

# Cross Current



Volume 34, Number 35

December 13, 2009

## Christmas Through A Fish Eye Lens



Talk about generating more heat than light!

According to authorities in Eugene, Oregon, a six-month-old kitten was swatting at some bright lights on a Christmas tree when some of the bulbs caught fire. In seconds, ravenous flames spread to a carpet and the heat of the blaze cracked a nearby fish bowl, sending water gushing onto the floor.

Thankfully, the deluge put out some of the flames, slowing the

small inferno just long enough for rescue crews to arrive and douse the rest of the fire. Inside the near-empty fish bowl firefighters found Clyde the goldfish, limp and unresponsive. But when they put him in another container of water, he revived, survived and eventually thrived. Investigators later confirmed that water from the fish bowl had stopped the fire from getting out of control.

In that small story I see a parallel to the true meaning of Christmas, the awesome nature of God's love, and a lesson for all of us as we head into the holiday season. For starters, God's desire for joy, peace on earth and goodwill toward all was thwarted the minute He gave us the right to choose between right and wrong.

Good will is often no match for free will. If we accept the right to make our own decisions, we must accept the reality that our bad choices will hurt ourselves and those we love. Like the curious kitten, we toy with things we don't understand; things that are dangerous; things that can plunge us into darkness and set fire to our world.

But as painful as that is, it beats the alternative. God could've made us blissful, obedient robots, programmed to do his bidding and nothing but. But that would've brought *him* no glory and *us* no growth.



God's gift to you.  
Don't keep it  
under wraps!

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  
Phone 758-5673  
(75 U-LORD)

At least the way things are, when God calls for volunteers, our response isn't Stepford but to step forward. In fact, it's often the trauma in this world that makes us see our need for a Father who loves us so much that he rescued us from our sin and ourselves.

That's where Christmas comes in. While most people think the season is a symbol for giving, a celebration of family and tradition, or a sop to spirituality, it's much more than that. Think of Christmas as an early Easter present. Jesus didn't come to teach us about sharing and generosity, he came to take our sins to the cross, to pay the ultimate price for the fallout of our free will.

The Christmas concept of God himself appearing in human flesh is not about birth followed by death, but about death followed by birth. "If any of you wants to be my follower," said Jesus, "you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross, and follow me. If you... give up your life for me, you'll find true life. And how do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your soul in the process? Is anything worth more than your soul?" (Matt. 16:24-26)

Judging from the orgy of acquisition now underway, it seems most people have answered, "Yes!" The bright lights beckon and we continue to swat away, oblivious, even to the obvious.

While many Christians are content to leave Jesus safely in the manger, he calls us to follow in his radical footsteps of sacrifice and service. It's our turn. The cross awaits and we must either pick it up or pack it up like a Christmas tree at the end of the holidays. Out of our sight. Out of our *minds*! Or we can carry it. And let it carry us, wherever Jesus leads.

Even though we celebrate the joyful Christmas message that Christ made peace between us and God by taking our punishment, we'll often feel like Clyde the goldfish. We'll still suffer the effects of sin — ours or somebody else's. But when everything around us explodes from the heat and heartache of life, our merciful God always stops things from getting worse than they'd be without him. Either through his own hand or by putting people in our lives to rescue and encourage us, he ensures we'll revive, survive and thrive, perhaps even blessing others in the process.

So remember, God honours every gift given to his Son: myrrh, frankincense — and goldfish.

