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CHRISTMAS ANXIETY OR JOY - YOUR CHOICE

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Well, it happened on Friday, I thought this year would be different, but no. My annual Christmas-is-coming-and-I-haven't-bought-everyone-I-know-a-gift-yet panic attack happened as I drove home from work. I hoped this year would be different, I tried to concentrate on the cheer of the season. I've dressed for Christmas every day in December so far, red, green, reindeer antlers on my head, jingle bells around my neck, everyday! We have decorated the house inside and out, and a package seems to arrive each day, but none of that was able to thwart the panic. On the way home, Friday, I needed to stop for a gift card, then I thought I should purchase two, then three, then everyone else, everyone I think I've ever met, began to enter my mind and the cost for the gift cards was calculated and I just couldn't take it. I parked and could see the line inside, so I just came home. Defeated.

Am I the only one who experiences this? Last year I wrote a [post](#) about how I was introduced as someone who hated Christmas and how that remark didn't set well with me. Well, after thinking about it, I could see why someone might think I disliked Christmas, but I don't, so I took multiple steps to change the perspective of my regard for Christmas and I hoped I would experience Christmas differently this year. What I've realized is that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

I think we can all agree that things changed in 2020. Last week, I advocated for a vaccine - I typically don't even get an annual flu shot, but this year that changed! This year we saw that something as simple as a facemask, could cause great division. We saw that the work of teachers is not something we all just naturally can do. We saw that the death of a man at the hands (or knee) of another can bring out years of oppressed silence around the globe. We even saw the toilet tissue could become a commodity. As we move into Christmas week 2020, I realize that the more things change the more they stay the same. The Christmas expectations have not changed - too many germs in the store, buy it online. Don't have enough money - use the credit card. (Don't do it!!!)

While 2020 has been different, and we will probably experience Christmas differently this year, one thing has not changed. Christmas is the season in which we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Whether we decide to be vaccinated against Covid, whether we experienced a change in our employment, or whether we experience the loss of a loved one in 2020, Christmas is the time when we celebrate Jesus. He is the gift we all can celebrate. To celebrate Him, no credit card is required. When we read the Christmas story in Matthew, we can see the contrast of different emotions - joy and expectation of the Magi in Matthew 2:2 "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." We see the stress and anxiety of Herod in Matthew 2:3, "When King

Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.” We must choose how we experience Christmas. Will you choose to be stressed about gifts and postage and shipping and whether to join with your family and friends, or will you view the season with joy and good tidings? It truly is a choice. After my anxiety passed, I’m choosing to concentrate on Jesus. My finances will not support what my mind wants to do and that’s okay. All of these people have birthdays and I can get them something then and spread it out over the year. I am choosing joy and excitement over stress. Amen. And I hope you will too.

Thank you for reading!
Merry Christmas!
Kim

