

makes you free, you



Therefore if the Son

shall be free indeed.



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LOVE GAME

IN A SNOWFLAKE

by Roger Montz

May the Grace and Peace, wrapped with unending Love from God our Father through His Son, Christ Jesus, be with each of you. We Christians love to set December apart from other months and reflect on the plan that God envisioned for His world before time began. God saw the formation of a chosen form of life that would be in His image—man. God also saw what His gift of 'free will' would do to this marvelous plan once man twisted it in to self-serving pleasures instead of serving the One who created it. God saw the fall of mankind, the deliberate choice to disobey His commandment, beginning when Adam and Eve took it upon themselves to learn of the Knowledge of good and evil. While in the Garden of Eden, all they knew was the Knowledge of good, serving God with all of their hearts and having 100% faith in God that He would provide all of their needs. When they disobeyed God and learned of evil, the words spoken by Christ Jesus rang true, "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men **LOVED DARKNESS RATHER THAN LIGHT**, because their deeds were evil." (John 3:19) From that moment, every man, woman and child would love the darkness in various degrees instead of being completely obedient to the Light, Christ Jesus. God also saw that once this fall occurred, man would be utterly helpless to try and reverse, on his own accord, love of darkness—the love to sin. God knew what He would have to do to rescue His chosen life forms—us. God, through the nation of Israel, set out to show the peoples of the world that He was truly God, that He loved them all despite their sinfulness and wanted everyone to return to His image. Once the time was right, God set into action His greatest plan and began the redemption of a fallen world. The Apostle John declared the beginning to us, "For God so loved the world that he **GAVE His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life**" (John 3:16) How God 'gave' His Son is the reason why we need to set this month aside to reflect on the beginning of redemption.

God sent His only Son Christ Jesus as a human baby, born of virgin birth so His gift would arrive undefiled, and then He laid the Christ Child in a lowly manger for the entire world to see. What do we see?—God's Love, a love so great that even knowing that in a short thirty-three year time-frame Christ Jesus would be sacrificed unto death for sinners—you and me. This is the

true Christmas, the giving of one gift so that the billions of human life-gifts might one day be saved into eternal life. God gave His Son knowing that Prophet Isaiah's words would be fulfilled, "though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." (Isaiah 1:18b)

I personally do not like winter all that much, it is cold, and I do not like to shovel snow. But there is a picture of snow, a meaning of the word snow, and the relationship of scarlet sins made white as snow that I will cherish forever.

Back when I was married to my second wife, my father-in-law, two friends and I traveled to Canada each year to go fishing in some remote lake. By mid October the big game fish have grown huge after a year of feasting on smaller fishes, and normally they bite better that time of year. The forecast in 1979 called for cold temperatures and chances for snow all that week, but the dream of fighting fish outweighed the possibility of being cold, wet and uncomfortable. On the second day of not so good luck, my father-in-law, Bo, and I were in one boat and two friends were in another. Fishing on the far side of the lake from our cabin, the sky darkened with heavy, cold clouds, and the wind blew lightly out of the North. Our boats had separated while searching for a spot where the fish were hitting, but we stayed in sight of each other in case one of us got into trouble. Then a light dusting of snow slowly



swirled between the boats causing bad visibility. Bo and I wondered if we should just call it quits and head for the cabin before it got any worse. Then it happened—Bo, an absolute, true Christian who loved the Lord with all of his heart, was unexpectedly struck by a heart aneurysm. I remember Bo clutching his heart and moaning in agony, barely able to speak, but I recall him saying, "All I need to do is lie down and rest; I will be okay." I was frightened beyond belief, and that grew worse when I could not see the other boat. I yelled and yelled as loud as I could for help but heard no answer. The reason I could not see the other boat was that at that very instant the largest, most brilliant, glistening, white snow flakes that I had ever seen started to fall and enveloped our boat so that I could not even see the bow of the boat. Every breath of wind stopped, and the snow flakes settled onto Bo who was lying on the wooden boat seat. Within seconds, a thick layer of the purest, whitest snow that could fall upon this earth covered Bo. Just as quickly as it started, the snow stopped. Then Bo sat up and said he was feeling much better and wanted to start fishing again. But I saw the other boat and yelled for help. They yelled back, "What's wrong?" Relieved to hear them, I started the engine, buzzed over to them and explained that Bo had a heart attack. The trip back to the cabin was hazardous and cold; but then a break in the



weather gave us just enough time to find a way to get Bo back to civilization and a hospital. A few days later we all arrived home, and that same day Bo walked out to the corn field to view God's bounty, returned to his house and died in the very same room where he was born.

I do not remember any Christmas as Bo's death, but I remember the unusual snow as a picture of what Christmas is all about. I remember that God gave His

Son and this season to us so that this little human baby would grow up and become the pure white snow that covered my scarlet sins.

Mary Lee and I along with all of your brothers and sisters at Cedar Valley Community Church wish you all a very blessed Merry Christmas and a blanket of Christ's pure snow. — Roger —



CHRIST JESUS IN OUR FAMILY TRADITION

by Mary Lee

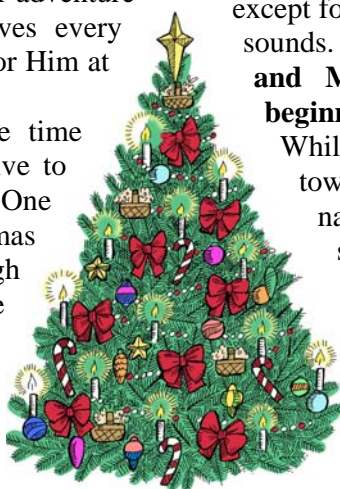
By the Grace of God through the blood of Christ Jesus, each of us begins an adventure with Christ the moment we declare, "Yes, I believe your Word, Father God. Christ Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross for my sin. Please, come into my heart." Our adventure of growing ever closer to Christ involves every aspect of our lives, including how we honor Him at Christmas time through family traditions.

For my family, December is the time when we celebrate Christ's birth and strive to center Christmas traditions around Christ. One family tradition is raising our own Christmas trees. Blue Spruce is my favorite, though the needles are very sharp! So, about the time you read this Voice, our family and perhaps a few friends will bundle up, gather tools, hike down to the tree line, and vote on which tree to honor. Grampa marks the chopping spot with the axe. Then from the youngest to the oldest to the youngest, we take turns chopping the tree down and catching our best efforts on camera.

I'm not sure when the chainsaw somehow entered into tree-trimming tradition. Perhaps, someone can explain to me why my boys laugh hysterically as they finish trimming the tree with a chainsaw, in the house.

Once our eight-foot Christmas tree is anchored in a bucket of sand, checked for live squirrels, and bird nests removed, Grampa expertly places the electric lights, often times with plenty of help and advice from those less than three-feet tall.

The aroma of Black-rice Soup, Beef Stew and Hot Apple Juice lures everyone to the table just long




enough to satisfy hunger because everyone wants to place their favorite ornaments, especially hand-made ornaments by Great Gramma. Our trees have never been as decoratively balanced as the one pictured on this page, but we like it that way. After the kids throw tensile all over the tree, everyone settles down to watch with anticipation Grampa clipping the candle holders onto the tree. Every year the candles are a different color, and Grampa lights one candle.


Then it is time for all to hush as all electric lights are turned off. Quiet, it is soooooo quiet . . . well . . . except for snickering, wiggling, and candy-cane licking sounds. **Grampa reads Luke 2: 1-20 about Joseph and Mary's journey to Bethlehem, the path beginning mankind's redemption through Christ.** While Grampa reads of wise travelers moving toward Bethlehem, young ones place the ceramic nativity pieces in imaginary fields and places surrounding the manger scene. Then, each person lights a candle on the tree and shares a special blessing from Christ. Placing baby Jesus is reserved for Christmas morning.

Now is a good time to begin your adventure with Christ. As you look at the candles on this tree, visualize Christ lighting a candle in your heart, a candle of redemption, a candle that will never go out.

— Mary Lee —



But those who **hope**
in the **Lord** will renew
their **strength**.

Isaiah 40:31a 

Mt Pleasant Men:
Bring your friends to the new, Wednesday evening
Worship Service December 6th
6-7:15 p.m. in the Chapel
Message – There is Hope: Life after Prison
by Roger Montz and Mary Lee Summy

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: *Voice of Freedom*, Cedar Valley Community Church, 3520 Ansborough Av., Waterloo, IA 50701. (Also available in Spanish)