

Telegram of Hope

The well-known motivational author Norman Vincent Peale wrote, “Christmas waves a magic wand over this world, and behold, everything is softer and more beautiful.” This quote evokes pictures of a roaring fire in a hearth, with colorful stockings hanging from the mantelshelf; an evergreen tree laden with baubles and tinsel, surrounded by a pile of cheerfully wrapped presents; a happy family sitting comfortably on a sofa, reading stories to their children while they sip hot chocolate. Through the window, we see snowflakes gently falling upon the white ground, sparkling in the moonlight. Is that the soft and beautiful world he imagined?

Unfortunately, “soft and beautiful” does not seem to be the right description for the images of distant sorrows and atrocities that we see on the news and read about on the Internet, nor of our sorrows closer to home such as poverty, economic stress, job loss, relationship breakdown, serious illness, or bereavement.

Nonetheless, “soft and beautiful” does make an appearance. The generosity of friends and thoughtfulness of family, the kindness of strangers, and the record fundraising drives by charities are all good examples.

But despite good intentions, human love is not always constant and can fail. There is something deeper to discover, in the words of Reverend Tom Cuthell: “Each year we retell the astonishing entrance that God made into our broken world and we are moved in the very bowels of our being by God’s capacity to surprise us with love. ... The birth of Jesus is God’s heartfelt protest against letting things be, abandoning people to their own devices, leaving people to fall back on the threadbare poverty of their own resources. Jesus is the saving, dynamic help of God among us; he is the one Word on God’s telegram of hope.”¹

And so we might find ourselves agreeing with Mr. Peale after all, that Christmas *does* make life softer and more beautiful, although it’s not down to our celebrations, nor even entirely due to the love shared at this season. It’s down to the “one-word telegram of hope,” which isn’t only for Christmas, but lasts a lifetime and beyond.

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Christmas reminds us that in the midst of adversity miracles happen, seeds are sown that will bear fruit in years to come, and Jesus’ message of peace for all still rings out. In the end good overcomes evil, the dead are resurrected, against the odds the vulnerable baby survives to rule the world.—*Bishop Joe Aldred*

1. www.st-cuthberts.net/crcmas99.php