



CROWD SAILING

Read the Word • Pass the Bread • Share the Recipe

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MAKING MERRY

by CAROLYN WILSON



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“GOD REST YE MERRY, GENTLEMEN,” SAYS THE HYMN WE ALL KNOW AND LOVE THIS TIME OF YEAR. “LET NOTHING YE DISMAY.”

My mother recently put a post on Facebook regarding the origin of the word merry and it got me thinking, partly because I’m an English language nerd and partly because I love that word. Its meaning is so rich.

MERRINESS SHOULD MARK OUR HOSPITALITY AT CHRISTMAS.

We moderns may blithely sing the song and if we ponder what it means to be merry at all, probably think it means peaceful and happy.



Well that's true in God's grace, but there is so much more here. 'Merry' is an old Anglo-Saxon word which meant 'valiant', 'great', or 'mighty'. Yes, it also meant being joyful and mirthful, but those ideas were intertwined.

So a valiant man was to rest in God and to do so joyously, not being dismayed. That is the Christmas exhortation in this hymn.

I can think of nothing so perfect in this mad year of 2020 to illustrate our hospitality at Christmas. Joyful hosting of our friends and family is more needed than ever to encourage our hearts and souls, and to illustrate beautifully for the world what the light of Christ can look like.

Merry hearts and merry faces. Where do we see these? Currently, the world is making it very difficult to see these things. But anything man can do won't stop God. We all know that. Christmas is here. The Son is come. Aslan is on the move.

So what do we do to celebrate? We feast. That will look different for all of us and that's great! Some of us may not be able to have many people over. Very well. Time to splurge then, on really good things to eat since there are so few of you. Perhaps there is time to try that one recipe you've been

meaning to, but it wouldn't feed a large crowd, so you haven't. Pull it out! Make a fancy table!

Some of you will be able to have large crowds. Do it! Perhaps you make merry by creating everything from scratch to pile your groaning table. Maybe you don't have that time, so your table groans under the delicious feast from Costco. Do it!

RAISE A GLASS, EAT A COOKIE, WORK YOUR WAY THROUGH THAT HAM. AND MAKE MERRY!

Perhaps the idea of food prep is just one step too far this Christmas. No worries, don't let that stop you from hospitality. It's a wine and dessert night and everyone brings something!

Perhaps you and all your friends are in the time of life with babies and children whose chief joy is taking ornaments off the tree. Very well. Buffet brunch it is, bought or made, and you can all have coffee together standing in the kitchen while the littles play together.

I hope you are taking my meaning here. The main thing is, do hospitality. Large or small, elaborate or simple, adults or kid oriented, be with God's people!

Christmas is not the point in the story where we hunker down in the bunker hoping we can just get through. Christmas is the point in the story where a host of angels declared war with a joyous song and the Commander in Chief showed up in a stable.

We've got them now, folks.

Gird up your loins, raise a glass, eat a cookie, work your way through that ham.

And make MERRY!



A FEW FAVORITE

CHRISTMAS TIPS/ TRADITIONS



With my eldest's birthday the day after Christmas, strategy is essential! I bake and freeze A LOT ahead of time. Cookie dough (always have some in the refrigerator this time of year), cinnamon rolls, birthday cake, chocolate babka, pizza dough—anything we can and will use in a pinch. And most of all I remember: there is no mess we haven't managed to clean up eventually. ;)

—CATHLIN SENTZ



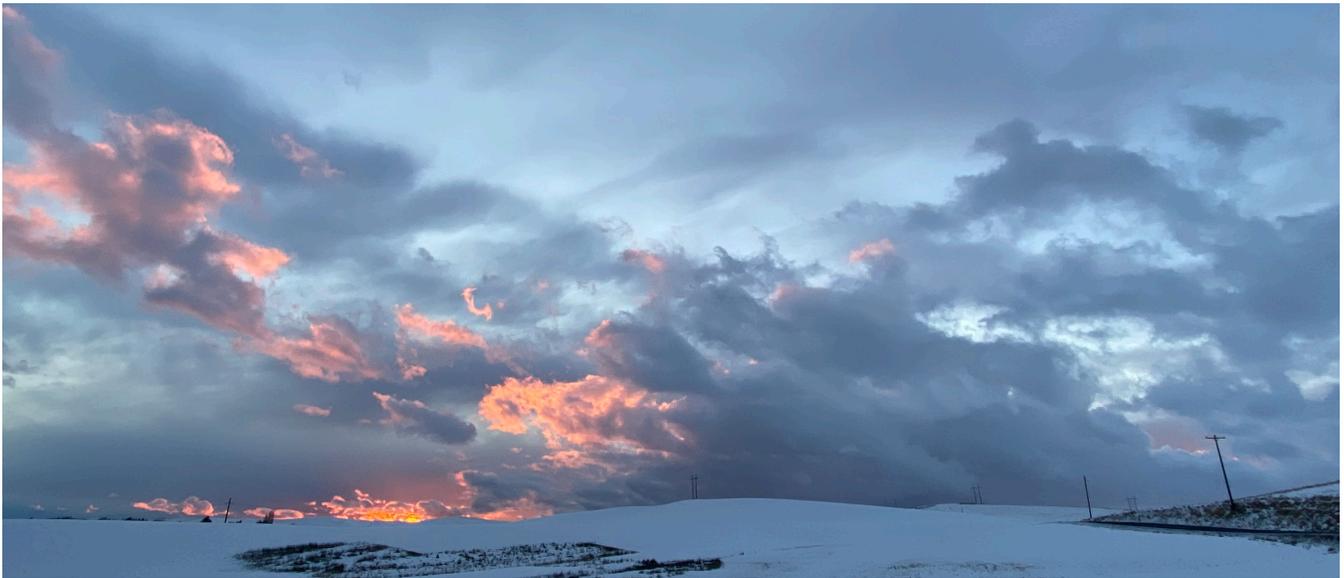
On Christmas Eve we pull out the fine china and plan a multi-course meal at home. It started as a date night at home for just the two of us, but as our children have gotten older we've started setting them up with a siblings meal early in the evening and then we pack them off to bed early so Mommy and Daddy can have the evening to eat together and then get all the gifts under the tree. To keep the preparation burden light, plan components and courses which can be prepped the day before: soups, salad components, desserts. Then when the moment comes you can plate and serve without stress and mess.

—LYDIA FOUCACHON



After the Christmas Eve service, we do appetizers with friends. We spend a quiet Christmas Day as a family, so enjoy packing the house out on the evening before. We always have Crabbies (a dish with crab from my Maryland grandmother) and piles of other sweet and savory foods. We play the funny Saran Wrap game with kids where we wrap little toys up for them to compete for! —JENNY SUMPTER





CHRISTMAS MERCY

by NANCY WILSON

When we think of kindness, we think of generosity and sympathy, friendliness and tenderheartedness. Of course, kindness is all those things and more. But I have noticed another angle on kindness. Kindness is often connected to mercy, and mercy is connected to forgiveness. Look at these three examples.

Psalm 117: Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples! For His merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord!

Nehemiah 9:17b: But you are God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness, and did not forsake them.

Ephesians 4:31-32: Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

At Christmas much of the world is thinking of ways to be kind, giving gifts and making generous contributions to needy causes. My suggestion is to do all this, yes, but to include mercy in the gift giving.

In other words, use this opportunity for some Christmas kindness that extends forgiveness.

Forgive your family members that you are not on speaking terms with. Forgive your parents. Forgive your children. Forgive your friends, your coworkers, your husband, your neighbors, your adversaries. This is merciful kindness, the kind that God has extended to us. Imitate Him. If He gives sunshine and rain to those who are evil, how much more should we (who have been forgiven so much!) be kind and forgiving to those who have wronged us?

Listen to Jesus: Love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father is also merciful (Luke 6:35).

Kindness that is forgiving is the love that covers sins (Prov. 10:2) and covers a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8). It puts away bitterness, resentment, and all its ugly cousins, and it puts on merciful kindness. This is supernatural kindness, Spirit-filled kindness, the kind we cannot produce on our own. But we have access to this kindness in Christ.

So as you are buying and wrapping gifts, give a different sort of gift. Give the gift of forgiveness and mercy wrapped in kindness. That is the gift that God has given us in His Son.

THIS IS MERCIFUL
KINDNESS, THE KIND THAT
GOD HAS EXTENDED TO US.
IMITATE HIM.

Christmas Doings

SALT DOUGH ORNAMENTS

from Kimberly Swait

2 c. flour
1 c. salt
1 c. water (more or less)
Wax paper
Cookie cutters
Disposable straw

Decorating Materials:

Ultra fine tip permanent marker
Spray acrylic sealant
Twine or ribbon

1. Mix ingredients together until you have a workable dough (like cut out cookie dough) . It should not be sticky or dry enough to have cracks.

2. Roll out dough to even thickness. (1/4- 1/2 inch thick).

3. Cut out dough into desired shapes with cookie cutters. Also cut out hole at top of ornament with a straw.

4. Place on wax paper or other drying rack to dry for 3-5 days.

You can also bake them in a 170-200 degree oven for 12-15 hours, but they will "puff" out some. Air drying keeps them flat.

5. Turn them over and make sure they are completely dry. Once dry, draw designs on ornaments with ultra fine permanent markers.

6. Spray ornament with acrylic sealant on both sides.

7. Thread a ribbon or twine through the hole in the ornament and tie off for hanging.

PAPER BAG STARS

from Cathlin Sentz

8 paper sandwich or kebab bags (with foil lining) per star
Glue stick
Scissors
Hole punch and string for hanging

-With open end of bag facing towards you, draw a T with the glue across the top edge and down the middle of the bag.

- Place the next bag on top and repeat until all 8 bags are glued

- Cut the open ends of the bags to a point, then cut out a couple triangles along each edge

-Open the star, hole punch where the two ends meet and tie a string for hanging

WREATHS

from Corinne Reagan

I love making a wreath every year from branches and plant materials found on a hike or just outside. I reuse the same brass wreath form every year and I use floral tape to attach the branches, and hot glue for the pinecones and dried orange wheels. If you don't have any trees near you, ask a Christmas tree lot if they have any trimmings!



HOSPITALITY MENU

FROM BEKAH MERKLE



MENU

for 8-10

Appetizer:

Charcuterie Board with:

Ina Garten's Roasted Rosemary Cashews

Almond Thins with Goat Cheese and Pepper Jelly

Fruit / Berries

Salami Slices with a smear of cream cheese and pepperoncini, folded in half and held with a toothpick

Cheese selection

Edible flowers for garnish

(Serve with a glass of champagne if you're doing a drink)

Main:

Pasta Recipe - see below

Baguette and butter

Salad - see below

Good with Cabernet Sauvignon

Dessert:

Good Vanilla Ice Cream, served in a pretty dish with a drizzle of Drambui and some lightly toasted, slivered almonds. (Especially good if they're still hot from the pan!)

Serve with coffee!

PASTA RECIPE

- 1/2 lb hot Italian sausage
- 1/2 lb sweet Italian sausage
- 1/2 c butter
- 1 red pepper, thinly sliced

- 1 bunch green onions, chopped
- 1/2 lb mushrooms, sliced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tsp dried basil
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 16 oz sour cream
- 1 1/2 c shredded parmesan
- 1 package linguine

DIRECTIONS:

Put a pot of water on to boil. Brown up your sausage in a pan over medium high heat. Once it's cooked through, remove sausage to another bowl and dump out any grease. Add your butter to the pan and saute pepper, green onions, and mushrooms. Saute until tender and add garlic, basil, salt, and pepper. Once the garlic is fragrant, dump in your sour cream and sausage and stir all together. Meanwhile, once your water boils, add the linguine and cook according to package instructions, being careful not to over-boil. After draining your pasta, toss with meat and veg sauce and stir in parmesan. Serve with extra parmesan on top.

SALAD RECIPE

MERKLE HOUSE DRESSING

- (be warned that this is incredibly punchy dressing!)
- 6 large peeled garlic cloves, chopped
- 1/2 c. good mayonnaise
- 2 Tbsp. cider vinegar
- 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp. Maldon salt
- 3/4 tsp. coarsely ground black pepper

This makes enough for roughly 6 hearts of Romaine, chopped and tossed with about 1 heaping cup shredded parmesan. Add homemade croutons if you're in the mood! Sprinkle additional parmesan on top.



EVERY
valley
SHALL BE
exalted,
AND EVERY
mountain + hill
SHALL BE MADE LOW:
& *the crooked* SHALL BE
made straight
AND THE ROUGH PLACES
plain

ISAIAH 40:4

