



# Coming

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always been  
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# Home for Christmas

By: Barbara Dickson

**A**s we drove through the silent night, we slowed and admired the beauty of coloured lights adorning windows and rooftops. Newly fallen snow made everything look fresh and sparkly under the moonlit sky. I felt quite sure visions of sugarplums danced in our neighbours' heads. In the magical small hours of Christmas morning we lingered in the stillness. All was calm and all was bright.

Inside our van music drifted from the radio, "Hark how the bells, sweet silver bells, all seem to say, throw cares away. Christmas is here, bringing good cheer, to young and old . . ."

Christmas was here. Bringing good cheer. The song said to throw cares away. How easy to sing, but so hard to do. In my 34 years, this was my worst Christmas. Cares had dumped themselves on me like the dirty mountain of plowed snow that sat at the end of my driveway. I wanted to sob, not sing.

My husband drove while our three girls slept in heavenly peace. My mother and father completed our little ensemble. It was the simple wish of my mother that had brought us out into the frosty night. My mom was dying. Diagnosed with cancer only three months earlier, the disease was overtaxing her lungs. Labouring for each breath, she had asked to see the Christmas lights one more time.

Every little family tradition and the season's brightest moments were overshadowed by the heart-rending reality that we would not share these things again. Every activity, from trimming the tree to leaving cookies and eggnog for Santa, exposed the rawness of already broken hearts. Mom was too ill to buy gifts, so while shoppers rushed home with their treasures, I shopped on my mother's behalf, buying what were in essence "goodbye" gifts to her children and grandchildren.

My eight-week-old daughter was celebrating her first Christmas. Tiny at birth, her Christmas stocking rivalled her in size. She was innocently oblivious to the fuss over pine trees, holly and mistletoe. And she didn't mind that Grandma was too weak to hold her.

Jack Frost nipped at my nose and my heart. And I found myself early Christmas morning feeling far from joyful or triumphant.

Christmas was supposed to be a time of festiveness, of rejoicing, of enjoying friends and family. The songs of the season proclaimed, "Oh there's no place like home for the holidays . . ."

Home. My mom's home had always been a solace for me. This was the first Christmas in my life that wouldn't be spent at Mom's, feasting on turkey, opening gifts, laughing and feasting again. Her home was filled with delicious smells, warm smiles and a mother's love.

There's no place like home for the holidays, where we can find a refuge of comfort and joy. During this last Christmas together, I witnessed God's power in tugging my mom's heart towards Home, His Home. Homesickness was settling around her. I saw it in her eyes, her longing to go Home. She quietly released her grip on this world. My mother had a deep faith in God and knew that her final stop on her life's journey would be Heaven, the sweetest Home.

Christmas honours the birth of Jesus, God's Son, who left His heavenly Home to come and live among us. Even while I despaired knowing Mom was leaving me, it comforted me to know that Jesus was longing too, longing to gather my mother in His arms.

Now when I hear Christmas songs about coming home, I pause, in wonder. Imagine celebrating the birth of Jesus everyday with Him as your guest of honour. Imagine actually hearing the trumpets sound and angels sing just as they did on that dewy Christmas morn 2000 years ago. Imagine ringing the bells of Heaven and hearing them resonate across the universe.

Oh, there's no place like Home. ☪

## Do you know someone who is grieving this Christmas?

*Simple acts of love can comfort.*

- Pray for her. She needs strength to get through today, courage to face tomorrow and a peace that only God can grant.
- Offer practical help. Usual Christmas tasks can overwhelm. Offer to wrap presents, bake cookies, and drive children to activities.
- Drop a meal off, including something tasty for dessert.
- Acknowledge her sadness. Her journey in grief may last a lifetime. Remember her loved one; listen and share precious memories.
- Send a card, a fruit basket or flowers.
- Christmas traditions are forever altered. Help her make new ones.