

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

QUIET MY HEART, LORD

Quiet my heart, Lord, and show me a Christmas as peaceful and calm as an old cattle shed...
Slow down my pace, Lord, and help me seek Jesus, the Son of Your Love, in a humble straw bed...

Steady my spirit, Lord, call me from chaos in simple surrender to pray and rejoice...
Breakthrough the busy, too-bright celebration, and whisper your message, "Be still...hear my voice..."
Be still, and know that I am God..." Psalm 46:10 author unknown

Prayers and Thoughts: Pray for Nick Butcher and family as they minister to us here in Ladoga.
Pray for the Leonards and their work in Turkey. Pray for our shut-ins. Remember all our mothers and fathers.
Remember our Military the mothers, fathers and their families. Pray for our church and leadership.

Ransom Us: *Psalm 44:18 Our hearts have not deserted you. We have not strayed from your path. ...26*
Rise up! Help us! Ransom us because of your unfailing love. Verses 13-17 and 19-25 continue the discontent
overcome by David in his current circumstances. Feeling abandoned can come over us even in the best of times and
seasons. But thru the hardships and trials can we say like David that we have not deserted our Lord and seek his help
and love. During this Christmas Season keep the Lord centered in your heart.

Christmas Surprises Under the Rockefeller Center Tree by Ron Hutchcraft

Oh, I love this time of year! I love the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree lighting. When I watched it a couple of
years ago, you know, it was as always, heartwarming to watch those lights come on in the middle of the city where I
spent so much ministry time.

And actually there was some good news coming from that big Christmas tree. Oh, we had the obligatory "bubble
gum" songs about Santa and snow and toys. But I was impressed with the fact that Jesus was there, too. That
particular year there were some beautiful presentations of "Silent Night" and "Away in a Manger" and "God Rest
Ye Merry Gentlemen." There actually were a few relatively holy moments in the middle of all that New York glitz.

I'm Ron Hutchcraft and I want to have A Word With You today about
"Christmas Surprises Under the Rockefeller Center Tree."

It was a reminder to me of how special this season really is. This Savior of ours who is largely ignored and
marginalized the rest of the year is suddenly and inescapably on the radar come December. Oh sure, there's a glut of
commercialism. But I'll tell you this, there's more Christ than at any other time of the year. And that provides for all of
us Jesus-lovers an unparalleled opportunity to move people we love to Jesus. To help them be in heaven with us some
day. If any season comes under the Biblical heading of "making the most of every opportunity" (Ephesians 5:16) the
Christmas season does.

It's a good time to remember what God was saying when His angel told Joseph to "give Him the name Jesus,
because He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:18). Jesus means "God rescues." Christmas means that
God has come from heaven as the Rescuer from the hell and the bondage of our sin. And there's no better time than
Christmas to join Jesus in His rescue mission. We can pray for opportunities, we can look for opportunities, and we
can plan for opportunities to introduce Him to hearts that are opened by the Christmas season.

The problem is that we are so robotically busy from now until Christmas that this season of rescue comes and goes
without us even trying to rescue anybody! I can already feel it myself. You get carried away by the inertia of just doing
Christmas, American style. The rescuing will not happen if we don't make it a non-negotiable of our plans, let's say
these next three weeks ahead.

Our word for today from the Word of God is in John 9:4. It tells us that, "We must work while it is day, for the
night is coming." That means making a promise to God that we will be intentional about bringing Jesus into the lives
of our lost friends and our neighbors and our loved ones. I said intentional during this time when it is still day, and the
light is on and on Jesus more than ever. We can be intentional about this by praying for them by name every day
during this season, by asking God to open up natural opportunities for us to talk about our relationship with Jesus. It
will be easier this time of year than any other.

Christmas Surprises Under the Rockefeller Center Tree by Ron Hutchcraft continued

I have that three-open prayer that I've talked about before, "Lord, open a door." Which means give me that natural opportunity to bring up my relationship with You. Then, "Lord, open their heart." Get them ready. And then, "Lord, open my mouth." Give me the words and the courage and the approach to use. How about planning to take them to dinner and then to a special Christmas event where the Gospel will be presented, or take them to the event and then have them over for dessert so you can talk about it.

Then include your own personal Hope Story with your Christmas card. I know some friends who do that, and they put it in an attractive form and they include the hope story of how this Jesus, who's birthday it is, changed their life forever and took it from B.C. (before Christ) to A.D. (after Christ). There's all kinds of ways God will answer your prayer for opportunities. Just start praying for them and keeping your eyes open for them.

'Tis the season! After all, this is His birthday. And there is no gift He wants more than the heart of someone He died for. Someone you know who doesn't know your Jesus. And there's just no better time.

The following is one of my favorite Christmas stories. I can just imagine a young lad doing this.

Jesus Goes for a Wagon Ride

It was the day after Christmas at a church in San Francisco. The pastor of the church was looking over the cradle when he noticed that the baby Jesus was missing from among the figures.

Immediately he turned and went outside and saw a little boy with a red wagon, and in the wagon was the figure of the little infant, Jesus. So he walked up to the boy and said, "Well, where did you get Him, my fine friend?" The little boy replied, "I got him from the church." The pastor asked "And why did you take him?" The boy said "Well, about a week before Christmas I prayed to the little Lord Jesus and I told him if he would bring me a red wagon for Christmas I would give him a ride around the block in it." shared by Debbie Gibbs

Christmas Smiles

A smile is such a funny thing. It wrinkles up your face, and when it's gone you have to find its secret hiding place. But far more wonderful it is to see what smiles can do; you smile at one, he smiles at you, and so one smile makes two. And since a smile can do so much by cheering hearts of care, let's smile a lot this Christmas time-such smiles go everywhere!

Thanks to Esther Miller for sharing this with us just 15 years ago

1 CORINTHIANS 13 CHRISTMAS VERSION

If I decorate my house perfectly with plaid bows, strands of twinkling lights and shiny balls, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another decorator. If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of Christmas cookies, preparing gourmet meals and arranging a beautifully adorned table at mealtime, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another cook. If I work at the soup kitchen, carol in the nursing home, and give all that I have to charity, but do not show love to my family, it profits me nothing. If I trim the spruce with shimmering angels and crocheted snowflakes, attend a myriad of holiday parties and sing in the choir's cantata, but do not focus on Christ, I have missed the point.

Love stops the cooking to hug the child. Love sets aside decorating to kiss the husband. Love is kind, though harried and tired. Love doesn't envy another's home that has coordinated Christmas china and table linens. Love doesn't yell at the kids to get out of the way, but is thankful they are there to be in the way. Love doesn't give only to those who are able to give in return but rejoices in giving to those who can't. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. Video games break, pearl necklaces will be lost, golf clubs will rust. But giving the gift of love will endure.

Merry Christmas! *from email ministry Sharon Jaynes*

With winter coming on and chances of more snow increasing it was odd to get this in a fortune cookie.

No snowflake in an avalanche ever feels responsible

***Check in with our heavenly Father this week, do some good and disappear. Clay Halsey alhalsey@tds.net
May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God be with you all. IICorinthians 13:14***