God’s Message of Hope

By: Jill Stewart

Read: Psalm 31:24

*“Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD” (Psalm 31:24)*

By the first week of November, I suddenly knew I couldn’t wait any longer. Which was, all things considered, a shock. Never in my life have I decorated for Christmas before the first week of December at the very earliest. With the demands of work and family and the many distractions of a comfortable life, it was always a last minute scramble to get the wreaths, candles, mantle, lights, and tree ready for holiday visitors and entertaining. The pending arrival of the Christ Child was mostly an afterthought.

But this Twilight Zone year of 2020 with its chaos and turmoil, both natural and manmade, has left all of us exhausted and drained and waiting for the rituals and traditions of our lives to resume. Sadly, I know that I will likely be the only person seeing the decorations inside my house this year. So why was I so eager to drag those boxes in from the garage just after Halloween? Why did I ache to see and feel those familiar ornaments again, remember the stories behind them, and find just the right place for Grandma’s crocheted stars on the tree branches? When the lights flickered on, I knew. For me that lit tree was a tangible symbol of Hope - hope in all the waiting.

Jesus was born into a time like ours - that was a mess, broken with strife and instability and political turmoil too. With help from the angels, the shepherds and other witnesses learned he was the one they had long waited for. In this strange year, we may see Jesus more clearly as God’s message of hope to our world too. And that Hope gives us courage as we continue our waiting for better days to come.

*Prayer:* O Lord of light and life, as we wait in darkness, open our eyes to the hope brought by the child born in Bethlehem. Amen