

When my computer sits idle for a set number of minutes this is what happens: the screen goes dark and out of the black come Windows operating system symbols. At first each is but a speck but then it grows larger and larger as it approaches. Just when it looks as if one will fill the whole screen it slides out of view only to be replaced with more symbols of every color beginning as specks then approaching, looming larger then passing by. I can be entertained for some time watching.

Crises in life come like that – first just a speck on the horizon then moving closer, dominating our view. Sometimes it seems that if I could just get through this coming event or this sickness or this time when my loved one is in danger then life could really begin for me. But as soon as one crisis flashes by another appears and when that one slips past still another until finally death will come and life will end.

Now the prophets thought it would be different when the Messiah came. “The people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light. The boots of the trampling warrior and the garments rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a son has been given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders. His authority shall grow continually and there shall be endless peace.”

When the prophet spoke the day of this king was but a speck on a distant horizon but the prophet knew that his king would engulf the world in peace. “He will establish and uphold his kingdom with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore.”

For almost two thousand years Christians have been joining this prophecy to the birth of Jesus. This child of Mary is the light shining in the darkness – the child born, the son given. He is the one called Wonderful counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace. Yet after two thousand years there is still war and justice comes near only to slide on by and righteousness grows closer for a moment but then is swallowed up by evils more vile than any that have gone before. Two thousand years after angels lit up the sky with a song greeting this child’s birth the crises keep on coming and coming until we die.

But this is Christmas – a magical moment for happiness and hope – a time for lavishing gifts as if we are rich and never giving a thought to January when the mail will bring the credit card statement. This is Christmas – a time to forget wars and rumors of wars and sickness and hunger and suffering. The king is born, the light in the darkness, the bringer of endless peace. Just believe. Maybe things will get better.

Sometimes they do for a moment. Your life or mine settles down and there is health and prosperity and safety. But not for everyone. One family is together today – the neighbor's daughter is in Iraq. One family celebrates a year of health today – the neighbor just learned that he has less than a year to live. So why did angels sing?

We humans always think that God is a fix-it man. Cure the disease, stop the war, bring prosperity, change the way the world is – that is what we need from this child of Mary. But Jesus was born not to fix the world but to love. Love is what his whole life would be – teaching, healing, feeding all in love. Even in his dying – loving.

The love of God in Jesus Christ is what we celebrate this day. God was not content just to send us messages of God's love and signs of God's love. In Jesus God has come to love us.

Often love feels kind of weak and helpless. When those we love suffer it tears our hearts not to be able to save and protect them from that suffering. But love is not about fixing another person nor even helping. Love is supporting and encouraging and letting the loved one know that we believe that she will be able to go through what she faces. Jesus loves us like that – not being powerful over us but encouraging and supporting us as we fight the battles life brings us.

And when we fall forgiving. Believing that we will one day learn to walk without falling.

No wonder the angels sang. And we join their song. The love of God has come to us never to abandon us. He does not come closer and closer just pass you by but comes to walk beside you today and forever. Amen.