

# Cybercolumn by John Duncan: Hope at Christmas

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## CYBER COLUMN: Hope at Christmas

**By John Duncan**

Christmas comes with the hope of merriment, joy and wonder. This year as the world waits for Christmas, we realize, in the words of C.S. Lewis in the Chronicles of Narnia, that many people wake up each day in a world where “it’s always winter, but never Christmas.”

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Imagine a child waiting for Christmas in the dark, dismal, dreary days of an ice-cold winter with no days of sunshine and in anticipation of a Christmas that never arrives—no joy, no gifts, no hope. I fear that’s the world people live in today. It’s a world of war, where suicide bombers kill the innocent; a world where worry over flu pandemics and societal troubles destroy the joy of daily life; a world of airport security that puts a lump in your throat each time you board an airplane; a world where the pressures of raising kids and paying the bills drain life of its meaning; a world of political bickering that makes the news less than inviting; a world where life hurts in its sickness; and a world where storms and hurricanes and global warming cause the daily weather report to possess more drama than it should. Life feels like a

frozen winter that never ends in the dark hearts of many people this Christmas.

The good news of Christmas, however, is Light bursts through the darkness like a flashing meteor, Christ's joy overshadows dismal days and Christ's love arrives to reinvest our dreary days with hope.

When I think of the great need this Christmas, I think of the need for hope in people's lives. A single parent raising three children needs hope to pay her bills. An unemployed person needs hope while filling out job application while seeking employment. A cancer patient sitting in a padded chair while chemotherapy drips in the veins needs hope of a better tomorrow. A young man who loses his wife in a car accident needs hope to endure grief. An elderly man whose health fails and locks him in a wheelchair needs hope for a meaningful future. A teenager worried about terror in the aftermath of 9/11 needs hope for security. A man whose financial disaster brings him to the point of self-destruction needs hope for pennies to feed his family. The victim of a hurricane needs hope for giving Christmas to the kids. Christmas arrives with hope.

When Matthew announced the birth of Jesus in his gospel, the encouraging word was one of hope—for God's presence, for salvation from our sins and for a star that would shine and lead to the Christ to be worshipped. When Luke recorded the message of angels, their wings glistening like glitter, his gospel proclaimed an angelic announcement of hope that lights up the night sky. When John in his gospel philosophically introduced the child born in Bethlehem as the Word, his words became a message of hope to all the people of all nations. Hope reigns at Christmas. Hope sings. Hope shines. Hope hums in the heart.

This Christmas, I will drive by houses and look at Christmas lights with the blare of seasonal music echoing in my ears, and I will think of hope. I will shop for gifts at the mall while poinsettias form a Christmas tree, and I will

think of hope. I will light candles at our Christmas Eve services and think of hope for our world.

The Apostle Paul might well have been imaging Christmas—a pregnant Mary riding on a donkey with her aching back and Joseph leading her to Bethlehem; the innkeeper making room for them in a stable stall with cattle and goats and a stable with hay as a crib; the star filling up the night with sparkle that arrests your sense of wide-eyed wonder; and the babe screaming at birth, Jesus arriving on earth while heaven held its breath in awe. Paul might well have been imagining Christmas when he poetically penned words of “the riches of the glory of mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).

That’s what Christmas means to me—hope, the mystery of glory shining like a star that sparkles in the heart where Jesus lives.

Rosa Parks died this year. One December day many years ago, she sat on a bus, refused to budge, and the rest is history. Near death, she spoke softly, “I try to keep hope alive, but that’s not always the easiest thing to do.” For some, it’s always winter and never Christmas, no hope. For me, Christmas comes with the birth of Christ to remind me that hope is as real as the tip of my nose and as genuine as the dust beneath my feet and as full of glory as a star glowing like a Christmas light in the western sky. Hope lives! Christmas keeps hope alive! May Christ and Christmas and hope live with wide-eyed wonder in your heart and in our world this holiday season!

Merry Christmas with hope to you.

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