



Just a Holiday?

For many, the meaning of Christmas gets lost in the preparations to celebrate Christmas as a 'holiday'. It has become the culmination of months (especially if you started by Halloween with the retail stores) of decorating and gift buying. Once the presents are unwrapped and the Christmas dinner is eaten, the 'holiday' is over and the next big 'push' is on. It may be getting up early on the 26th for after Christmas sales, preparations for New Year's Eve parties or the culmination of football season with its long list of bowl games. For some, the Christmas tree and decorations are down by New Years, and life resumes its 'normal rhythm' on January 2nd when work and school usually resume. The baby in Bethlehem is forgotten. The coming of the new year, as marked in January, may include hopes and dreams for better things ahead. There may be resolutions made and good intentions for keeping them, but the sense of Christmas as more than a holiday is lost. God sent Jesus not as an excuse for a day off work, a marketing ploy to keep retailers in the black for another year by making sure everyone's 'want list' is filled, or a chance to over indulge in good food. He sent his son to teach people how to live every day in ways that can change the world for the better for all people!

We do not often hear about it, but there are world changing things going on. Start this year looking for them and looking for ways to be a world changer yourself! Here are a couple world changers to start your list:

- ★ Claire Flowers and her preschool age son Otto believe God loves everyone. They are sending a "you deserve to be loved" card to every person on death row by Valentine's Day. They are also sending the same message to all members of Congress to counter the hate mail that the members receive. Claire & Otto want to share the good news Christ brought that all life is valuable, and they hope to encourage the conversation about not taking life for any reason (see Newsline 12-20-2018).
- ★ The Mercer Island, WA High School band raised the money to get themselves and a band from Puerto Rico to the Rose parade after learning of the hardships their counterparts in Puerto Rico still deal with after last year's storms. They're helping in other ways too.

This week pray for:

- The tsunami victims in Indonesia and fire victims in California.
- The New Jersey high school student who had to endure having his dreadlocks chopped off publicly without cause in order to participate in a wrestling match. Pray for all those who must endure such cruel discrimination.
- Two children have now died on the border in US custody. Continue to pray for all children and families in custody and all those seeking asylum, help and safety.



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