

A Crack in Everything
December 24, 2010
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One Christmas many years ago a minor catastrophe happened in our household. We had a lovely piece of frosted glass hanging in the middle of a picture window. It had graceful swirls and lovely lines and—now—an unsightly crack in middle of it. No, the kids were not playing ball in the house, at least not that they would admit. It seems that the wooden frame had gotten dry and begun to shrink, putting pressure on the glass. As a result, I woke up in the morning and found a large crack stretching from one end to the other. I was saddened by it. Our keepsake was ruined. Oh, it was never worth a lot of money. But, because it was made by a dear family friend, it had a great deal of sentimental value. We were reminded that no matter how careful we are, over time many of our most precious possessions will either crack or break or wear out.

Tonight we are looking forward to Christmas with eager anticipation. The parties are planned. The decorations are in place. The presents are wrapped—at least I hope they're wrapped. We picture a holiday scene as graceful and lovely as my piece of frosted glass. After all, it's the "most wonderful time of the year." Our hearts are filled with Norman Rockwell-like fantasies of happy times and warmth and love.

Yet, there is a sense in which our fantasies exceed reality. Christmas *should* be happy. It *should* be filled with warmth and love. It *should* be all those things that holiday songs and TV commercials say it should be. But so many times it falls short, and proves to be a long, long way from that which we dreamed.

Edna Hong was an author from Northfield, Minnesota. In her book, *Bright Valley of Love*, she told the story of Gunther, a child who is born physically deformed. Because of the awful burden of raising him, Gunther is abandoned by his parents. He's taken to an institution. If that isn't sad enough, one day Gunther watches helplessly as one of his little friends dies—right before Christmas. Gunther screams in agony. And these are the words he shouts, "There's a crack in everything." And to many of us whose dreams will not be realized this Christmas, or any Christmas, we know it's true. There *is* a crack in everything. And for many different reasons.

Friends, that is precisely why we have Christmas. Because there's a crack in everything, God's Son is born. Jesus is the healing. He is the hope. He is the love. He comes to our world, not in spite of our brokenness, but because of it. He comes to fix the crack that stretches from one end of creation to the other.

Do you believe this? Isn't there a part of us that is cracked and broken, and needing to be fixed? I think so. So often we tear down instead of build up. So often we pull away rather than come together. So often, given the choice between life and death, we choose death. There's a crack in everything.

So what can we do? One thing is sure, we cannot fix ourselves. There is a certain sense in which we can only wonder and tremble at the thought of God coming to earth for us. There is a certain sense in which we can only humble ourselves and make room for him to come. There is a certain sense in which we can only follow the star, and go like the shepherds and wise men, to worship the newborn king.

There in the manger we find him, the one we've been searching for, maybe for all of our lives—our healing, our hope, our love.