

What Will You Reflect on This Christmas?

Christmas always brings thoughts of my childhood, when I believed that Father Christmas landed with his reindeer on my roof, came down the chimney and ate half that mince pie. The nativity story and the stable with no room at the inn came real to me in life when I struggled to find a hotel in a busy city. Christmas always reminds me of Dickens.

Life itself sees the best of times and the worst of times, and Christmas reminds us of these as we sadly and happily reflect. Then the road of life turns into the new year, and the hope for better days grip our great expectations for the times to come. Though Jesus was probably born in April, we celebrate His birth at this time, and in Him for many of us lies that hope, His Spirit that comforts us through the worse of times, the Father who will never leave us alone or abandoned, who celebrates with us the best of times.

It is a time when not all are together as life's toll has separated families through divorce or dispute. It is a time when many are lonely, where widows grieve their losses, where parents lament over a child lost at war or on the streets of our increasingly dangerous cities. My wife celebrates her birthday a few days before Christmas and also remembers the death of her father at this time—emotions mixed, yet calendar reminders of the brief time we spend at life's rock as we hew our lasting testimony and legacy.

In the words of Dickens and because of Jesus, I know in life and death, "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done, it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known." There are far better days ahead; the best is yet to come; and we all need to be bold and reach out to embrace this and do our best, be our unique and wonderfully

made self, give ourselves to others and receive all we encounter with good cheer.

Be at peace with yourself and others this Christmas and prepare for the third decade of the 21st century some 2000 years on from His birth. See yourself in the timeline of that much bigger picture and the agenda laid out for us all. Like the Dickens character Pip, we all have a great benefactor, though we can know Him, and He wants to know us all to remember that. Happy Christmas to all of you. {eoa}

Martin Clarke *is an international businessman.*