Dear friend,

It was Christmas Eve, 1985. My friend wanted to tell his two young children about Christmas in a way that would help them understand its importance. He began, "Because of Christmas, we don't have to fear death."

Before he could explain further, tears sprang to the eyes of his youngest. At age four, she had already been thinking about death — her own and that of those she loved.

Do you remember when you first came to fear death? In our mind's eye we see the Grim Reaper, his scythe in his hands, waiting at the end of the road. A recent headline proclaimed the "death rate" in New York down dramatically. But in our hearts we know, despite the breakthroughs of modern medicine, until Jesus returns the death rate will remain 100%.

We celebrate a long ago birth in a far off land, but it is not remote. It's as close and strong, as intimate and relevant as each human being's desire for life, joy, and love. The manger in Bethlehem held the most precious package ever delivered into time and space — precious, not just in a huge, cosmic sense, but personally. He fills us with love and relieves our fears. Instead of a grim reaper, we who have accepted His salvation, find at the end of the road, our dear Friend, Jesus, full of joy and love, waiting to personally escort each one of us to the other side.

"In My Father's house," He said, "are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you." Do you trust the character and integrity of Jesus? Then you can trust in the certainty of heaven. *If it were not so, I would have told you.*

We've had no premonition of a soon demise, so you, dear loved ones, are stuck with Gen and me for a while longer. We mention death in our Christmas letter only as a reminder of what the season is about — <u>life</u>. Want a marvelous reason to sing, give gifts, and be merry this Christmas? In John 11, Jesus said:

> *I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.*

Harald   Gen