

## How to Make Holidays, Holy Days

Hallmark™, the world's leading greeting card manufacturer, wraps up its mission statement in that most familiar phrase, "When you care enough to send the very best."

It's that time of year, again, for Christians around the world to send their best.

There are many ways to express the message of Advent. We'll mail packages of goodies, plan trips to be with loved ones or give food baskets to the needy. Somehow, we find a way to give witness of God's love and grace.

However, if we had to choose just one way to share our love with others throughout this season most of us need to look no further than a Christmas card. Yes, that's good news for the greeting card industry. But, what am I trying to convey means so much more-it's following the example of the apostle Paul.

Paul writes his own greeting card messages. In fact, his words are intended to reach his readers' and listeners' innermost core-their hearts and souls. Paul cuts to the chase by saying: "Now we can give thanks to our God for you."

That's on the front of his card. Then, when you open it up, he continues: "We thank him for the joy we have in his presence in your faith. May our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus prepare the way for us to come to you! May the Lord make your love for one another and for all people grow more and more and become as great as our love for you. In this way he will strengthen you, and you will be perfect and holy in the presence for our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all who belong to him" (1 Thessalonians 3:9-13).

This greeting is more like a Christmas letter that we stuff inside the card. Paul's vision, he says, is seasoned with hope, the hope that he and his company of the faithful will eventually visit with the brothers and sisters in Thessalonica. This is a living hope that's rooted in the providence of God. It's a hope that is the hallmark of Paul's vision: He has complete confidence in God's time and God's calendar.

This is the same encouragement that people need today in the midst of hardship *because these Holy days, these holidays, are for many -hollow days*. For some people this is a very empty, lonely season. So, please share a word of hope. Share the joy of the Lord and know that you are deeply loved. The most precious gift that God could give, you have already received. That gift is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, come into the world to save our souls. Joy to the world!