

Born to die

Read Isaiah 53

The sights and sounds, the symbols and decorations, the carols and flurry everywhere we go these days remind us that the Christmas season is here again.

Christmas – What a wonderful time of year! Christmas – What a great time to be alive!

Christmas – What joyous gatherings with family and friends, filled with all kinds of foods and treats, laughter and fun, gifts and goodies, conjuring images of Christmases past.

Yet at the heart of all the celebratory activities is the story of the One who gave us Christmas.

And while it is no doubt the best story ever, it is not without its elements of sadness, for stamped across its account in big red letters is the markings of sorrow, the evidence of shed blood, the reality of sacrifice, the announcement of death, the eulogy of the Baby born in a manger – born to die – born to die so that every man, woman, boy or girl could get a shot at life.

Few things if any affect me like the Christmas story; and yet I know I'm not alone, as every day the testimonies of multiplied thousands bear witness to the reality of the fact that the Christmas story continues to come alive in the hearts of people across cultures: People who've discovered that the true meaning of Christmas is found not in things, but in a Person – in the Person of the Christ-child who was born to die that all who believe in Him might live.

That's why the story of Christmas gives hope to those who feel hopeless, joy to those who are saddened, peace to the restless, comfort to the grieving, strength to those who are feeble, love to the scorned, and life everlasting to a world that is dying in trespasses and sin.

But it simply doesn't get any better than this, God offers eternal life to all who would receive the gift of salvation purchased by His Son Jesus when He died on the cross for all mankind. It's a gift that is freely offered and one that must be freely accepted, without force. It's a gift that's made available to anyone and everyone who's willing to receive it.

So this Christmas season, let's take a journey back in time and visit that first Christmas scene of some 2,000 years ago. Let's find the stable and tiptoe to the manger where the Christ-child lies, surrounded by smelly animals – compelling emblems of death and sacrifice, forcing us to shift our focus and consider the overwhelming cost of Christmas – the very life of the only begotten Son of God.

Then let's show our gratitude by opening our hearts and inviting the Christ-child to take up residence there. Let's throw our arms wide open and receive His free gift of salvation. Let's make room this Christmas for the One who died that we might live.