



The Essence of Christmas

Another Christmas is almost here, and if you're like most people, you're probably so busy with all that goes into Christmas that you haven't yet found much time to stop

and think about "the reason for the season." The following quotes and a poem are all about putting the meaning and joy back into Christmas. – *Ronan Keane*

Christmas is the spirit of giving without a thought of getting. It is happiness because we see joy in people. It is forgetting self and finding time for others. It is discarding the meaningless and stressing the true values. – *Thomas Monson*

The world is filled with the sounds of Christmas. If you listen with your outer ears, you will hear carols, bells, and laughter, and now and then a sob of loneliness. If you listen with the inner ear, you will hear the sound of angels' wings, the hush of inner expectation, and the sacred sound of the deepest silence, the vibrant whisper of the eternal Word.

The world is filled with the sights of Christmas. If you look with your outer eyes, you will see brightly decorated trees, tinsel stars, flaming candles, and a crèche. If you look with the inner eye, you will see the star of Bethlehem in your own heart. – *Adapted from Anna May Nielson*

Keeping Christmas

Henry van Dyke

There is a better thing than the *observance* of Christmas Day,
and that is *keeping* Christmas.

Are you willing to forget what you have done for other people and
to remember what other people have done for you?

To ignore what the world owes you,
and to think what you owe the world?

To stoop down and consider the needs and desires of little children?

To remember the weakness and loneliness of people who are growing old?

To stop asking how much your friends like you,
and ask yourself whether you love them enough?

To make a grave for your ugly thoughts
and a garden for your kindly feelings? ...

Are you willing to believe that love is the strongest thing in the world
– stronger than hate, stronger than death – and that the blessed Life
which began in Bethlehem many years ago is the image and
brightness of eternal love?
Then you can keep Christmas!



We can help bring the light into the Christmas holidays as we consider the needs of others, give generously, and share special moments together. Our actions don't have to be costly or extravagant. We can call a friend who is lonely, offer to help someone who is burdened, send a text, or visit an elderly person and take time to listen patiently. We can start within our own home and family, our neighborhood, our workplace, and our surroundings. One small act of kindness is more valuable than a bucket load of good intentions. – *Gabriel and Sally García*



Why is the original Christmas story considered such a source of hope to so many people around the world today? ... That first Christmas was a declaration of the good news for everyone! It was hope for shepherds and wise men alike. It was the hope that God hadn't forgotten about the world he made. If the name Jesus really means rescuer; then we can still be rescued from hopelessness because of that first Christmas time! – *Grace Foundation*

Hope is being able to see light despite all of the darkness. – *Desmond Tutu*

