

CHRISTMAS MES- SAGES BY LOCAL SPIRITUAL LEADERS

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closer to the heart of the Christ and in more complete accord with the ideals which He gave to the world.

The Spirit of Christmas is the spirit of good cheer and of good will. And certainly, the Christmas season brings a great deal of joy and happiness. The song of the angels was a song of peace and good will to men. If we keep this song echoing round the world, it ought to increase the world's store of happiness.

While the Christmas season brings happiness to many, others are sad and lonely; there are homes that are desolate and cheerless. The pinch of poverty and the grind of toil is no idle dream. For many people, even in America, Christmas is anything but a happy time.

Let the artist sketch for you a picture. It is Christmas, at eventide. The air outside is clear and crisp; the hush of night is on, though it is not really dark, for a mantle of snowy whiteness covers the earth. A beautiful home is before you. The curtains are withdrawn sufficiently to enable you to see within the glowing fire, with its warmth and cheer, the Christmas tree, illumined with the colored lights, and laden with gifts, pleasing to all; while the faces of parents and the children are radiant with the Christmas joy. Not yet is the picture complete, for out in the cold and snow stand a mother and her child, within the shadow, where they may see and not be seen from within. Their clothing is scanty and tattered. Their appearance presents unmistakable evidence of cold, hunger and weariness. They pause for a moment to look upon that scene which others might enjoy, but of which they had no part. Then they must pass on to the lowly and cheerless place they called home. The Spirit of Christmas finds expression in giving cheer to the helpless, ministering to those in need.

The Spirit of Christmas is the spirit of gift-giving. When the wise men guided by the star had found the Christ-child, they opened their treasures and presented unto him, gold, frankincense and myrrh. The Christmas Spirit is the spirit that regards nothing too good for our Lord; no gift too great for Him who giveth all.

A great deal of the joy of Christmas giving has been lost, because it has come to be a time for the mere exchange of gifts, when people give to others, not because there is sincere regard, or need of the gift, but giving because others have or will give to them.

We cannot give gifts to Christ in the way that the wise men did, but ministering in Christ's name to those in need, is not only ministering to Christ, it is also showing the Christmas Spirit, for if we put Christ in Christmas, we shall have the Christmas Spirit.

The Spirit of Christmas is the spirit that makes for peace and brotherhood. Let this find expression, not merely in the relationship of man with man, but of organization with organization, and nation with nation. When men and nations catch the real Christmas Spirit, it will be manifest not only at Christmas time, but all the time.

Then nations will not be considering the junking of their navies just for a ten year period, but will begin to build a peace-program that will go on and on through the ages. Then let us have the real Christmas Spirit, which is the spirit of Good Cheer, of Gift-giving, of Peace, of Brotherhood and of Christ.

JOHN 3: 16 - 21

The Rev. William Grotefeld St. Pauls Evangelical Church

What will abide with us of the Christmas of 1921? Will it be the love and the life and the light of Christ? Love, life, light are the words engraved on the tombstone of the German preacher, philosopher and poet, John G. Herder. Love, life and light decorate the heart of man better than a tombstone and are the things that make for a merry Christmas more than anything else. And it seems to me that at no time in the history of the world there was greater need of warm love, happy life and true light than now. It was night time when Jesus revealed himself to Simeon and spoke to him of the eye of God, of eternal life, and the gift that revealeth the truth. Does not seem as if Christmas, coming a midwinter, when the days are shortest and the nights are cold, came to bring the message: cheer ye, pilgrim, in the darkest darkness of thy sojourn God still is there with you with His love and light. He will turn thy darkest night into your brightest day. He comes to your rescue when His help is most needed and when it does you the greatest good. He knows the most opportune time. True love is faithful and wise.

Love "God so loved the world." How beautiful these words from the lips of Jesus! They sound so sweet and true. God loveth Peter and Paul, Mary Magdalene and Phoebe, God loveth the world, even me, even you. A man of one of the African tribes came to a missionary and said, "I could like to buy that book which says, 'God so loveth the world.'" It was missionary Williams who began each sermon with this word: "God so loveth the world." One African who heard this word for the first time was moved to tears. How does it strike you? Should the God of love not have your full confidence? Should His love not drive malice and jealousy and hatred out of your heart? Let love and friendship and brotherliness prevail. In the spirit of the shepherds let us come together and say: "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing, which is come to pass." Let us love Him who first loved us and with one accord praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Life Love is life. And Jesus says: "Whoever believeth shall have everlasting life. Faith in the only begotten Son of God, Jesus, the Christ, is the beginning of eternal life. To believe is come as the shepherd did with faith in God and the Scriptures, and loving interest in each other. To believe is to come as the wise men came from the far east not shunning hardship and sacrifice, feeling no effort is too much and no sacrifice too great to gain this one treasure which is in Christ Jesus. "He that believeth not, is condemn-

ed." "Believeth not?" Why? Because of your great intellect or knowledge, because of your goodness and perfection, because of your good works? No need of the Word of God and Christian worship, of prayer and communion because of self-sufficiency? Impossible! What does Christ say? "Believeth not, because their deeds were evil." There can be false imaginations. Not the glory and halo that you may be able to throw around yourself, but the general direction of your heart and life, your inner worth, the sum total of your life, will determine whether you enjoy with "Whoever believeth shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

Light

This life turns its face towards the light, loves the light and wants to be in the light all the time. He that believeth, loveth the truth and the light. That is our great joy, "the light is come into the world." God is light and is no darkness in Him. Jesus affirmed this. The light from heaven illumined the night for the shepherds at Bethlehem. This light suddenly blazed down upon Paul at Damascus. The shepherds and Paul found Jesus, who saves, Jesus born at Bethlehem and in the hearts of Paul and Peter, Mary Magdalene and Lydia the proof that this Christ is the light which should come into the world, that he is the light which shall lead us the way of love and life, the light that sends down into the dark chambers of our heart the merciful rays of light and hope and comfort, the light to be for us in the hour of death the bright morning star which leads to eternal life in heaven. Isn't it reasonable, that we now should walk in the light? Arise, shine; for thy light is come. Ye were sometimes darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord; walk as the children of light.

It will indeed be a Merry Christmas where these three reign, love, life and light. Time will tell whether thy coming to the Christmas of 1921 was a coming to Christ.

CHRISTMAS

The Rev. Gilbert H. Newland First Methodist Episcopal Church

First there is the material Christmas. The snow on the ground. The

toys and all manner of gifts in the stores. The dressed windows proclaim it. The evergreen trees in the homes. The wonder in the children's faces. The mail man with a Santa Claus pack. Christmas dominates the business world for most all December. The gathering of relatives and friends at the old home for the feast.

Then Christmas grows from the material to the mental or from a picture to a thought. From the eye to the mind. It is a story of wise men coming to see the Child. Angel choirs, shepherds watching by night. A star in the sky. A babe in a manger. Statesmen sit about tables in Washington to write the Christmas of "peace on earth and good will to men" in the laws between the nations. It fills our minds as we plan a remembrance for relatives and for friends.

Lastly Christmas passes from the mental to the spiritual. From the mind to the heart. It becomes in its essence spirit and life. Many people celebrate it only as a material Christmas. Others add to this the mental conception which haunts the Christmas-tide. However we all may enter into the spiritual side of this religious season, Christmas is the soul of religion. It is the birthday of love. It is the beginning of forgiveness and good will. Its heavenly choir taught earth the diving art of music. It conquers selfishness and meanness. It inspires every worthy man and cause. It moves the world to generosity. We date all events from it: either B. C. or A. D. Christmas stands at the center of time. Christ came that we might have life and spirit. There will never be a greater day than Christmas until there is a better Christ than the Saviour of humanity.

"Swift through the vast expanse it flew, And loud the echo rolled;

The theme, the song, the joy was new, 'Twas more than Heaven could hold. Down through the portals of the sky, The impetuous torrent ran:

And angels flew with eager joy, To bear the news to man."

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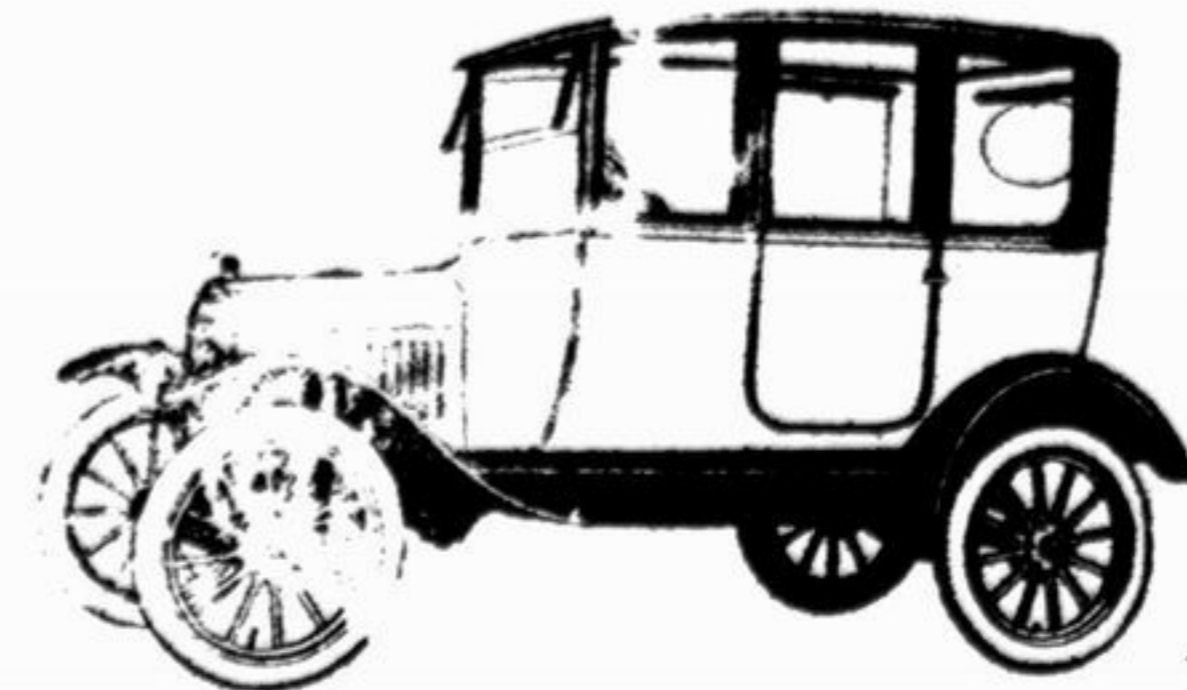
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