

CHRISTMAS VINE 2011

Every year, I try to think of something fresh to inspire us all as I begin my Christmas message. I have spent the last few days entertaining an energetic 4 year old grandson; he gives me so much pleasure seeing him growing and changing, for him there is a need for love and stability in his little life. He is a child that soaks up trust, knowledge and new things every single day. As I thought of this precious young life I couldn't help but think of the importance of our children, especially at this time of year when we celebrate the birth of a special child into a small, poor, village and family in Palestine over 2000 years ago. He was born into a loving family, brought up to love and respect his family, his faith and his contemporaries. I'm sure he too gave his parents and extended family lots of pleasure as he grew in stature and knowledge. He certainly wouldn't have had the temptations modern day families have when all around him was fear and uncertainty. Who was it that said that it takes a whole village to raise a child? (*I looked it up on Google which states it is a traditional African saying attributed to Hilary Clinton when she was First lady*) I guess that's how it would have been in Jesus day as well. He was the product of his time, place and circumstances. He had healthy respect for life, and for all creation as the most important things, instilled in him by those who nurtured him, nothing was taken for granted.

We are reminded daily of the poverty and disease in so many poor countries, and we can try to be as generous as we can to help alleviate it and to help with the necessities of life such as clean water and adequate shelter and food, which is the right of all people. (Support the work of CWS). Alongside of that we see so many technical gadgets and toys being the right of children in more influential countries, even my little grandson knows more about games on the computer than I do! How do we even try to bridge the gap? That is so hard to even begin to comprehend. As we move towards Christmas we can reflect on Jesus childhood that led him into a mission that began the process of changing lives that began 2000 years ago and continues into our day and culture. His family life gave him the love, the nurturing and the confidence, the education and the discipline to say and do what he saw was the most important thing. His relationship with the One he knew as his Father, His God and ours, his reliance on the Holy Spirit to inspire and give him courage, his love and knowledge of the scriptures, the way he gathered disciples and friends around him and his ability to tell stories that had meaning and his genuineness of love that could reach across society, religions and gender made him an inspiration for all who follow him, as it still does today.

So let us rightly think of children at Christmas, not by the material things they crave, but by loving and nurturing them so that they can have the confidence, the stability and the respect to go into their future and help bring change for those who come after them.

Yes, it takes a village to raise a child. This old adage holds a wealth of truth. None of us can stand alone. We are all dependent on each other and the responsibility to ensure that our children live happy, healthy lives belongs to all of us. It is our responsibility to make sure this next generation succeeds.

Have a Christ-filled Christmas and may peace, hope, joy and love be the gifts you give and receive as you celebrate afresh the birth of this special Child at Christmas.

God's blessing be yours, Doris