

## CHRISTMAS

When I was a child sometimes Christmas was rather bleak, and many Christmases were bleaker than others. One year I had learned there was no Santa Claus. I had heard this in school around the age of eight so was aware. Now I was ten and not surprised when my mother told me there would not be any Christmas presents this year. My Father was not working, and I knew money was tight if not non-existent. My bigger brother Bill had quit school on his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of December, and had a job delivering telegrams on a bicycle in Michigan in the middle of winter. My oldest brother was not working, and he and his wife were living with us. I expected nothing but when I woke up on Christmas morning there were a stack of presents for me. Santa Claus had come. Bill had provided my Christmas. When I asked my mother how I had received presents she said that Bill had worked and bought me presents. He would not live long after that and would pass away a year and a half later after joining the Army so he could provide an allotment check monthly. His passing left a huge hole in my life. I never forgot his kind caring for his baby sister and his letters to me some of which I still have. In those letters he urges me to stay in school and to not give up as he had because he had no decent clothes to wear. When I think about Santa Claus I think about Bill. He loved me as no one else did and left me the gifts of his advice and counsel. He would talk to me about my parents' conflicts and give me the courage that I needed to cope. When I think of Santa Claus I think of Bill. He knew the gift of caring for someone so much that a sacrifice was his gift.

John 1:14 The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father full of grace and truth.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for each day you give us and for the beauty and love we receive each and every day. Thank you, Lord, for the gift of a babe, a babe that would grow and live among us and give his life for our sinful nature. Be with us this Christmas. May we remember as we gather the babe that was sent so many years ago, a babe that would grow and offer his life in atonement for our sins. May we seek to be worthy of this sacrifice. Be with our Pastor may we be a blessing to him as he leads us and is a blessing to us. Be with our church, may we seek to make it your church in every way, offering love and forgiveness to all. Be with our staff and leaders, may they be blessed as they are a blessing to us. In the name of Jesus, we offer this prayer. Amen

Grace Epperson