes from the tree will also be bad (Matthew 7:18-19). And obviously, good fruit isn’t going to result from a tree that is “deceitful and desperately wicked!” This is why we need *“...the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ...”* (Philippians 1:11 NIV). This world judges everything by its external appearance, but only God can see into the secret recesses of the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). That’s why we need His Spirit working through us, or we can be easily deceived. For *“there is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death”* (Proverbs 14:12 NIV). Therefore, whenever we, as Christians, take our eyes off of Jesus and become distracted by the world (1 John 2:15-17), Satan is able to deceive us, for we see only that which is on the surface. When that occurs, the devil can cause us all kinds of grief! He plants thoughts in our minds and they fester there and grow into a resentment toward God and toward our neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40). Then we fall so far from His Light, that we stumble in the darkness (John 3:19-21), blinded (Luke 6:39) from the Truth (John 14:6). And fruit cannot grow in darkness, it needs light (2 Corinthians 4:6 and 1 Peter 2:9)! The problem is that even Christians want to have total control over the course their lives will take. They want to pick and choose what



they will and will not do for God. But it doesn’t work that way! He is the Potter and we are the clay (Isaiah 29:16, 64:8 and Jeremiah 18:4-6). So, the only way that we can please Him is to let go of the steering wheel, jump into the back seat, and let the Holy Spirit be our driver and navigator! Moses told the Hebrews, *“...Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you to day... The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still”* (Exodus 14:13-14 NIV). Christians get busy, busy, busy, trying to fight off what they perceive to be the devil’s attacks (Luke 8:14). However, the Almighty has said, *“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth”* (Psalms 46:10 NIV).

Jesus told His disciples, *“Have faith in God... I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what He says will happen, it will be done for him”* (Mark 11:22-23 NIV). Also, see John 15:16). What is the mountain? It is that obstacle that Satan is using to thwart the plan of God in the lives of those who are wholly dedicated to His service! In the case of Joshua, it was the walls of Jericho (Joshua 6:2-20 and Hebrews 11:30), with Samson it was the Philistine army (Judges 15:14-16), and with Moses it was charging Egyptian chariots (Exodus 14:26-31). They were that mountain that was getting in the way of God and causing problems for those who love and serve Him. We sometimes receive letters from prisoners who spend more time studying legal documents than reading the Bible! They are so sure that every time the parole board turns them down it is an attack from the devil. Now what if Joseph had thought that way? He was assaulted by his brothers and sold as a slave (Genesis 37:20-28). Yet, if Joseph had taken the same attitude as most Christians today, he would have spent all of his time trying to escape. But it wasn’t God’s will for him to escape (Genesis 50:20 and Romans 8:28)! Even though he was a slave, Joseph had peace in his heart, because he knew that he belonged to God. Therefore, so did his problems! And Joseph was content to let God work things out for him. However, God usually doesn’t work on the same time schedule that we would choose. He has a better plan! But we must be patient and wait on Him (Psalm 27:14 and Luke 12:22-34), or it will not work!

Joseph didn’t know why God had allowed such awful things to happen to him. He didn’t comprehend all the spiritual ramifications involved, but he trusted God anyway (see Proverbs 3:5-7)! Now I want you to notice something else about this. When we put our hope and faith in Jesus, our situation doesn’t always improve right away. Sometimes it gets worse! Joseph went from being a well-respected slave to an imprisoned slave (Genesis 39:20). Nevertheless, it didn’t diminish his faith no matter how bleak the circumstances, or how dark his situation became (2 Samuel 22:29 and Isaiah 42:16). For the darkest part of the night comes right before the dawn! As a result, the Lord made Joseph the second most important man in all of Egypt! Through him, all of his brothers were saved from starvation. However, before God could trust him with such an important position, Joseph first had to prove that he trusted God! The Lord wants to be glorified through us! So, what He often does is to say to Satan, *“Go ahead, attack My servant. He is strong enough in Me, that I know He can take it.”* (See Job 1:8-12 and Luke 22:31-32.) That’s when Satan strikes at us with all kinds of afflictions. Everything seems to go wrong. All looks totally hopeless as far as human perception is concerned. Then, just at that moment when Satan thinks he’s got us cornered, God gets involved! And when He does, He doesn’t always take away **(Continued On Page 4)**

our problem, or stop the attack. He delivers us right in the midst of the devil's territory! Then He says to Satan, "You did the best you could to attack My servant, but no matter what you tried to do, My child, who loves Me, and depends on Me, will be victorious in Me! That's because his faith is not built on the sinking sand (Matthew 7:26) of your filthy, rotting world system (Matthew 6:19-20 and 1 John 2:17). It is built on the Rock of My Son (2 Samuel 22:47 and 1 Corinthians 10:4)! And "...the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18 KJV)!"

We Christians miss out on so much when we refuse to trust God and to wait patiently on Him (Psalm 37:7). The Lord doesn't want you to take matters into your own hands, using all the carnal techniques and weapons available through human means. Because, as Christians, "*the weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds*" (2 Cor. 10:4 NIV). What strongholds? Demonic strongholds! "*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but ...against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*" (Ephesians 6:12 NIV). These forces are not human. They are fallen angels (Revelation 12:9), demon spirits! You can't see them, but they exist in the spirit realm. Unregenerated humans are just pawns that are manipulated or influenced by powerful demonic forces who plan their strategy very well. That's why, when you try to fight them with human weapons, you will lose! "...*This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's'*" (2 Chronicles 20:15 NIV). So "*let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up*" (Galatians 6:9 NIV).

The problem is that people don't understand who Jesus is. They think He was just a prophet mentioned in the Bible. I remember once talking to a man who believed that we all descended from a bunch of aliens who came here from another planet long ago. He said he read about it in some book. Knowing that I am a Christian and a Bible believer, he told me he could prove it to me. He said, "Doesn't the Bible say, "*Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, in Our likeness...'*" (Genesis 1:26 NIV). "Yes," I agreed. "Then who is the 'we' and the 'us'?" he asked me confidently. "God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit," I replied. He suddenly looked amazed and lost his confidence. "But Jesus wasn't born yet," he stated. I responded by saying, "Jesus said, "*...Before Abraham was, I am*" (John 8:58 KJV)." The man didn't say anything, but walked away looking dumbfounded. God made a similar statement when He said, "*Come, let Us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other*" (Genesis 11:7 NIV). Jesus fulfilled all the prophecy regarding the Messiah. He was Jewish. He was born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). He would suffer great thirst (Psalm 22:15). His hands and feet would be pierced (Psalm 22:16). Those who crucified Him would cast lots for His clothing (Psalm 22:18). And there is much more. John 1:1-14 makes it clear who Jesus is. It says, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John [the Baptist]. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through Him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; He came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the*

world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to that which was His own [Jews], but His own did not receive Him. Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-14 NIV). Proverbs 8:22-36 speaks of the love between God the Father and God the Son and Their excitement at creating a new world for us to live in. Jesus said, through Solomon, "*Then I was the craftsman at His side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in His presence, rejoicing in His whole world and delighting in mankind*" (Proverbs 8:30-31 NIV). John chapter 17 tells us what Jesus prayed about to His Father, knowing the humiliation, horror and agony He was about to suffer for us.

Nevertheless, the Bible tells us about the overflowing joy in Heaven the day Jesus was born. The angels enthusiastically announced Christ's birth to shepherds (Luke 2:8-13). Then there's the excitement of the three kings (Matthew 2:10-11). Evidently great enthusiasm was felt in Heaven! How many loving parents would want their child to live such a life? Yet, "*...God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16 KJV). That does not mean that God loves this world system (1 John 2:15-

17). No. It means that God saw the pitiful state of the human race and had compassion for us, knowing that "*We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to*

his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6 NIV). How many children, if you were to ask them what they want to be when they grow up, will say, "I want to be despised and rejected by my own race. I want to be treated with contempt in my own hometown, suffer many sorrows, and be betrayed by a friend. I want to be tortured by strangers, mocked by leaders of my own faith, and publicly humiliated. Then I want to be beaten with a whip, crowned with thorns, and nailed to a cross naked until I slowly die in agony?" The question is ludicrous because all of this is the very antithesis of the natural desires of the human heart. However, that was the life of Jesus Christ (see Mark 6:1-3, 14:43-46,

Matthew 26:38, 26:67-68, 27:26-31)! Yet all Heaven was joyful at the birth! Why? Because God the Father loves us so much that He was willing to allow "*...His only begotten Son*" (John 3:16-17 KJV) to leave all the glories of Heaven and come into a world that despises Him (Isaiah 53:3), to die in our place, so that through Him, we will escape an eternity in Hell and be reinstated to God.

My favorite line in "O Holy Night" is "Behold your King!" No one was ever so worthy to be our King! No one ever did so much for us as Christ did. Despite the problems of this world that Satan and we humans have brought on ourselves, there is still hope in Christ, and a new beginning with God. "*And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:5-8 NIV). Christ suffered and died for those who hated Him, because His love for us is so great! However, who do people think about at Christmas time? Santa Clause! Considering all this, isn't it better to tell your children that they are important enough to our Creator that He who put the planets and stars in the sky, and made all that is good on this earth, loved them enough to die in their place?

