

Cross Current



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An Exchange and Return

“I shall return!”

Not just the battle cry of every disgruntled gift recipient, those words are some of the most famous in all of military history, uttered by General Douglas MacArthur.

From the start of his storied career, the Arkansas native was exceptional. In the First World War, MacArthur earned the respect and loyalty of his men by leading from the front, not from safely behind the fighting. He earned two Distinguished Service Crosses, seven Silver Stars, a Distinguished Service Medal, and two Purple Hearts.

When the Philippines achieved partial independence in 1935, MacArthur was asked to supervise the creation of a Philippine army, and he did. But in July 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt recalled MacArthur and made him commander of the Armed Forces in the Far East, promoting him to the rank of four star general.

After Pearl Harbour, the Japanese moved against the Philippines and proved unstoppable. MacArthur was ordered by Roosevelt to Australia in March 1942 and the general left reluctantly. There, MacArthur reiterated his resolve to vanquish the enemy and finish the work he'd begun. “I came through,” he said, “and I shall return.” Many scoffed, awed by the seemingly insurmountable power of his opponent.

But by October 1944, Allied forces under the general's command landed once more in the Philippines. MacArthur moved his headquarters to Manila and prepared to oversee the invasion of Japan. But Operation Downfall was pre-empted when Japan capitulated following the dropping of the atomic bombs. On September 2nd, MacArthur accepted Japan's unconditional surrender, ending the war.

In the following years, the general helped a devastated Japan rebuild,



To find the right
emphasis this Christmas,
accentuate the
Sent in Present!

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

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Sunday
Worship 11:00

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establish democracy, and set a course for growth and prosperity. When MacArthur died in 1964, he was a national hero.

But his vindication is nothing compared to the ultimate victory won by our Commander, Jesus Christ. Ironically, while most people fixate on the baby in the manger, the true relevance of Christmas is found, not in three wise men but in three wise words: “I shall return!”

“Look, I'm coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds,” Jesus says. (Rev. 22:12).

For shunning safety to embrace sacrifice, Jesus got only one distinguished service Cross and it cost him his life. In fact, the manger-cradle is meaningless without that murderous cross. We'd still be separated eternally from God by our many sins if Jesus hadn't grown to become Lord and Saviour, exchanging his life for ours. Thankfully, “Christ died for us so that, whether we're dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever.” (1 Thess. 9-11)

There have always been doubters, of course. Just before Jesus went to Calvary, he predicted his impending death and resurrection.

“There's more than enough room in my Father's home... When everything's ready, I'll come and get you, so you will always be with me.” (John 14:2,3) “I shall return!”

But when he was lying broken in his burial bandages, the sceptics scoffed. The enemies of Christ seemed invincible. There was even a sense of unfinished business when God called Jesus away from the fray after his resurrection and ascension. But Jesus could look at his promise of salvation and say, “I came through, and I shall return!”

And he will. So our response this Christmas must be more than a sentimental nod to the Nativity. We must see Jesus, not as a swaddled, coddled Saviour, but as the blood-soaked invincible Soldier we follow into daily battle for the hearts and souls of those around us.

“Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you... For at just the right time, Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only almighty God...” (1 Tim. 6:11,12, 15)

So from the abundant love, mercy and forgiveness God has given you, give back, freely and sacrificially to others, saying to God: “Out of my bountiful blessings... I shall return!”

