

CHRISTMAS 2022

Father John was fond of painting the image of Jesus, the son of God, choosing a messy stable as his birthplace. Father John wanted to remind us that God is with us, especially when things are messy. Good to know, you can count on mess.

For me, the season of Advent and Christmas is a time to feel and remember that hope, love, joy and peace are with us, even in the mess. It's a good time for gratitude and connection. We are truly not alone.

A kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave.

A time to thank all the helpers who show me beauty and give me comfort in the mess: a perfect rose, adoring grandchildren, the warmth of hugs, kind friends. Memories, senses, voices, love – how grateful I am for all.

Christmas is a time for ghosts and former versions of ourselves. We can thank or blame Dickens for this. Book Club is reading *A Christmas Carol* this month. My eyes fly over the words as I have read them and heard them many times before. I like the reminder that we are responsible for our chains:

“You are fettered,” said Scrooge, trembling. “Tell me why?”

“I wear the chain I forged in life,” replied the Ghost. “I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to you?”

Scrooge trembled more and more.

“Or would you know,” pursued the Ghost, “the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have laboured on it, since. It is a ponderous chain!”

The message of redemption and renewal:

Yes! and the bedpost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own. Best and happiest of all, the Time before him was his own, to make amends in!

“I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!” Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out of bed. “The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me.”

The stern directive that mankind is our business:

“Business!” cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. “Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business.”

The wonder of miracles:

“It’s Christmas Day!” said Scrooge to himself. “I haven’t missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can.”

Dickens is a voice that helps us in the mess.

Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and Happy, Healthy, Joyous New Year! Thank you for being a part of my 2022.

Love, Cyndi

Ring Out, Wild Bells

A Christmas Poem by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809 - 1892)

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light;
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more,
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease,
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.



Frank and Cyndi



Mike and Jeff (sons)



Jeff (son)



Jeff and Brittany



Jeff, Brittany, Sydney, Claire



Sydney (age 15)



Claire (age 8) with her Christmas hamsters



Gerard (son)



Blue Mountains, Australia



Maggie (daughter), Devin, Liam (age 5)





David (nephew)



Lily (R.I.P.) and Gerard



Willis



Mandalorian and Linc (R.I.P.)



Tigger and Stuart in the mess