



## CELEBRATING THE SEASON WITH JOYFUL ABANDON

*"Be merry all, be merry all,  
With holly dress the festive hall,  
Prepare the song, the feast, the ball,  
To welcome merry Christmas."*

WILLIAM SPENCER

**THANKSGIVING HAS COME AND GONE**, and the early days of a new Christmas season stand at the doorway of our hearts, awaiting an eager welcome. If you listen closely, even now you may imagine hearing a knock at the door, like a happy announcement that it's time, that the days to prepare for Christmas are here. If you listen with the ears of your spirit and soul, you may even hear a voice—the King of Christmas himself—calling you to begin your celebration. Reminding you to rejoice in him.

Yes, Christmas carries with it an air of excitement, the warmth of home and family, all treasured things touched by tradition, and the joy of Christmas worship. Childhood memories bubble to the surface, bringing out the kid in all of us as we recall the thrill of holiday activities on magical December nights. Or we remember the love and laughter of our family gathered in the living room while watching favorite Christmas movies. And we mustn't forget the years of playing the role of a bleating sheep or an angel with a crooked halo in the Christmas pageant at church.

Warm memories like these from our early days help us welcome the season each year. Charles Dickens said, "It is good to be children

sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child himself.” Just like children, the anticipation of Christmas can also make our grown-up hearts smile. That’s especially true when we’re trying to create similar heartwarming memories for our own children or grandchildren.

Sometimes, though, if we’re honest, a feeling of panic or some other negative emotion may try to intrude on the merry moods our hearts yearn to feel or pass on to others. Too much to do, too little time, expectations, normal daily demands, and unexpected interruptions or disappointments of life try to steal our joy. It’s happened to me time and again over the years.

Let’s not let any Christmas-spirit thieves worm their way into our hearts this year. Instead, let’s take a few simple steps to alleviate the pressures where possible.

We can postpone appointments or tasks that aren’t absolutely necessary, plan for super simple meals, cut back or simplify gift-giving in some way, and forgo activities or traditions that drain us rather than give us joy. Let’s each take the steps needed in our own lives to reduce our stress and then determine to celebrate and enjoy the season with joyful abandon.

Join me, won’t you? The magic and merry, the holly and holy await. Let’s reclaim and welcome a beautiful Christmas!



## Beautiful Christmas

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Beautiful Christmas, I welcome you,  
Come in and dwell with me,  
Deck my home with joy and laughter  
String love lights on the Christmas tree.

Beautiful Christmas, please go with me  
Give cheer to those I greet,  
Warm hearts with simple acts of kindness  
Look closely for the unseen need.

Beautiful Christmas, shine everywhere  
Touch all with peace and goodwill,  
Bring light to even the darkest corners  
Grant hope, speak "Peace, be still."

Beautiful Christmas, I know you now  
The Bethlehem Babe you are,  
I welcome you, come dwell with me,  
Lead me by the light of your star.

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*"On that day the Brand of the LORD will be  
beautiful and glorious . . ." (Isaiah 4:2)*

## *Christmas* **WISDOM**

*Determine to celebrate and enjoy the season with joyful abandon,  
making the adjustments needed to do just that.*

## *Christmas* **PRAYER**

*Jesus, I long to fully welcome this season of celebrating your birth.  
Please help me*

*Christmas* **PAST**

*One of my favorite ways of welcoming Christmas when I was growing up was*

*Christmas* **PRESENT**

*I am welcoming Christmas this year by*

*Christmas* **MERRYMAKING**

*Hold your own little Christmas welcoming ceremony. String lights around your front door or light a Christmas candle—or any number of other symbolic holiday activities—and sing “Joy to the World” or “O Come, All Ye Faithful.” As you create a Christmas ambiance in your home, you’ll set the stage for Christmas worship in your heart.*