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## CHRISTMAS MESSAGES BY LOCAL SPIRITUAL LEADERS

### CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

The Rev. J. Alfred Nansen  
First Evangelical Church

How fitting it is that the Washington Conference for the Reduction of Armaments has come as a part of the preparation of the minds of the people of the world for the observance of the Christmas season! May God grant that the deliberations of the master minds of the world may be inspired by the Prince of Peace. May the song of the angels at the nativity of our Lord be sung with renewed enthusiasm and spirit on Christmas morn, 1921.

We celebrate the birthday of one whose name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace. As the season reminds us of the angelic strains, "Peace on earth and good-will among men," we cannot but hope that the day is about to dawn when it will be descriptive of human society. The world is slowly recovering from its bitterest and most devastating debauchery of the ancient theory that might makes right. The world is listening this year, more eagerly than ever before for the sweet strains of the Christmas carol. Multitudes of people from every nation under God, especially from the devastated sections of Europe, with anxious longing mingled with a strange new hope, turn eager eyes toward the Conference at Washington which has been called into existence by the Christian president of the most Christian nation yet known in history.

We usually begin too late in the season to cultivate a Christmas spirit that is vitally personal and hence miss many of the blessings which the season has in store amidst the hurried preparation of many gifts merely because custom demands gifts at this season. There has arisen among us the custom of EXCHANGING presents. This custom has taken the day out of that which should be our spontaneous expression of appreciation for ability to help in satisfying the most crying needs of the world. God made

His greatest gift to a needy world. Only when we have learned that our gifts of greatest value should be made to those in need will we learn that "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Such giving is prompted by true Christmas spirit.

It is customary for friends to wish one another a Merry Christmas. My companion joins me in wishing for our many friends of this community far more than this—a blessed Christmas marked by a new spirit of consecration to the ideals which came into the world thru the teachings of the Prince of Peace. If He be lifted up, He shall draw all men unto Himself. Let us all join in exalting Him thru-out the new year.

"Glory to God in the Highest,  
And on earth peace and good-will among men."

### THE RICHEST OF ALL CHRISTMAS GIFTS

The Rev. Otto F. Arndt  
Immanuel Evangelical  
Lutheran Church

The Christmas Season is a season of giving. Gift innumerable and of various kinds are presented to both rich and poor. However, there is one gift which exceeds all in value and in beauty and which is given to both rich and poor alike. Which is this wonderful gift? It is the Babe of Bethlehem, the gift of our Father to a sinful world. It is a gift which should fill all our hearts with joy and gladness. For who is this Babe of Bethlehem? The angel of the Lord tells us that "F" says, "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour." This Babe of Bethlehem, this richest of all Christmas gifts, is just what every one of us needs—it is a Saviour.

respecting us. It is His will that we All men are sinners by nature and as such are subject to eternal damnation. Our sins brought the wrath and curse of a just and holy God upon us. Without a Saviour we are lost, eternally lost. Without a Saviour there is no beam of joy to gladden our lives, no star of hope in the dark hour of death. But who could be our Saviour? No mere human being could, because all men are lost in sin and were in the power of the devil. Our Saviour, therefore, had to be God himself. God's own power was necessary to bear the great punishment of the world's sin. But at the same time our Saviour had to be man in order to suffer and to die. And so, what did God do? O, wonderful love of God! He sent His very own Son, the Son of His heart, into this world of sin and wickedness to become our Saviour. This Son of God became man, a mere man, like unto us in all things, but without sin. The Lord of heaven and earth became a lowly infant. This God-man became our Redeemer and Saviour. He took our sins upon Himself and bore the wrath and punishment of a just and holy God in our stead, thereby saving us from sin, death and the devil. — That is God's blessed Christmas gift to a world of sin.

And now, what are we to do? Let the children that gather around their Christmas trees tell you. What do they do on beholding their Christmas gifts? Why they take them. Even the little child on its mother's arm stretches forth its little hands and grasps its Christmas gift. That is just what we are to do. We, too, must take the great Christmas gift which our heavenly Father offers us in His Son. We must accept our Saviour with the hand of Faith; we must believe in Him as our Saviour, as our Redeemer.

You may be very poor my dear friend, and perhaps no Christmas tree and no Christmas present will be in

your home. Nevertheless, rejoice and be glad on this merry Christmas Day! For the Gospel brings you a Christmas gift which is far more precious than all the riches of this world, a Christmas gift which will be yours forever if you but take it and keep it. You may live in trouble and deep sorrow, and perhaps you will miss some loved one at your Christmas table. Still rejoice and be glad this merry Christmas Day! The Gospel brings you the loving Saviour, the Comfort of all the sorrowing and the consolation of all the weeping. He will take the place of the missing loved one at your Christmas table and in your heart if you but ask Him.

You may be a great sinner, and perhaps you think that this blessed gift is not meant for such as you. But, oh my dear friend, rejoice and be glad this merry Christmas Day! This great and wonderful gift is meant especially for you. The Gospel brings you a Saviour whose love, grace and mercy are greater, far greater than all your sins. It is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, which taketh away also your sins, no matter how black or vile they may be. Therefore, believe in Him and rejoice!

### THE PERMANENT FAITH

The Rev. Eneas B. Goodwin  
St. Josephs Catholic Church

John Calvin gave a definition of Faith that makes us forget many of the vagaries in his Institutes. He said that, "Faith is knowledge of the will of God respecting us received from His word."

The Scriptures tell us that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to redeem man. These words indicate the will of God

be-aved. And, since we know His will in this respect, there is nothing for us to do but to cooperate in order that He will may not be frustrated. It does sound strange to say that we should cooperate with Him. He is Almighty God and common sense would emphatically declare that we must cooperate with Him. Unfortunately, common sense does not always guide our actions. In fact the more we reflect upon our actions the more convinced do we become that common sense plays a very small part in regulating the conduct of life.

There are certain elemental forces that effect the understanding so that judgment is warped, or deflected, or twisted in a most astonishing manner. These forces are pride, self-esteem, inordinate self love and, in fine, every thing that may be classed under the head of selfishness. It is not surprising, therefore, that we do not cooperate with God. It is surprising that we cooperate with any thing.

Still there is the fact. We know the will of God respecting us so that we must have Faith. And I believe we have. The forces of which I spoke are, indeed, elemental, powerful, inimical to our everlasting welfare; but, after all, they are only momentary in their influence—momentary. I mean, in respect of the duration of life. Behind them is the solid, permanent structure of Faith.

Can we doubt it when we see so many manifestations of real joy as we do during the Christmas season? All the rest of the year we may truthfully say that joy has gone out of Christmas. Christmas Day corrects us. Joy has not gone for the plain reason that Faith has not gone. The vision of the little Child in the stable of Bethlehem enables us to know the will of God respecting us, and the lumber world behind is symbolical of the Cross—the Child was to carry so that we might more easily and less hurriedly come into the Light.

### THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

The Rev. Hugh M. MacWhorter  
St. Andrews Episcopal Church

"Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy," S. Luke, 2: 10.

This is the characteristic Christmas message. It is what the Christian Church is set in the midst of a dark world to say. A world where men and women tremble in the midst of their pleasures, and look into the future with forebodings and nothing satisfies, and there is no peace. Take away the thought of God, banish life everlasting from human hope, and nothing is left. But here is the church of Jesus Christ bringing glad tidings of great joy to all these men and women, making the whole world bright and beautiful and new and wonderful and worth while. The church takes a word out of the Christmas message and makes it a description of all Christian teaching. We preach the "gospel." And "gospel" means "good tidings."

The message of the Christian church is to tell the best piece of good news which anyone ever heard, and to bring the Christmas joy into every heart.

There is no pain in our religion for despondency or discouragement. The emphatic word in it from the beginning is this word "joy." "The ransom of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

That old prophecy finds fulfillment in every Christian heart. He who knows that God is his loving Father, and that Jesus Christ is his own Saviour and that the grace is but an open gate into a celestial country and an heavenly company and a life eternal, has he not good reason to be glad! Sorrow comes, indeed, pain enters into every life, disappointment be-ets us, there is tribulation, as was promised; but in the heart of the true disciple of the Lord Jesus, the sun shines on forever. We have a secret which helps us to face troubles and to banish fear, and amidst perplexities to live in peace. It is the secret which the angel told the shepherds.

Christmas is the feast of gladness. The old songs have their sweet echoes in our Christmas anthems. The great gift which God gave inspires all our gifts, and our hearts are filled with love and gladness. We go about

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