

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

December always seems to be a busy month for many of us. We may be out and about shopping, or going to Christmas parties, or visiting family. Our culture reminds us of how wonderful Christmas will be with the perfect gift. We hear songs on the radio about it being the most wonderful time of the year in one fashion or another. There is one song that I hear this time of year on the radio that makes me cry each time I hear it. One reason is because of its lyrics and another reason is because it reminds me that this time of year can be difficult for many people.

The song that I'm referring to is called *Christmas Shoes*. The words to the chorus are: *Sir, I want to buy these shoes for my mama please; It's Christmas Eve and these shoes are just her size; Could you hurry sir; Daddy says there's not much time; You see, mom's been sick for quite a while; And I know these shoes will make her smile; And I want her to look beautiful if mama meets Jesus tonight.*

The young boy referred to in this song reminds me of one of many possibly situations that could make life difficult during the Christmas season. We might be mourning the loss of a loved one. Watching parades without one of your parents or missing a father or a brother during the family football game in the backyard. We might miss a child or children running around the house with their new toy or being excited over their presents.

Broken or strained relationships make this time of year hard. It might be the first Christmas without a spouse. Children may not understand why Christmas is different.

This time of year can also be difficult because of financial burdens. We may not have the Christmas we want to have because of the loss of a job. The perfect gift for the special people in our lives needs to stay on the shelf to be able to pay the monthly expenses.

Relocating to a new area may make it difficult to be home for the holidays. We may miss the family gathering and meal. We may not be sure where we fit in our new location.

Whatever the circumstances are that make this time of year difficult, we have hope. We have hope in Jesus Christ. Mary and Joseph, with a little help from angels realized this. I can't imagine what this young couple thought. For Joseph to find out that his betrothed was pregnant must've been a nightmare. He planned to dismiss her quietly until the angel appeared to him and told him that the child had been conceived by the Holy Spirit and that they child be name Emmanuel – God with us.

Joseph didn't dismiss Mary. Jesus was born and gives us hope. God is with each and every one of us. On those days when we struggle because of life's difficult moments, God is there. We have hope in the tiny baby whose birth we celebrate in two weeks. Emmanuel – God with us. God is with us each and every step of the way.

In the midst of difficult times, the Christ child comes to us, to warm our hearts and to reassure us of God's unconditional love and presence in our lives. We have comfort and hope in God's promises and love for us.

God is with us.

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