

## I hate Christmas

I hate Christmas! That's what I just wrote. You may suggest that saying such is a terrible thing to say. You may ask: How can anyone hate Christmas. It is a wonderful time of year; a time for family, friends and presents.

Allow me to explain. I was walking down the country road by my house on a beautiful July morning. The sun was shining. The sky was cloudless except for the remnants of some airplane contrails left as they crossed the Atlantic Ocean. The morning breeze caressed my face as it rippled gently through the tall roadside grass. Amid such beauty and serenity, why would such a thought of hating Christmas when the season was still a distance away? Was I in the middle of receiving the raw material for a column from across the pond in early July? What was this about being preoccupied with Christmas in July?

As I walked along, seeds of thoughts about Christmas began to percolate in my mind. As they fought for recognition and attention, I began to realize why I hate Christmas.

I hate Christmas because it is filled with unreal and so often, unmet expectations.

I hate Christmas because it happens during the dead of winter, when nights are long, days are short and the cover of darkness often becomes the fodder for depression, negativity, hopelessness, feeling unloved and unwanted.

I hate Christmas because it is a time when children can manipulate parents, burdening them with gift expectations and comparisons with friends.

I hate Christmas when office parties become excuses for self-aggrandisement, ego tripping, tongue wagging, posturing and silly pranks and stupid gifts.

I hate Christmas when Christmas becomes Christmas in July and every month thereafter.

I hate Christmas when Christmas music starts earlier and earlier each year and when Christmas actually shows up, I am sick and tired of it blaring through the stores that makes me sneeze in disgust.

I hate the crowds of Christmas; want the latest and greatest for their children irrespective of the cost. They run through the aisles of the stores as if running from the bulls in Spain, trying to make sure they get their prize and are not gored by a fellow bull in the process.

I hate the countdown to the days before. It seems to start earlier and earlier each year as it tries to generate an excitement but instead, generates a panic

I hate all those reminders of the perfect gift for everyone on my list. Surely the folks who create such a list never met me, my friends or my pocket book.

I hate "the get before it's gone" mentality of stores who invite me to open wide my wallet and forget about the January bills that will come due.

I hate Christmas because I am a Scrooge who is bah-humbugged by the commercialism and guilt-laden euphoric expectations that are generated by the season.

I hate Christmas that takes Christ out of it and is simply left with "mas" which means "Missing a Saviour."

Christmas is "missing a Saviour" when the idea of a "saviour" with a small "s" replaces a big Saviour. The saviour of Christmas is not the countdown, the panic, the expectations, the parties, the new outfits, the most expensive toys and gadgets or the canned music. Instead it is the season that is personal because of a Saviour; one who takes us from the dead of winter and gives us life; one who takes us from the dead of sin to the life of hope; one who takes us from unmet expectations into peace of mind; one who takes us from dashed hopes into the realm of nothing is too good for us; one who takes our deepest longings and satisfies them with the Gift that keeps on giving.

So you see that the reason I hate Christmas is because you cannot celebrate something when the most important part is missing; "missing a Saviour."