

A Children's Christmas Story—

EVERYDAY IS CHRISTMAS

by Marguerite Estaver

"Mummy, why can't everyday be Christmas?"

Becky's mother looked intently at her, then asked:

"Why do you want everyday to be Christmas?"

Becky had been wandering restlessly about the house all day. She didn't seem to want to play: in fact, she had paid little attention to the gifts her mother and father had so self-sacrificingly chosen for her.

"I wonder", thought her mother, "if there was something else she especially longed for that we didn't know about. . . Or "(Suddenly concerned) I wonder if she is 'coming down' with something!"

Hastily she put her hand on Becky's forehead, then she looked sharply at her eyes.

No fever! (a relief!) But if ever a child's eyes were filled with longing this was the child.

Thoughtfully her mother went on.

"Was there something you especially wanted this Christmas, that you did not receive? — Or is it just that it is fun to give and to receive gifts?"

"No-o-o No, Mummy! . . . I think I am lonesome. And I want to cry".

"But why, dear?" Her mother knelt beside her, gathered her into her arms, and lovingly tried to understand. Becky's arms crept up around her mother's neck, she buried her face on her mother's shoulder, and then she did cry.

"I think, mummy", she said when, comforted by her mother her tears had begun to subside, "I think . . . I want to cry . . . because . . . yesterday everybody loved everybody . . . and it was warm, and beautiful . . . and bright . . . but today they have all forgotten, and it is cold — and gray — and nobody loves anybody"

"That isn't quite true, dear. I love you, very—very much. And I think you love me very—very much". She had coaxed a quivering smile from Becky, and just then the 'phone rang.

To an unheard question she replied: "Yes — yes surely. Becky and I would love to . . ."

"In an hour, then".

Turning to Becky she said:

"Nancy is home from the hospital and her mother has to do some shopping, and we are going over to keep Nancy company. What shall we take to her?"

"Some candies!" promptly.

"Well", she hesitated, "maybe she can't have candy yet. What else is there?"

"Could we take fruit?"

"Yes, I think so. And perhaps a jar of your 'special' jelly; you remember how much she liked it when she was over here?"

"Couldn't she have the cookies with the little Christmas trees on them?"

"Yes, we could take some and, if she can't have them now, her mother can save them for her till later."

"And I want to give her my new Chinese checkers— and my doll".

Startled, her mother looked at her intently. That doll had cost much money — and Becky had wanted it for months.

"If you would like to, dear."

It was a beautiful afternoon. The doll lay cuddled in Nancy's arm, tucked under the bed covers with her, The jelly was enjoyed. Nancy and Becky had a lovely time with the checkers. And when they came to leave, her face flushed pink and her eyes shining, Becky glowed. She seemed all lighted-up from inside.

When they were alone out-of-doors she joyously exclaimed, "Mummy, this is Christmas, too, even if it isn't Christmas".

"Darling", her mother in a hushed voice replied, "everyday is Christmas if we keep Jesus' love in our hearts".

And she thought, "I wonder how many people are 'lonesome' 'and want to cry' just because someone doesn't have the love of Jesus in his heart — And I wonder — if Jesus wants to cry because the Christmas birth is not in everyone's heart."

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

by J. H. Jowett, D.D.

O God, the Father of all men, in Whose grace all our light is born, and in Whose love is the fountain of our festivity, mercifully lead me into the holy secret of Christmastide, and take me into the innermost room of its holy joy. Forbid that I should remain in the outer courts, dwelling amid its merely carnal pleasures, satisfied with the merriment that dies with the day, and contented with the happiness that passes with the fading flower and the withering leaf. Bring me into the eternal things of this blessed season, the things that abide, the love that manifests itself in unflinching good will, and the joy that rings Christmas bells all the year round. Let me draw water out of the wells of salvation, and let the joy of the Lord be my strength.

Graciously give unto me the joy of perfect reconciliation with Thy will. May every disorderly power in my soul be subdued to willing obedience. Create in me the music of harmonious fellowship so that all my powers may be as a united orchestra to praise and bless Thy holy name.

And mercifully give unto me the joy of spiritual liberty. Let Thy statutes become my songs. Take the reluctance out of my service and the frown from my obedience. Let me not be in Thy house in the spirit of a bond-slave, but rather in the spirit of a son, finding springs of comfort in Thy presence, and esteeming Thy desire as my delight.

O God, give unto me the holy joy of human sympathy. Recreate the chords that have become insensitive to my brother's joy and griefs. If the harp is broken graciously remake it out of the fulness of Thy love. Save me from the death of selfishness. When Christmastide is over suffer me not to die again into moral benumbment, untroubled by my brother's sighs and uncheered by my brother's songs. Unite me to my fellow with tender kinship, and let me be partaker of his triumphs and defeats.

And graciously impart unto me the joy of glorious hope. Let my horizon shine with most alluring light. May the Christmas star always go before me, leading me to ever-deepening revelations of the Lord, and giving me fresh surprises of Heavenly grace and love.

Kindle Thou the Christmas fire of holy love. Light the lamps of Christmas geniality and good will. Hallow and glorify my Lord's birthday with Thy presence, and crown it with unsullied joy and peace. Amen.

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"Love never asks how much must I do, but how much can I do?"

"A man may give without loving, but he cannot love without giving."

Unless a man is ready to work for the salvation of others, it may be questioned whether he himself is saved. He who wants only enough religion to save himself is not likely to have even that much.—Henry Clay Trumbull.