

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

It's the most wonderful time of the year! At least that's what we hear on the radio and our Christmas CDs. It's the most wonderful time of the year. I guess it's because it's the time of year where everyone is thinking about the holidays – what gifts to give, what food to make, what parties to attend...but is it really the most wonderful time of the year?

For some, the answer is probably yes. For others, it isn't the most wonderful time of the year. Rather it's a time that some may want to pass by quickly because of losses in their lives. Many are grieving the loss of a loved one either through death or broken relationships during the holidays. The child that once smiled and sang Christmas carols is no longer there...The father who watched football games with his family New Year's Day is absent. Holiday parties and family get-togethers are no longer the same without your husband or wife. Quiet evenings at home may have turned into lonely and sad times. Loved ones are missed. Family celebrations are different and may not be the happy time that they've been in the past.

It's the most wonderful time of the year. But what about those who have been laid off from their jobs or learned that their job was being eliminated? The financial hardship has created a different atmosphere this holiday season. How are we going to pay the bills? How are we going to celebrate Christmas with our children, with our family when we don't have the resources to give them gifts?

Is it the most wonderful time of the year? I would say yes, but not when thinking about the losses that we have experienced. I say yes because of the hope that we have in this tiny child, this baby whose birth we will celebrate – the Christ child. This baby’s birth brings us hope...this child who grows up and does miraculous things...the Christ who brings comfort and healing in all things...the Christ that loved us all so much that he died on the cross and was raised from the dead to save us from the powers of sin and death.

This baby whose birth we are preparing to celebrate brings us hope and comfort. For in this baby we have a friend...a friend that is always there to listen...a friend that is always there to cry to...a friend who is always there to lend a helping hand...a friend that loves us for who we are...a friend that gives us hope when he says, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”

Now the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding be in your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.