



T'was the season to wish family, friends and even strangers Merry Christmas. Time and again we heralded this greeting to others and they in turn to us. Now that the gifts have been opened, the relatives have left and the holidays are over, let us reflect. Was Christmas merry? Was our soul filled with joy this past Christmas season?

If our joy depended on a plump old man bringing gifts to everyone based upon how naughty or nice we were this past year, Christmas wasn't that merry. If we were expecting our family and/or others to make our Christmas joy-filled, then we probably spent the holidays on an emotional rollercoaster. However, if we lived out of the Life of the Babe of Bethlehem and His gifts, then our Christmas was very merry indeed.

An angel first announced Baby Jesus and His gifts some 2,000 years ago at the first Christmas. He said, "I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be

for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."¹ Come, let's look a little deeper into our Savior and His gifts that make us merry.

Jesus was the only person to ever be born of a virgin, to possess an innocent human body and to take the consequences of our sin upon Himself.² He willingly went to the cross, shed his blood, was raised from the dead and then ascended to the right hand of Father. He accomplished all this for one very incredible purpose - to gift believers His very life. He did this by sending His Holy Spirit to indwell us.³ When our brothers and sisters received the Spirit on Pentecost, they were so merry and so full of joy that people thought they had drunk too much wine.⁴ To them, being a Christian was very merry.

Think about it. When believers receive the Holy Spirit, the all-powerful and all-knowing Creator of the Universe makes His home inside our hearts. Overwhelming! This is such good news of great joy that it is worth shouting Merry Christmas from every rooftop not only on the night before Christmas, but also on every night of the year.

Upon entering believers, the Spirit gifts us with "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."⁵ And, He grants "us everything pertaining to life and godliness."⁶ Wow! When the Holy Spirit indwells us, He gifts us with every spiritual blessing that exists!⁷ He gifts us with everything pertaining to eternal life and godly behavior! We lack nothing! This is cause to be extraordinarily merry!

After announcing Christ's birth,⁸ a whole host of angels told us more spiritual blessings when they said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace

upon men (i.e. men, women or children) with whom He is well pleased.”⁹ Wow! God is well pleased with believers! Here is the reasoning: God is well pleased with Jesus.¹⁰ Jesus lives inside of believers. Therefore, God is well pleased with us. This makes for a very joy filled Christmas season!

Receivers of the Holy Spirit are also gifted His peace. We received His peace when He justified us in Christ.¹¹ We can experience His peace all the time, even in the midst of conflicts, when we believe by faith that God has gifted His peace to us in Christ.¹² Having peace amongst the stress makes for a very merry Christian life.

Another blessing comes when the Holy Spirit comforts us with His peace even as we grieve the loss of loved ones - especially family.¹³ Over the holidays, I find myself missing family. My mom and Connie’s mom have passed. Both were great women of God who loved me. I miss them. I miss their fellowship. However, in the midst of my grief, God is still good and faithful.¹⁴ I can still be merry at Christmas and sing O Come All Ye Faithful because God never fails. This is why we can “rejoice always”.¹⁵

The Holy Spirit’s enabling presence also makes it possible for believers to love the unlovely whether or not the unlovely is a stranger, friend or family member. Believers can love others unconditionally because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts.¹⁶ Yes, this also is cause to be very merry.

Christmas brings joy because Jesus gifts us eternal life. John says it like this, “He who has the Son (Jesus) has the life (eternal life); he who does not have the Son of God (Jesus) does not have the life (eternal life).”¹⁷ Eternal life in Christ is our only hope of being reunited to our loved ones.¹⁸



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Faith is another spiritual blessing that God gifts to receivers which makes us confidently merry. “For without faith, it is impossible to please God.”¹⁹ Jesus is the author and finisher of faith.²⁰ Those who receive Jesus by faith are given His faith by grace. Paul says it this way, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works (one’s religious performance), that no one should boast.”²¹

By now you are probably ready to continue to “ring those bells” throughout the New Year. But linger a little longer because there is more. Believers have

been made partakers of the divine nature in Christ.²² Having His divine nature makes us complete. The One who has all authority says, “In Him (Jesus) all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you (the believer), have been made complete.”²³ Simply amazing! When receivers correctly understand this truth, it empowers us to deny ungodliness, live righteously and be merry.²⁴ We don’t have to wish that of ourselves, it is already ours. We can experience our completeness in Christ and be merry when we yield our will to the Spirit who lives within.

Another gift receivers have in Christ is the gift of righteousness. At spiritual birth, receivers are made just as “right” with God as Jesus Christ. Paul tells us that “those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.” And, “through the obedience of the One (Jesus) the many will be made (or appointed) righteous.”²⁵ When we receive this grace gift by faith and believe with our head and heart that we are completely righteous in Christ, we will experience reigning in life through Christ.²⁶ Unwrapping this gift of righteousness makes our merriment secure.

Let us not forget about the wonderful gift of being in God’s family. John says it this way, “as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe (or have faith) in His name.”²⁷ Receivers now have God as Father, and Jesus as a brother.²⁸ Joy to the world! We are part of God’s family!

Believers have been gifted a new identity in Christ. We are now called saints that are saved by grace. The apostle Paul didn’t call the carnal behaving Christians in Corinth “sinners”. He identified them correctly when he said, “...to the church of God which is at Corinth, to

those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling..."²⁹ Paul understood that behavior follows belief. When we believe we are saints with our head and heart, then we will act like saints. What a remarkable identity gift that makes merry.

The Christmas list of gifts in Christ goes on. How about the marvelous gift of forgiveness? 1 John 1:9 states, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."³⁰ God cleanses receivers from all unrighteousness (or forgives us for all of our sins) the moment we receive Him. Again John says, "...the blood of Jesus, His (God's) Son, cleanses us from all sin."³¹ "All" includes past, present and future sins. This, my friend, is a very merciful gift that makes us merry.

Not only have we received forgiveness, but we are also empowered by the Holy Spirit to completely forgive those who have sinned against us. Scripture commands, "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."³² When someone sins against us and we have held him or her accountable,³³ we are to forgive him or her whether or not the relationship is reconciled. Waiting until someone asks us to forgive them, or waiting until we "feel" like forgiving them, will only bind us in the bitter bondage of unforgiveness that strips the "merry" out of Christmas and our Christian life. The Holy Spirit empowers us to willingly

choose to be obedient and forgive others just like Christ has forgiven us. This is one of God's most majestic supernatural gifts that makes believers very merry!

We have also been gifted our freedom. The crucifixion of Christ has set us free from being slaves to sin.³⁴ We have been set free from condemnation,³⁵ given perfection for all time,³⁶ and gifted holiness and blamelessness. God has promised that we will never be separated from His love. We have been gifted victory over Satan and his demons.³⁷ On top of all this, we have hope in every circumstance because God is causing ALL THINGS to work together for our good.³⁸ Wow! This is more than merry!

God's gifts go on and on and on, but this letter cannot. So I will close with this – If our Christmas wasn't that merry, we do not have to let it carry over into the new year. By submitting our wills to the Babe of Bethlehem whose Spirit lives within and by believing in His most wonderful gifts, we can be merry or full of joy every day of the New Year.³⁹

From all of us at Christian Families Today to all of you, may you experience a Merry Christmas all year long in Christ.

Happy New Year,

Greg Brezina

Notes

1. Luke 2:10b-11
2. II Corinthians 5:21
3. John 16:7-14; Colossians 1:26-27; Luke 11:13
4. Acts 2:13
5. Ephesians 1:3
6. II Peter 1:3
7. John 10:10,14:20,15:5,16:7-13; Acts 1:4-5; I Corinthians 12-13
8. Luke 2:11
9. Luke 2:14
10. Matthew 3:17, 12:18;17:5
11. Romans 5:1
12. Philippians 4:6-9
13. I Thessalonians 5:15; I Peter 3:9
14. I Corinthians 1:9
15. I Thessalonians 5:16
16. Romans 5:5
17. I John 5:12
18. Matthew 19:13-14; Mark 10:13-14; Luke 18:16
19. Hebrews 11:6
20. Hebrews 12:2
21. Ephesians 2:8-9
22. 2 Peter 1:4
23. Colossians 2:9-10a
24. Romans 6:1-2; Titus 2:11-12
25. Romans 5:17-19
26. I John 4:9
27. John 1:12; I John 3:1a
28. Romans 8:17
29. I Corinthians 1:2a
30. I John 1:9
31. I John 1:7b
32. Ephesians 4:32
33. Matthew 18:21-35
34. Romans 6:6
35. Romans 8:1
36. Hebrews 10:14
37. I John 4:4b
38. Romans 8:23-39
39. Isaiah 9:3-8



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