



Lutheran Bible Translators of Canada

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Most of us have an idealized picture in our minds of the perfect Christmas celebration. It probably looks a bit like a greeting card, with family all in their pyjamas gathered around a roaring fire, a living room bathed in soft, candlelight with all manner of tasty treats piled carefully in bowls or laid out on plates, a beautifully adorned Christmas tree with lovingly chosen packages underneath, a feast for all who survey on the table, the comforting aroma of turkey, pumpkin pie and hot apple cider wafting from the

kitchen, and so much more. It's a vision worthy of that classic Christmas movie the whole family assembles to watch together once a year. **It's the thing we look forward to every year, and it's not Christmas without it.**

But what if things don't happen that way this year? What if one member of the family is in prison and is saddened that everyone seems to have forgotten them? What if someone is across the country or across the ocean, unable to muster the funds to come home? What if it's the first Christmas without a family member who recently died? What if a job loss or an injury has led to a depleted bank account and bare cupboards? What if the greeting card has become a cold and disappointing telegram? Would Christmas be ruined?

Let's take a look at the events of the first Christmas. Mary and Joseph were alone in a strange city, away from home and family and familiar comforts. They didn't have the beautifully decorated house with the presents and the feast and the joy. They didn't even have a real roof over their heads. The only place they could find shelter was a stable that someone had offered to them out of compassion. There were aromas in that place, but they were from farm animals and not from cooking food. Mary, expecting her first child, did not have the blessing of a modern, sanitary hospital with a skilled medical staff and aftercare. Giving birth would be painful and messy, and Joseph was loving and willing to help, but inexperienced—he was no doubt frustrated that he was not able to provide better accommodations for Mary and the child they knew would come soon.

Although their little Boy arrived safely there was little acknowledgement of the birth, save from some shepherds, Simeon and Anna, and the Magi who would come later. And if all that were not enough, an insane madman bent on killing this would-be King would put a contract out on not only Mary's Son but every little boy of a similar age and pedigree— Herod thought he was being thorough. **Mary would have to endure the whispers that her Child was illegitimate, and years later the ominous promise that *a sword would pierce her own soul through*.** Hallmark this was not.

So, given all this, what did Mary and Joseph really have on that cold, smelly, uncomfortable and lonely night? They had God's promise, the Child of promise, in their arms. **They had the Child they were told to name Jesus, which means "God saves", whose very Name is a fulfilled promise, who would reconcile them and all persons to God the Father by taking care of their greatest need, *saving them from their sins*.** They had the realization that, just as the angel had told Mary, when first bringing the news that she would bear a child though she was a virgin, this Child was the long-awaited Messiah, the King of Kings, the Prince of Peace. They had no idea how any of this would work out, but they had the promise, and because of that promise, they had hope.

It is certainly not wrong to enjoy a decorated tree, presents, good food, and gathered family and friends. God gives blessings from overflowing stores. But let's always remember that we can celebrate Christmas even if some or all those things are missing, because we can celebrate in our own hearts and with those around us the same promise, and the same hope. **And if that's all we have this Christmas, it's more than enough.**



Around the world some **300 million persons** struggle to mark the coming of Christ because they do not yet have the Bible in the language of their hearts. **It's hard to know Jesus without His Word. This Christmas please consider partnering with LBTC missionaries to help reduce those numbers through Bible translation and literacy training. The Webers, the Kuhns, and the Veiths send you and yours their greetings, and ask that you join them through your time, talents and treasures to help bring the saving Word to all persons everywhere, this Christmas and beyond.**

May God bless you this Christmas, and make you a blessing now and always!

The Missionaries and Staff of Lutheran Bible Translators of Canada