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“THERE IS HOPE FOR YOUR FUTURE, says the LORD”

(today’s biblical motto from Jeremiah 31:17)

Dear friends:

Heide and I send our heartfelt greetings to you at this very special Christmas season of 2020. There could not have been a more appropriate biblical motto for the coming weeks and the coming year than what the prophet Jeremiah told his people approximately 2600 years ago when they were in dire straits. In dire straits we are presently, aren't we!? Christmas will definitely be different this year, but it is not going to be cancelled just because all those superfluous Christmas parties have to be cancelled. Who done it? CORONA is the culprit! A microscopic virus, morphologically similar to a corona, a crown! Sounds pretty harmless, but it is a vicious killer that has a firm grip on all of humanity. As of today it has killed a total of 318,782 Americans: Fathers, mothers, grandpas and grandmas, sisters, brothers, friends and foe. How are we supposed to fight that s.o.b., that confounded party killer? Wear your mask, keep social distance, wash your hands, and get vaccinated a.s.a.p. If you do that you will fulfil the most important commandment that has, despite of all the vicissitudes of life, preserved and sustained humanity up to now: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself!” (Leviticus 19:17). Yes, wear your mask as a sign of that love, and by the same token don't get too close to people. If we adhere to these basic rules of common sense we'll be able to pretty soon again hug one another. Corona indicates in lethal ways that we are very vulnerable, and puts into perspective that we are not nearly as omnipotent as we think. However there is good news that comes with the Christmas story, and I'll start with the Gospel of John: “In the beginning was the word (the information), and the word was with God, and the word was God. (...) And the word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth,” (John 1:1;14). God's word became PERSONA, a person, and person in Latin means mask! Mask means image, and God created humankind in his image (Genesis 1:27). That is us, dear friends, and we wear this mask for life, which reminds us every day and every hour that we are God's children, who are privileged to share God's reality among us. The gospelwriter Luke talks about this reality in more realistic and emotional terms when he proclaims that God became real through the birth of a helpless baby in need of love and protection, who entered into the frailty and weakness of human nature (Philippians 2:6-8). He came and is here to stay, and he shall accompany us wherever we go, whatever we do in joy and sorrow, in life and death. That's why God's word became flesh, a person, in Jesus from Nazareth, God's Christ, and our Lord and Savior. Thus sounds and resounds the Christmas message through the ages, the word of the living God. Yes, Christmas may be different this year, without so many more or less meaningful traditions like Santa, Rudolph, White Christmas etc. However their omission lets the real light of Christmas even shine brighter, and the angel's message sound louder: “Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (...) Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men,” (Luke 2:10-11; 14).

Friends, the true light, which enlightens everyone came into the world, (John 1:9). It shines bright and clear also on Christmas 2020, and on all those people, who at this time are on their way out of this world, because their earthly pilgrimage was cut short by Covid 19, the vicious virus with the royal name CORONA. Today is December 22nd, and 325,097 Americans have died from Corona so far, 2,332 alone today. The news have it that POTUS has left the White House for Florida after unleashing new chaos: he threatens COVID relief, vetoes the defense bill, and issues most questionable pardons. Not just a few WH officials are very concerned about what else he might be doing in his final days. So we hope and pray that the true light will also enlighten Mr. Trump, who seems to be mainly holed up in the WH, ever deeper in denial, and living in an alternate reality, as Pat Robertson called it yesterday. Even his stalwart supporter William Barr, the former AG, is very critical of Trump's shenanigans, that are attributed to some conspiracists close to him. We still hope that common sense might bring him back to the real world, and we are looking forward to January 20th. As far as the pandemic is concerned we are still in the midst of a nightmare, and as the President Elect had it: our darkest days are ahead of us not behind us. It will take many months to vaccinate the most vulnerable people worldwide, but there is hope, and God willing science and common sense will get the upper hand. Provided we are still among the living, Heide and I will report back sometime next year. And do not forget: "There is hope for your future, says the Lord!" Have a merry and meaningful Christmas and a healthy New Year!

Love and shalom

Martin and Heide

P.s. How we are doing? Well, all of you who are familiar with Parkinson's know that we have good days and bad days. Our motto "one day at a time, Lord Jesus" has served us well, and Martin is very thankful that he is able to do all the supportive work that needs to be done. A lot of work interrupted my writing this letter to you, and I am glad I got it done today on the 22nd of December. And by the way, we still enjoy our life!