

# Cross Current



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## Manger Danger

Too often at Christmas, we put Jesus away in a manger.

We limit our thoughts of him to when he was a baby, holy but harmless, an infant who makes no demands on our lives — so unlike the radical Saviour he became, the one who called his followers to sacrifice and service. The truth is, the baby in the feed box makes us feel warm, comfortable and complacent, instead of challenging us to give and grow until it hurts.



The real Jesus of Christmas is not the babe of Bethlehem but the Christ of the crucifixion, the risen one of the resurrection who offers pardon and peace with God because he paid the penalty for our sins. In return for forgiveness, he expects a personal commitment to get to know and love him in a way that shapes our values, thoughts and actions. Ultimately, belief must influence behaviour, and character our conduct. If Jesus didn't come back from the dead, none of the story is to be trusted. But, if he did, none of the story is to be ignored, including his call to put God and others first in all things.

In other words, Christmas without Easter is as empty as the packaging we pitch the minute we open our presents. But look for the parallels between the Saviour and the saved and they shine like the eastern star that guides the wise ones to the wee one.

For starters, the birth of Jesus unfolds when a ruler decrees that all citizens shall go back home, prepared to pay the price of citizenship. Just as Caesar decrees the census, God decries the sin in us and calls his people to return to their spiritual roots, ready to render the currency of his spiritual kingdom: love and faithfulness.



If your faith is  
ornamental, you have  
a spiritual hangup! .

followers of Christ meet at  
16 Morrell St., Btfd, ON, N3T 4J2  
*Sharing Jesus and the Journey*

**JOIN US!**

Sunday  
Worship 11:00

Wednesday  
Bible Study 7:00  
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Pregnant with spiritual possibilities, we forfeit the comfort and acceptance of the world, which has no room for pilgrims like us. We're kept on the outside, our faith dissed, dismissed or disdained by those too distracted to see its true value.

But even amid isolation and the apathy of others, Christ is born in us, bringing joy and rejuvenation. Our hearts are the manger, a rough, improbable place for the gift of God to be revealed. With our journey home still stretching before us, we wrap the treasure of heaven in whatever we have at the time — the rags of our gratitude and good intentions — and marvel when God brings others to us to see the mind-altering miracle that has arrived in our lives.

Like Mary and Joseph, we must keep the emphasis on Christ and not ourselves, recognizing he is the one who will save the seekers. God, through his Holy Spirit, will guide the humble and the available to his Son and our role is simply to share the peace, power and presence we've been entrusted to present.

But we can't leave Jesus in the manger and stay put in the stable. We must move on, open to God's word, God's will and God's way. We follow as he leads, mindful that those who know power and privilege will often feel threatened by a Saviour who lays claim to their throne. Still, if we serve well, our Father will draw to us many who see in our love a glimpse of the goodness and forgiveness of his grace.

Especially in the church, we can stand in awesome wonder as those who've travelled far on their journey of faith break out their offerings of praise, prayer and passion for the Lord. Even today, the wise seek him and they often find him in our work and worship.

And just as the Magi bowed low in the presence of the newly-born babe — or Peter and John at the tomb bent low in the absence of the newly-raised Lamb — those who see our hope and happiness will sometimes fall to their knees in adoration of the Author of every good and perfect gift.

We are the ones who will deliver Christ to the world, not as a baby but as the bringer of light and life; faith and freedom; healing and holiness. Though we may not yet fully understanding the ever-unfolding scope of God's plan, we are entrusted with the Messiah and we must let him grow to maturity in our lives. The manger is a good place to start, but learn to think outside the box.