

Christmas Then and Now

By Brenda Spina, M.S., LMFT, LPC

One of the many memories I have of Christmas as a child includes the Christmas my sister and I received baby buggies to push our dolls in around the neighborhood. My parents, full time ministers of the Gospel, worked very hard for very little yet always found a way to make Christmas a very special time for their children. I remember those times with great joy and anticipation. Those were days in which entering the holiday season seemed to be so easy. Worries appeared to be few and demands on loyalties to outside family dynamics limited.

The truth is, as a child, the demands and pressures of the season were carried on the shoulders of my parents. Allowed to be a child, the Christmas holiday was a wonderful celebration of the birth of God's Son, Jesus. That is exactly what it is supposed to be.

Now, as an adult, I still enter the holiday season with joy and anticipation but for very different reasons. There are many circumstances for people entering this season that create a feeling of dread and heaviness of heart. We all experience these emotions for different reasons. The fact that has not changed is the reality that our days and the weight they may bring to our spirits is still carried on someone else's shoulders. They rest on the shoulders of our Heavenly Father. He may not be with us in flesh but He is with us in Spirit.

Psalm 86:1-6 states, "Bow down your ear, O Lord, hear me;
For I am poor and needy.
Preserve my life for I am holy;
You are my God;
Save Your servant who trusts in you!
Be merciful to me, O Lord,
For I cry to You all day long,
Rejoice the soul of Your servant,
For to You O Lord, I lift up my soul.
For you, O Lord, are good, and ready to forgive
And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon you."

If we can believe, despite our circumstances, that our Heavenly Father still carries us when we cannot walk this walk, the above prayer becomes the cry of our hearts. We express the realization of our neediness, remind Him of the covering of His blood that makes us holy, express with abandonment our trust in Him and ask for mercy.

This is what brings me joy and anticipation for this Christmas season. Whether my circumstances bring pain, chaos, joy, conflict or peace, my Lord is there for me to call upon. It is His coming that brought peace, joy and salvation to my heart. I could not have survived without Him. "To you O Lord I lift up my soul. For you, O Lord, are good

and ready to forgive and abundant in mercy to those who call up on you. Thank you for coming. Thank you for loving. Thank you for dying. Thank you for living!" Merry Christmas!

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