

Recipe for a Happy New Year. Anonymous

Take twelve fine, full-grown months; see that these are thoroughly free from old memories of bitterness, rancor and hate, cleanse them completely from every clinging spite; pick off all specks of pettiness and littleness; in short, see that these months are freed from all the past—have them fresh and clean as when they first came from the great storehouse of Time.

Cut these months into thirty or thirty-one equal parts. Do not attempt to make up the whole batch at one time (so many persons spoil the entire lot this way) but prepare one day at a time.

Into each day put equal parts of faith, patience, courage, work (some people omit this ingredient and so spoil the flavor of the rest), hope, fidelity, liberality, kindness, rest (leaving this out is like leaving the oil out of the salad dressing— don't do it), prayer, meditation, and one well-selected resolution.

Put in about one teaspoonful of good spirits, a dash of fun, a pinch of folly, a sprinkling of play, and a heaping cupful of good humor.

Reflections of a Mother

I gave you life, but cannot live it for you.

I can teach you things, but I cannot make you learn.

I can give you directions, but I cannot be there to lead you.

I can allow you freedom, but I cannot account for it.

I can take you to church, but I cannot make you believe.

I can teach you right from wrong, but I cannot always decide for you.

I can buy you beautiful clothes, but I cannot make you beautiful inside.

I can offer you advice, but I cannot accept it for you.

I can give you love, but I cannot force it upon you.

I can teach you to share, but I cannot make you unselfish.

I can teach you respect, but I cannot force you to show honor.

I can advise you about friends, but cannot choose them for you.

I can advise you about sex, but I cannot keep you pure.

I can tell you the facts of life, but I can't build your reputation.

I can tell you about drink, but I can't say "no" for you.

I can warn you about drugs, but I can't prevent you from using them.

I can tell you about lofty goals, but I can't achieve them for you.

I can teach you about kindness, but I can't force you to be gracious.

I can warn you about sins, but I cannot make you moral.

I can love you as a child, but I cannot place you in God's family.

I can pray for you, but I cannot make you walk with God.

I can teach you about Jesus, but I cannot make Jesus your Lord.

I can tell you how to live, but I cannot give you eternal life.

I can love you with unconditional love all of my life...and I will!

Always, Mom

Taking Care Of Mothers

Many of us take better care of our cars than we do our mothers and yet we only expect our cars to last 5 or 6 years but we expect our mothers to last for a lifetime. Maybe we need a maintenance manual for mothers so we would know how to take care of them at least as well as we do our automobiles. Here are some items that might be included in such a manual.

Engine: A mother's engine is one of the most dependable kinds you can find. She can reach top speed from a prone position at a single cry from a sleeping child. But regular breaks are needed to keep up that peak performance.

Mothers need a hot bath and a nap every 100 miles, a baby-sitter and a night out every 1,000 miles, and a live in baby-sitter with a one week vacation every 10,000 miles.

Battery: Mother's batteries should be recharged regularly. Handmade items, notes, unexpected hugs and kisses, and frequent "I love you's" will do very well for a recharge.

Carburetor: When a mother's carburetor floods it should be treated immediately with Kleenex and a soft shoulder.

Brakes: See that she uses her brakes to slow down often and come to a full stop occasionally. (A squeaking sound indicates a need for a rest.)

Fuel: Most mothers can run indefinitely on coffee, leftovers and salads, but an occasional dinner for two at a nice restaurant will really add to her efficiency.

Chassis: Mothers run best when their bodies are properly maintained. Regular exercise should be encouraged and provided for as necessary. A change in hairdo or makeup in spring and fall are also helpful.

If you notice the chassis begins to sag, immediately start a program of walking, jogging, swimming, or bike-riding. These are most effective when done with fathers who often need chassis work as well.

Tune-ups: Mothers need regular tune-ups. Compliments are both the cheapest and most effective way to keep a mother purring contentedly.

If these instructions are followed consistently, this fantastic creation and gift from God that we call MOTHER should last a lifetime and give good service and constant love to those who need her most.

Teach The Children

Just a week before Christmas I had a visitor. I just finished the household chores for the night and was preparing to go to bed, when I heard a noise in the front of the house. I opened the door to the front room and, to my surprise, Santa himself stepped out from behind the Christmas tree. He placed a finger over his mouth so I would not cry out.

"What are you doing?" I started to ask. The words choked up in my throat, as I saw the tears in his eyes. His usual jolly manner was gone. Gone was the eager boisterous soul we all know.

He then answered me with a simple statement, "Teach The Children".

I was puzzled; what did he mean? He anticipated my question, and with one quick movement brought forth a miniature toy bag from behind the tree.

As I stood there bewildered, Santa said, "Teach the children! Teach them the meaning of Christmas. The meaning that children now-a-day's have forgotten!"

Santa then reached in his bag, pulled out a Fir Tree, and placed it before the mantle. "Teach the children that the pure green color of the stately fir tree remains green all year around, depicting the everlasting hope of mankind. All the needles point heavenward, making it a symbol of Man's thoughts toward heaven".

He again reached into his bag and pulled out a brilliant Star. "Teach the children that the star was the heavenly sign of promises long ago. God promised a savior for the world, and the star was the sign of the fulfillment of that promise."

He then reached in his bag and pulled out a Candle. "Teach the children that the candle symbolizes that Christ is the light of the world. And when we see this great light we are reminded of He who displaced the darkness." Once again, he reached into his bag, removed a Wreath, and placed it on the tree. "Teach the children that the wreath symbolizes the eternal nature of love. Real love never ceases. Love is one continuous round of affection."

He then pulled out from his bag an ornament of Himself. "Teach the children that I, Santa Clause symbolize the generosity and good will we feel during the month of December."

He reached in again and pulled out a Holly Leaf. "Teach the children that the holly plant represents immortality. It represents the Crown of Thorns worn by our Savior. The red holly berries represent the blood shed by Him."

Next, he pulled out a Gift from the bag and said, "Teach the children that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." "Thanks are to God for His unspeakable gift. Teach the children that the Wise Men bowed before the Holy Babe and presented Him with gold, frankincense, and myrrh. We should always give gifts in the same spirit as the Wise Men."

Santa reached in his bag, pulled out a Candy Cane, and hung it on the tree. "Teach the children that the candy cane represents the shepherds crook. The crook on the shepherd's staff helps to bring back strayed sheep to the flock. The candy cane is the symbol that we are our brother's keeper."

He reached in again and pulled out an Angel. "Teach the children that it was the Angels that heralded in the glorious news of the Savior's birth. The angels sang Glory to God in the Highest, on earth peace, and good will toward men."

Suddenly I heard a soft twinkling sound, from his bag he pulled out a Bell. "Teach the children that the lost sheep are found by the sound of the bell, it should bring man to the fold. The bell symbolizes guidance and return."

Santa looked back at the tree and was pleased. He looked back at me and I saw that the twinkle was back in his eyes. He said, "Teach the children the true meaning of Christmas, and not to put me in the center, for I am but a humble servant of the One That Is, and I bow down and worship Him, our Lord, our God."

Only because of His Grace

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart...

Thanksgiving Weather

Turkeys will thaw in the morning, then warm in the oven to an afternoon high near 190F. The kitchen will turn hot and humid, and if you bother the cook, be ready for a severe squall or cold shoulder.

During the late afternoon and evening, the cold front of a knife will slice through the turkey, causing an accumulation of one to two inches on plates. Mashed potatoes will drift across one side while cranberry sauce creates slippery spots on the other. Please pass the gravy.

A weight watch and indigestion warning have been issued for the entire area, with increased stuffiness around the beltway. During the evening, the turkey will diminish and taper off to leftovers, dropping to a low of 34F in the refrigerator.

Looking ahead to Friday and Saturday, high pressure to eat sandwiches will be established. Flurries of leftovers can be expected both days with a 50 percent chance of scattered soup late in the day. We expect a warming trend where soup develops. By early next week, eating pressure will be low as the only wish left will be the bone.

The Fork

There was a woman who had been diagnosed with cancer and had been given 3 months to live. Her Dr. told her to start making preparations to die (something we all should be doing all of the time.) So she contacted her pastor and had him come to her house to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes.

She told him which songs she wanted sung at the service, what scriptures she would like read, and what she wanted to be wearing. The woman also told her pastor that she wanted to be buried with her favorite bible. Everything was in order and the pastor was preparing to leave when the woman suddenly remembered something very important to her.

"There's one more thing." She said excitedly.

"What's that?" came the pastor's reply.

"This is very important." The woman continued. "I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand."

The pastor stood looking at the woman not knowing quite what to say.

"That shocks you doesn't it?" The woman asked.

"Well to be honest, I'm puzzled by the request," said the pastor.

The woman explained. "In all my years of attending church socials and functions where food was involved (and let's be honest, food is an important part of any church event; spiritual or otherwise); my favorite part was when whoever was clearing away the dishes of the main course would lean over and say 'you can keep your fork.' It was my favorite part because I knew that something better was coming. When they told me to keep my fork, I knew that something great was about to be given to me. It wasn't Jell-O or pudding. It was cake or pie. Something with substance. So I just want people to see me there in that casket with a fork in my hand and I want them to wonder 'What's with the fork?' Then I want you to tell them: 'Something better is coming so keep your fork too.'"

The pastor's eyes were welled up with tears of joy as he hugged the woman goodbye. He knew this would be one of the last times he would see her before her death. But he also knew that that woman had a better grasp of heaven than he did. She KNEW that something better was coming.

At the funeral people were walking by the woman's casket and they saw the pretty dress she was wearing and her favorite bible and the fork placed in her right hand. Over and over the pastor heard the question "What's with the fork?" And over and over he smiled.

During his message, the pastor told the people of the conversation he had with the woman shortly before she died. He also told them about the fork and about what it symbolized to her. The pastor told the people how he could not stop thinking about the fork and told them that they probably would not be able to stop thinking about it either. He was right.

So the next time you reach down for your fork, let it remind you oh so gently that there is something better coming.

The Gospel According To Me

When I say, "I am a Christian,"
I'm not shouting, "I am saved."
I'm whispering, "I was lost";
That is why I chose this way.

When I say, "I am a Christian,"
I don't speak of this with pride.
I'm confessing that I stumble,
And need someone to be my guide.

When I say, "I am a Christian,"
I'm not trying to be strong.
I'm professing that I'm weak,
And pray for strength to carry on.

When I say, "I am a Christian,"
I'm not bragging of success.
I'm admitting I have failed,
And cannot ever pay the debt.

When I say, "I am a Christian,"
I'm not claiming to be perfect.
My flaws are too visible,
But God believes I'm worth it.

When I say, "I am a Christian,"
I still feel the sting of pain.
I have my share of heartaches,
Which is why I speak His name.

When I say, "I am a Christian,"
I do not wish to judge.
I have no authority;
I only know I'm loved.

--Author unknown.

The Jelly Bean Prayer

RED is for the blood He gave

GREEN is for the grass He made

YELLOW is for the sun so bright

ORANGE is for the edge of night

BLACK is for the sins we made

WHITE is for the grace He gave

PURPLE is for His hour of sorrow

PINK is for our new tomorrow

A bag full of jelly beans, colorful and sweet

Is a prayer, is a promise, is a special treat!

THE MARRIAGE PRAYER

BY LOUIS H EVANS

O God of Love, Thou hast established marriage for the welfare and happiness of mankind. Thine was the plan and only with Thee can we work it out with joy. Thou has said, "It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a help meet for him." Now our joys are doubled since the happiness of one is the happiness of the other. Our burdens now are halved when we share them; we divide the load.

Bless this husband. Bless him as provider of nourishment and raiment and sustain him in all the exactions and pressures of his battle for bread. May his strength be her protection, his character be her boast and her pride, and may he so live that she will find him the haven for which the heart of woman truly longs. Bless this loving wife. Give her tenderness that will make her great, a deep sense of understanding and a great faith in Thee. Give her that inner beauty of soul that never fades, that eternal youth that is found in holding fast the things that never age.

Teach them that marriage is not living merely for each other; it is two uniting and joining hands to serve Thee. Give them a great spiritual purpose in life. May they seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and the other things shall be added unto them.

May they not expect that perfection of each other that belongs alone to Thee. May they minimize each other's weaknesses, be swift to praise and magnify each other's strengths, and see each other through a lover's kind and patient eyes.

Now make such assignments to them in Thy will as will develop their characters as they walk together. Give them enough tears to keep them tender, enough hurts to keep them humane, enough failure to keep their hands clenched tightly in Thine, and enough success to encourage them in their walk with Thee. May they never take each other's love for granted, but always experience that breathless wonder that exclaims, "Out of all this world you have chosen me."

When life is done, may they be found then as now, hand in hand, still thanking God for each other. May they serve Thee happily, faithfully, together, until as last one shall lay the other into the arms of God. This we ask through Jesus Christ, great lover of our souls.

Amen .

The Meanest Mother

I had the meanest mother in the whole world. While other kids ate candy for breakfast, I had to have cereal, eggs or toast. When others had cokes and candy for lunch, I had to eat a sandwich. As you can guess, my supper was different than the other kids' also.

But at least, I wasn't alone in my sufferings. My sister and two brothers had the same mean mother as I did. My mother insisted upon knowing where we were at all times. You'd think we were on a chain gang. She had to know who our friends were and where we were going. She insisted if we said we'd be gone an hour, that we be gone one hour or less--not one hour and one minute.

I am nearly ashamed to admit it, but she actually struck us. Not once, but each time we had a mind of our own and did as we pleased. That poor belt was used more on our seats than it was to hold up Daddy's pants. Can you imagine someone actually hitting a child just because he disobeyed? Now you can begin to see how mean she really was.

We had to wear clean clothes and take a bath. The other kids always wore their clothes for days. We reached the height of insults because she made our clothes herself, just to save money. Why, oh why, did we have to have a mother who made us feel different from our friends?

The worst is yet to come. We had to be in bed by nine each night and up at eight the next morning. We couldn't sleep 'till noon like our friends. So while they slept my mother actually had the nerve to break the child-labor law. She made us work. We had to wash dishes, make beds, learn to cook and all sorts of cruel things. I believe she laid awake at night thinking up mean things to do to us. She always insisted upon us telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, even if it killed us - and it nearly did.

By the time we were teen-agers, she was much wiser, and our life became even more unbearable. None of this tooting the horn of a car for us to come running. She embarrassed us to no end by making our dates and friends come to the door to get us. If I spent the night with a girlfriend, can you imagine she checked on me to see if I were really there. I never had the chance to elope to Mexico. That is if I'd had a boyfriend to elope with. I forgot to mention, while my friends were dating at the mature age of 12 and 13, my old fashioned mother refused to let me date until the age of 15 and 16. Fifteen, that is, if you dated only to go to a school function. And that was maybe twice a year.

Through the years, things didn't improve a bit. We could not lie in bed, "sick" like our friends did, and miss school. If our friends had a toe ache, a hang nail or serious ailment, they could stay home from school. Our marks in school had to be up to par. Our friends' report cards had beautiful colors on them, black for passing, red for failing. My mother, being as different as she was, would settle for nothing less than ugly black marks.

As the years rolled by, first one and then the other of us was put to shame. We were graduated from high school. With our mother behind us, talking, hitting and demanding respect, none of us was allowed the pleasure of being a drop-out.

My mother was a complete failure as a mother. Out of four children, a couple of us attained some higher education. None of us have ever been arrested, divorced or beaten his mate. Each of my brothers served his time in the service of this country. And whom do we have to blame for the terrible way we turned out? You're right, our mean mother. Look at the things we missed. We never got to march in a protest parade, nor to take part in a riot, burn draft cards, and a million and one other things that our friends did. She forced us to grow up into God-fearing, educated, honest adults.

Using this as a background, I am trying to raise my three children. I stand a little taller and I am filled with pride when my children call me mean. Because, you see, I thank God, He gave me the meanest mother in the

whole world.

* This article was changed on June 8, 2001 after receiving the following e-mail from the author. I thought you'd like to hear why she wrote it. - Mike

I am going to forward you the original article, "Meanest Mother", that I wrote in 1967. I noticed on your web page, you had a copy that has been changed many, many times.

This was first published in the Our Sunday Visitor, a Catholic newspaper, in 1967, and again in Guideposts, a magazine, by Dr. Norman Vincent Peale. It has a copyright. I never mind anyone using it, non-profit, as long as they use the original and my name as author. I am very pleased that you liked it enough to put on your web page, but would appreciate it, if you would change it to reflect the original. It seems to have taken on a life of its own, and I have spent many years trying to keep it corrected.

I wrote this because my three children thought I was such a mean mom. I never intended to have it published, but friends and family encouraged me to submit it for publication. I have heard many stories as to how people received it. I suppose the one that touched my heart the most, was the lady who said it was read at a dinner after her mother's funeral.

Thank you for putting it on your web page. I am looking forward to reading the original there also.

Thank you, Bobbie Pingaro

The Meaning of the 12 Days of Christmas

People often think of 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' as the days preceding the festival. Actually, Christmas is a season of the Christian Year that lasts for the twelve days beginning December 25 and lasting until January 6 - the Day of Epiphany, when the church celebrates the revelation of Christ as the Light of the world and recalls the journey of the magi.

Concerning the popular song 'the Twelve Days of Christmas,' a couple of years ago, I learned the story behind the text from an article in the newsletter of the Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Montgomery.

From 1558 until 1829 Roman Catholics in England were not allowed to practice their faith openly. During that era someone wrote 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' as a kind of secret catechism that could be sung in public without the risk of persecution. The song has two levels of interpretation: the surface meaning plus a hidden meaning known only to members of the church. Each element in the carol is a code word for a religious reality.

- 1) The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus Christ.
- 2) The two turtledoves are the Old and New Testaments.
- 3) Three French hens stand for faith, hope and love.
- 4) The four calling birds are the four Gospels
- 5) The five gold rings recall the Torah (Law) the first five book of the Old Testament
- 6) The six geese a-laying stand for the six days of creation.
- 7) Seven swans a-swimming represent the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit.
- 8) The eight maids a-milking are the eight beatitudes.
- 9) Nine ladies dancing? These are the nine fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5).
- 10) The ten lords a-leaping are the Ten Commandments.
- 11) Eleven pipers piping stand for the eleven faithful disciples.
- 12) Twelve drummers drumming symbolize the 12 points of belief in the Apostles' Creed.

The Paradox of our Age

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy less. We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences, but less time. We have more degrees but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgment; more experts, yet more problems; more medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too little, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom. We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often.

We've learned how to make a living, but not a life. We've added years to life not life to years. We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet a new neighbor. We conquered outer space but not inner space. We've done larger things, but not better things.

We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul. We've conquered the atom, but not our prejudice. We write more, but learn less. We plan more, but accomplish less. We've learned to rush, but not to wait. We build more computers to hold more information, to produce more copies than ever, but we communicate less and less.

These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion; big men and small character; steep profits and shallow relationships. These are the days of two incomes but more divorce; fancier houses but broken homes. These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throwaway morality, one night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer, to quiet, to kill. It is a time when there is much in the showroom window and nothing in the stockroom. A time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when you can choose either to share this insight, or to just hit delete.

Remember, spend some time with your loved ones, because they are not going to be around forever.

Remember to say a kind word to someone who looks up to you in awe, because that little person soon will grow up and leave your side.

Remember to give a warm hug to the one next to you, because that is the only treasure you can give with your heart and it doesn't cost a cent.

Remember to say "I love you" to your partner and your loved ones, but most of all mean it. A kiss and an embrace will mend hurt when it comes from deep inside of you.

Remember to hold hands and cherish the moment for someday that person will not be there again.

Give time to love, give time to speak, and give time to share the precious thoughts in your mind.

AND ALWAYS REMEMBER:

Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.

Dr. Bob Moorehead is former pastor of Seattle's Overlake Christian Church. He retired in 1998 after 29 years in that post. The essay appeared in 'Words Aptly Spoken,' Dr. Moorehead's 1995 collection of prayers, homilies, and monologues used in his sermons and radio broadcasts.

When a friend sent me the above poem whose source is currently unknown, I could not help but be reminded of this verse in the Bible, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:36)

In so many ways, modern society has provided us with so much, and yet, in so many ways, we have so little of the stuff that really matters.

There is an old saying, "You can't take it with you." When all is said and done, and our physical bodies have run their course, no amount of diamonds, furs, big houses, or money will spare us from our death. Nor will material riches guarantee our salvation. Instead, in those final minutes or hours of our last breaths, we will consider two things. Those we love, and what lies beyond physical death. The truly wise will question these things now, rather than when it may be too late.

I suppose, when one boils the above poem down to one word, a suitable single sentiment would be "priorities". Do we place flesh before spirit? Selfish desires before godly needs? Lust before love? These are probing questions only we, ourselves, can answer, but there will a come a time we will have to face yet Another. God.

Contributed by Melanie Schurr

The Plight Before Christmas

'Tis the month before Christmas and all through the house,
Our two teens leave gift lists for me and my spouse.

They scribble and write, compose and compare,
In hopes that St. Nick has some big bucks to spare!

But Dad with his wallet and I with my purse,
Realize things have taken a turn for the worse.

Gone are the days of toy cars and doll beds,
When visions of sugarplums danced in their heads.

It's CDs, and sweaters, and watches and rings,
Computers and Play Station Games of all things.

More rapid than reindeer the items ring up,
We'll have to get second and third jobs to keep up!

So I think for a minute, and then start to smile--
The answer's been with me, there all the while.

Then I gather my children and with hugs and a kiss,
I remind them it's not about presents and lists.

It's about friends and family, and laughter and love,
And the blessings we're given from God up above.

In the midst of the frenzy and the lure of the mall,
We shouldn't forget..the greatest Gift of all.

And then I'll exclaim 'ere I turn in for the night,
"Happy Christmas to all, and... may we all get it right!"

Our thanks to Mary Beth Weisenberger of Continental, Ohio for reminding us to keep Christ in our Christmas.

The Window

Two men, both seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon to help drain the fluid from his lungs. His bed was next to the room's only window. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back.

The men talked for hours on end. They spoke of their wives and families, their homes, their jobs, their involvement in the military service, where they had been on vacation.

Every afternoon when the man in the bed by the window could sit up, he would pass the time by describing to his roommate all the things he could see outside the window. The man in the other bed began to live for those one hour periods where his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and color of the world outside.

The window overlooked a park with a lovely lake. Ducks and swans played on the water while children sailed their model boats. Young lovers walked arm in arm amidst flowers of every color of the rainbow. Grand old trees graced the landscape, and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance.

As the man by the window described all this in exquisite detail, the man on the other side of the room would close his eyes and imagine the picturesque scene. One warm afternoon the man by the window described a parade passing by.

Although the other man couldn't hear the band - he could see it. In his mind's eye as the gentleman by the window portrayed it with descriptive words.

Days and weeks passed. One morning, the day nurse arrived to bring water for their baths only to find the lifeless body of the man by the window, who had died peacefully in his sleep. She was saddened and called the hospital attendants to take the body away.

As soon as it seemed appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the switch, and after making sure he was comfortable, she left him alone.

Slowly, painfully, he propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look at the world outside. Finally, he would have the joy of seeing it for himself. He strained to slowly turn to look out the window beside the bed. It faced a blank wall.

The man asked the nurse what could have compelled his deceased roommate who had described such wonderful things outside this window. The nurse responded that the man was blind and could not even see the wall. She said, "Perhaps he just wanted to encourage you."

Epilogue: There is tremendous happiness in making others happy, despite our own situations. Shared grief is half the sorrow, but happiness when shared, is doubled. If you want to feel rich, just count all the things you have that money can't buy. "Today is a gift, that's why it is called the present."

Today

I woke up early today, excited over all I get to do before the clock strikes midnight. I have responsibilities to fulfill today. I am important.

My job is to choose what kind of day I am going to have.

Today I can complain because the weather is rainy or I can be thankful that the grass is getting watered for free.

Today I can feel sad that I don't have more money or I can be glad that my finances encourage me to plan my purchases wisely and guide me away from waste.

Today I can grumble about my health or I can rejoice that I am alive.

Today I can lament over all that my parents didn't give me when I was growing up or I can feel grateful that they allowed me to be born.

Today I can cry because roses have thorns or I can celebrate that thorns have roses.

Today I can mourn my lack of friends or I can excitedly embark upon a quest to discover new relationships.

Today I can whine because I have to go to work or I can shout for joy because I have a job to do.

Today I can complain because I have to go to school or eagerly open my mind and fill it with rich new tidbits of knowledge.

Today I can murmur dejectedly because I have to do housework or I can feel honored because the Universe has provided shelter for my mind, body and soul.

Today stretches ahead of me, waiting to be shaped. And here I am, the sculptor who gets to do the shaping.

What today will be like is up to me. I get to choose what kind of day I will have!

What kind of day will you have?

True Night Before Christmas

by John W Cook

T'was the night before Christmas, when all through the earth
God's people were waiting the time of Christ's birth.

The various prophecies, God-given with care
Came to pass on one night in Judea there.

The people were scattered through Israel's land
Paying their taxes at Caesar's command

Young Mary, with Joseph, espoused to be wed,
Descendants of David to Bethlehem sped.

T'was late in the evening they arrived there that day
They found at the inn there was no place to stay.

Away in a stable, no place for a guest,
They settled that couple, to find them some rest.

The star in the sky shone unusually bright
To herald the event to take place that night.

When there, on the hay, her time now full come,
The virgin, dear Mary, gave birth to God's Son.

With no crib to lie in, a stable for sheep
Became for our Saviour a place for His sleep.

Moreover, that night in a field calm and still
Rough shepherds were resting serenely until

Through the dark of the sky God's glory shone round.
All quaking and frightened, they fell to the ground.

To these as they trembled God's messenger came
Good tidings of great joy to all to proclaim.

"For you on this day in the city close by
A baby, your Saviour, in a manger does lie.

So go to the stable, the baby you'll find.
In swaddling clothes He lies there entwined"

And then in a twinkling 'twas heard through the air
The praise of the angels assembled up there.

To God in the highest all glory and praise,
Goodwill amongst men and peace through their days."

When the angels returned then to heaven above,
There stood the shepherds amazed by God's love.

A moment they wondered, then hastily ran.
Found Mary and Joseph and God's gift to man.

The baby, named Jesus. man's Saviour from sin,
Had come as was promised, His work to begin.

His eyes not quite opened how much they would see
Of hatred and failures, of man's misery.

The shepherds, the wonder, made known as they went,
Told all of the Gift that to mankind was sent.

The star, that same star that proclaimed His birth,
Was shining for people all over this earth,

The wise men, they saw it and knew what it meant,
The Saviour God promised this world had been sent

They left all to find Him. a baby, 'tis true:
He came as their Saviour; He came for us too.

Once more it is Christmas. the time of Christ's birth.
A holiday season: is that all it's worth?

No, there's hope in this message, forgiveness from sin
For those who receive Him, who let Him come in

Let's remember HIS birthday, let's celebrate right
Merry Christmas to all. to all a good night.

T'was the night before Jesus came

T'was the night before Jesus came and all thru the house
Not a creature was praying, not one in the house
Their Bibles were lain on the shelf without care
In hopes that Jesus would not come there.

The children were dressing to crawl into bed,
Not once ever kneeling or bowing a head.
And Mom in her rocker with baby on her lap
Was watching the Late Show while I took a nap.

When out of the east there arose such a clatter,
I sprang to my feet to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash!

When what to my wondering eyes should appear
But angels proclaiming that Jesus was here
With a light like the sun sending forth a bright ray
I knew in a moment this must be THE DAY!

The light of His face made me cover my head
It was Jesus! returning just like He had said.
And though I possessed worldly wisdom and wealth,
I cried when I saw Him in spite of myself.

In the Book of Life which He held in His hand.
Was written the name of every saved man.
He spoke not a word as He searched for my name,
When He said "It's not here" my head hung in shame.

The people whose names had been written with love
He gathered to take to His Father above.
With those who were ready He rose without a sound,
While the rest were left standing around

I fell to my knees, but it was too late,
I had waited too long and thus sealed my fate.
I stood and I cried as they rose out of sight,
Oh, if only I had been ready tonight.

In the words of this poem the meaning is clear,
The coming of Jesus is drawing near.
There's only one life and when comes the last call,
We'll find that the Bible was true after all!

(Revelations 19:11-16)

Author

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What My Mother Taught Me

My mother taught me to appreciate a job well done:
“If you’re going to kill each other, do it outside – I’ve just finished cleaning!”

My mother taught me religion:
“You’d better pray that stain will come out of the carpet.”

My mother taught me about time travel:
“If you don’t straighten up, I’m going to knock you right into the middle of next week!”

My mother taught me logic:
“Because I said so, that’s why.”

My mother taught me foresight:
“Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you’re in an accident.”

My mother taught me irony:
“Keep laughing and I’ll give you something to cry about.”

My mother taught me about the science of osmosis:
“Shut your mouth and eat your supper!”

My mother taught me about contortionism:
“Will you look at the dirt on the back of your neck!”

My mother taught me about stamina:
“You’ll sit there until all that spinach is finished.”

My mother taught me about weather:
“It looks as if a tornado swept through your room.”

My mother taught me how to solve physics problems:
“If I yelled because I saw a meteor coming towards you, would you listen to me then?”

My mother taught me about hypocrisy:
“If I’ve told you once, I’ve told you a million times: don’t exaggerate!!”

My mother taught me the circle of life:
“I brought you into this world, and I can take you out.”

My mother taught me about behaviour modification:
“Stop acting like your father!”

My mother taught me about envy:
“There are millions of less fortunate children in this world who don’t have wonderful parents like you do!”

Thanks, Mom!

When I'm An Old Lady

When I'm an old lady, I'll live with my kids,
and make them so happy, just as they did.
I want to pay back all the joy they've provided,
returning each deed. Oh, they'll be so excited.

When I'm an old lady and live with my kids.

I'll write on the wall with reds, whites and blues,
and bounce on the furniture wearing my shoes.
I'll drink from the carton and then leave it out.
I'll stuff all the toilets, and oh, how they'll shout.

When I'm an old lady and live with my kids.

When they're on the phone and just out of reach,
I'll get into things like sugar and bleach.
Oh, they'll snap their fingers and then shake their head,
and when that is done I'll hide under the bed.

When I'm an old lady and live with my kids.

When they cook dinner and call me to meals,
I'll not eat my green beans or salads congealed.
I'll gag on my okra, spill milk on the table,
and when they get angry, run fast as I'm able.

When I'm an old lady and live with my kids.

I'll sit close to the TV, through the channels I'll click,
I'll cross both my eyes to see if they stick.
I'll take off my socks and throw one away,
And play in the mud until the end of the day.

When I'm an old lady and live with my kids.

And later in bed, I'll lay back and sigh,
and thank God in prayer and then close my eyes,
and my kids will look down with a smile slowly creeping,
and say with a groan. "She's so sweet when she's sleeping!"

When I'm an old lady and live with my kids.

When The Warrior Returns

- Francis Scott Key

When the warrior returns, from the battle afar,
To the home and the country he nobly defended,
O! Warm be the welcome to gladden his ear,
And loud be the joy that his perils are ended:
In the full tide of song let his fame roll along,
To the feast-flowing board let us gratefully throng,
Where, mixed with the olive, the laurel shall wave,
And form a bright wreath for the brows of the brave.

Columbians! A band of your brothers behold,
Who claim the reward of your hearts' warm emotion,
When your cause, when your honor, urged onward the bold,
In vain frowned the desert, in vain raged the ocean:
To a far distant shore, to the battle's wild roar,
They rushed, your fair fame and your rights to secure:
Then, mixed with the olive, the laurel shall wave,
And form a bright wreath for the brows of the brave.

In the conflict resistless, each toil they endured,
'Till their foes fled dismayed from the war's desolation:
And pale beamed the Crescent, its splendor obscured
By the light of the Star Spangled flag of our nation.
Where each radiant star gleamed a meteor of war,
And the turbaned heads bowed to its terrible glare,
Now, mixed with the olive, the laurel shall wave,
And form a bright wreath for the brows of the brave.

Our fathers, who stand on the summit of fame,
Shall exultingly hear of their sons the proud story:
How their young bosoms glow'd with the patriot flame,
How they fought, how they fell, in the blaze of their glory.
How triumphant they rode o'er the wondering flood,
And stained the blue waters with infidel blood;
How, mixed with the olive, the laurel did wave,
And formed a bright wreath for the brows of the brave.

Then welcome the warrior returned from afar,
To the home and the country he nobly defended:
Let the thanks due to valor now gladden his ear,
And loud be the joy that his perils are ended.
In the full tide of song let his fame roll along,
To the feast-flowing board let us gratefully throng,
Where, mixed with the olive, the laurel shall wave,
And form a bright wreath for the brows of the brave.

Why Jesus is Better Than Santa Claus

Santa lives at the North Pole ...

JESUS is everywhere.
Santa rides in a sleigh ..

JESUS rides on the wind and walks on the water.
Santa comes but once a year ...

JESUS is an ever present help.
Santa fills your stockings with goodies ...

JESUS supplies all your needs.
Santa comes down your chimney uninvited ...

JESUS stands at your door and knocks, and then enters your heart.
You have to wait in line to see Santa ...

JESUS is as close as the mention of His name.
Santa lets you sit on his lap ...

JESUS lets you rest in His arms.
Santa doesn't know your name, all he can say is "Hi little boy or girl, what's your name?" ...

JESUS knew our name before we did. Not only does He know our name, He knows our address too. He knows our history and future and He even knows how many hairs are on our heads.
Santa has a belly like a bowl full of jelly ...

JESUS has a heart full of love.
All Santa can offer is HO HO HO ...

JESUS offers health, help and hope.
Santa says "You better not cry" ...

JESUS says "Cast all your cares on me for I care for you."
Santa's little helpers make toys ...

JESUS makes new life, mends wounded hearts,
repairs broken homes and builds mansions.
Santa may make you chuckle but ...

JESUS gives you joy that is your strength.
While Santa puts gifts under your tree ...

JESUS became our gift and died on the tree.

It's obvious there is really no comparison. We need to remember WHO Christmas is all about. We need to put Christ back in Christmas, Jesus is still the reason for the season. Yes, Jesus is better, he is even better than Santa Claus.