

## NewsRoom

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Section: M

### Slowing down in a fast season

If you're like the Wilsons, this Christmas season has been unusually hectic. The season is short this year. There is not even much time for procrastinators to procrastinate. (Note: You have less than a week to deck the halls, have those parties and put gifts under the tree.)

Maybe it's my advancing age. They always say time goes faster every year. It's true.

It also could be the times in which we live. Americans are rushing more, doing more, enduring more every year. We hurtle from one national crisis to the next, one soccer game to the next, one text message to the next and so on. We live in a constant state of motion and stress.

This has been a fast year. Christmas is not really compatible with such a frenetic pace.

There are some other things I have noticed: Big store clerks and cashiers seem clearly to have been trained not to say "Merry Christmas." And, we were at a restaurant recently for dinner, when we said "Merry Christmas" to our waiter, he said with relief, "I am glad you said that. When I said it earlier, a patron replied that it wasn't politically correct."

"Merry Christmas" is becoming a political statement, another point of division in a divided country. How sad. There are people taking pains to avoid saying it, and others stating it too emphatically just to make the point (losing the point, in the process).

Isn't it interesting that, after years of going to ridiculous lengths in the name of "tolerance," we are less tolerant as a people? Whole segments of America live in a perpetual state of being "offended." We are more divided, not less. Society continues to coarsen.

More Christmas, not less, would be a good part of the antidote. Not more noise or commercialization, mind you, but more of the things that matter. Christmas is the hinge of history, yet something to contemplate simply, quietly. The Gospel of Luke 2:1-20 breaks the greatest news story of all time, in half this column's length:

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting

a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly, a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they saw him, they spread the word concerning what had been told to them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said.

And Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

I hope you can slow down a quick season, and ponder Christmas. It's never old news. Merry Christmas.

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--- Index References ---

Company: SAVIOR LIFETEC CORP

News Subject: (Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Health & Family (1HE30); Social Issues (1SO05); Forecasts (1FO11); Population Demographics (1PO77); Family Social Issues (1FA81))

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