

makes you free, you



Therefore if the Son

shall be free indeed.



# Voice of Freedom

A Ministry of

Cedar Valley Community Church



Prison Ministry Goodnews Letter

Volume 7, Issue 9

December 2009

## White or Blue Christmas

by Roger Montz and Mary Lee

### From the Heart of Roger:

Grace and peace to all of you from the one true God Almighty whose unending love is poured out to us each day. There was a day when God chose to demonstrate His love to us, and for some two thousand years since then we remember and rejoice in that day. Yes, it is that time again when we celebrate God's precious gift to us and the fulfillment of John 3:16. **Christmas is all about the dawn of salvation for everyone who accepts Jesus, the Light of the World.**

Christmas is all about God's love, and His love is why we need to take one step backwards, take a deep look, a deep breath and ask, "Am I into Christ or am I into Christmas?"

We extend to all of you warm love-wishes for a very merry Christmas in Christ Jesus from Cedar Valley Community Church, and Heart Surrender Ministry. You and your families will be offered up in prayers that your eyes may behold the glory of this season.

I remember the sharp contrast between the first Christmas I spent in prison back in 1996 and the many glittering times of Christmas before prison. For years before prison I had looked forward to Christmas, not to celebrate the arrival of my Savior in a small, cramped, dreary stable but to plan what earthly gifts I could

lavish onto my family in hopes of gaining more love from them. The glitter of lights, pretty bows and wrapping paper around expensive gifts were of more value to me than a precious baby wrapped in drab swaddling clothes. The branches on our family's ten-foot fresh-cut Christmas tree were weighted down with sparkly ornaments that dangled over many presents lying underneath. This excited me more than God's smiling gift lying on old cut-up grass in a manger. **So, Christmas time before prison was all about me and my happiness, a Me-mas, not a Christ-mas.** Then in prison for nearly two months before my first Christmas, I dreaded even the thought of Christmas let alone trying to celebrate it in my small, cramped and dreary cell. In that dim-lit cell, my happiness left me. Being alone plus having no money, no tree, no presents, no Christmas cookies, and no hope for a brighter tomorrow all tore at my heart. I was headed for a dim, blue Christmas.

Several events in my life have gotten me down. Even with the down times before prison of a couple of divorces,

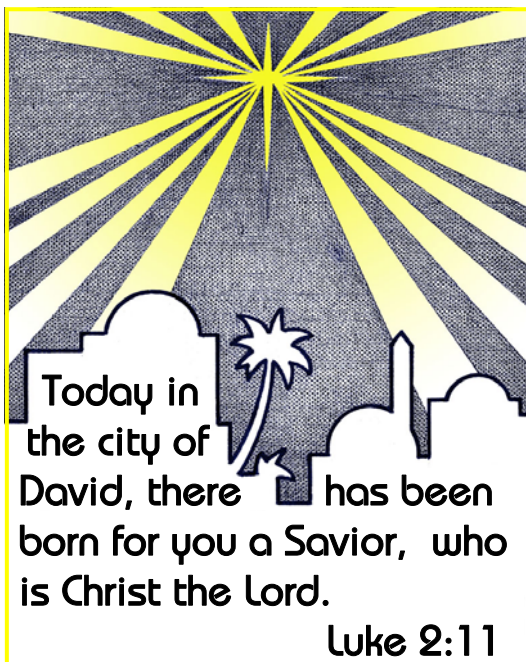
the passing of several loved ones and my arrest; I was not down for long. After each divorce, there was always a pretty woman at closing time. Loved ones gone, brought back good memories. After my arrest, I knew there would be no more victims, and I had the promise from God to create in me a new creation. I committed to following Jesus during my stay in prison, but then sitting alone on my bunk in prison it became hard to do. I had to make a choice. **I could have a blue Christmas wishing as hard as I could not to be in that cell or I could close my eyes and listen with my heart to God's still, small gentle voice saying, "Come to the manger, come as you are, heartbroken, come, and see what I have given you, My gift that will bring you eternal joy."**

That first Christmas in prison turned white when I chose to listen to God's voice. I chose to put away the desire to fill my life and other people's lives with worthless earthly gifts. I chose the promise of God over the fading memories of tinsel and colored lights. I chose to have a white Christmas as white as the brilliant white robe that Jesus wore on the Mount of Transfiguration which heralded His glory on this earth, white as the dove that represented the Holy Spirit descending upon Christ at His baptism, white as the purist snow which reminds me that it was God's Christmas gift of His Son that made the way for salvation at Calvary. On the cross, Christ Jesus made my Christmas white as snow.

**Do you need to make a choice? You can choose a dim-blue Christmas all alone or you can choose a brilliant-white Christmas with angels all around.** You can listen to earthly voices of rock 'n roll or you can listen to beautiful heartwarming voices of

Christmas songs such as Silent Night, Joy to the World, and many more Christian Christmas songs. Go to the chapel or library and check them out. Read, reread then reread again the life-giving story of how God sent His baby Son to us in Luke 2:1-38. Close your eyes, as I have many times, and visualize yourself sitting on a hill side watching the shepherds making their way to the stable immersed in the glowing light from the single star of Bethlehem. Visualize walking into the stable and kneeling alongside the manger. Peek over the side of the manger and see for yourself the loving smile of Jesus. Reach out your hand and feel the mighty right hand of Christ Jesus clench around your finger. **Hear the Holy Spirit whisper in your heart, "He will never let you go!" Lay down the only present you can give Him, your heart filled with the message "I accept You Jesus as my Lord and Savior."** Yes, live the Christmas season in joy. Live within the white Light of Christ Jesus. Come to the stable, come and receive your free gift, come and have a very merry Christmas with Christ.

- Roger -



**If we walk in the Light as God Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:7**



**From the Heart of Mary Lee:**

I visualize Joseph helping Mary wrap the swaddling cloth around baby Jesus. A swaddling cloth is a long, narrow cloth designed to wrap securely around a newborn baby for warmth and protection, a security-blanket insuring peace and comfort. I trust that Jesus enjoyed his earthly father, Joseph, present at home most of the time to love on Him, and Jesus knew His Heavenly Father was always with Him.

During my childhood, Dad worked away from home. I missed him terribly when he flew away on Air Force missions, and I wanted him to come home and wrap my heart in his loving security-blanket. When Dad came home, life seemed bright and at peace, especially at Christmas time. Dad delighted in giving each of us kids \$5, taking us shopping and watching us buy presents for one another. Dad's eyes sparkled at the sight of us decorating the Christmas tree — me hanging one piece of tinsel on each pine stem and my brother throwing handfuls of tinsel at the tree. Dad entertained us with stories about when he didn't have a Christmas tree and substituted a Tumble Weed sprayed gold or a Prickly Pear Cactus carefully decorated with paper chains. But Christmas always ended, and Dad always flew away on another mission. When Dad left, it was like my security blanket, stitched together with love and happiness, got lost and I couldn't find it.

Around age thirteen, during one of those lonely times without Dad, we kids were sent to church on the bus a few times. **I didn't understand then that the Bible was God's Living Word and encouragement for me to want this Jesus, but the pull toward Jesus was so strong that a few months later I knew I believed John 3:16 and asked Jesus to save me.**

Jesus was never worshipped in our home, and my happiness at Christmas still depended on Dad. Each time Dad came home, I still felt wrapped in Dad's security blanket. Each time Dad left, I still missed him terribly, feeling insecure and unhappy. But something in me was different. I couldn't explain it then, but now I know that Jesus had his foot inside my heart's door, and He encouraged me during my blue times. My heart was wrapped in Jesus' white security blanket stitched permanently together with God's grace, love, peace, faith and joy.

**Everyone Remember:  
Invite friends and  
someone new to your  
Christ-Living  
Chapel Services and  
Special Events.**

**Mount Pleasant Men!  
New Year Worship with  
Heart Surrender Ministry  
Wednesday Evening  
December 30  
6-7 p.m.**

The true meaning of Christmas turned from blue to white for me after I married into a Christ-loving family. That was when I began understanding the difference between human happiness, which comes and goes, and joy obtained from Jesus, which is eternal and securely wrapped around my heart. **In Luke 2:10-11 an angel told the shepherds, "I bring you good news of great joy**



**which will 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."** Joy is like a rainbow of God's promises connecting every Christian heart to heart as Jesus reflect His pure light through our lives.

With the joy of celebrating the birth Jesus, the meaning of family traditions deepened, and decorations on the Christmas tree were more illuminated. God's gift of joy lasts all year and brightens life, even what I refer to as temporary, human happiness. When I feel blue, God's everlasting gift of joy lifts me up into His white light.

My Dad was gone a lot, but now whether I am by myself, with family, or with friends in my community of faith, my Father God is with me celebrating the birth and ministry of His Son, Jesus. **Nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:39)** "I trust in the loving kindness of God forever and ever." (Psalm 53:8) When I read Matthew 28:20, I hear Jesus telling me to observe all that He has commanded; and He will be with me always, even to the end of the age. How about you? Are you blue and alone this Christmas? **If you are living in the blues, you can make the choice of asking Jesus to wrap your heart in His white security-blanket of peace and joy.** Come to the stable. Come and receive your free gift, come and have the best Merry Christmas ever with Jesus. — Mary Lee —

If you are not on our mailing list and would like to be, or if for any reason you would like to be taken off, please send a note to:

Waterloo, Iowa 50701  
3520 Ansborough Avenue

