

Christmas Messages From Local Clergy

**By Rev. C. G. Higginson,
Richmond Hill United Church**
For weeks we have been working toward Christmas, sending our greetings and gifts, preparing for the family dinner; but our plans are not complete until we have made a place and a time in which to give heartfelt thanks to God, who first gave us Christmas when He sent His Son.

As Christians we believe that "the blessed life which began in Bethlehem more than nineteen hundred years ago is the image and brightness of Eternal Love." To behold the brightness of that Eternal Love in the face of Jesus Christ is to find life and joy and peace forevermore. Surely then, at Christmas and at all times, we can wish nothing greater than this for each other and for our world. May you know that blessing as you worship Him who gave the Babe of Bethlehem to the world.

**By Rev. Robert W. Irvin, Pastor
Richmond Hill Baptist Church**

"... thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." Matthew 1: 21
How grand and glorious was the message of comfort and assurance given by the angel of the Lord to Joseph. In the midst of his concern and consternation there came a message from the throne of God. "Fear not!", the angel said, "Do not be troubled, do not be alarmed, for this is all God's plan. Mary's son is God's Son also, so do not be afraid!"

"Better news still! This Son of God and Mary is to be a Saviour, both for His people and for the world. That's why His name is to be called 'Jesus,' which means 'Jehovah is salvation.' And so fear turns to fascination, concern to confidence, trouble to triumph! Some months later a similar angelic message echoes across the Judean hills, as humble shepherds listen in amazement and wonder. "Fear not, I bring you only tidings of abundant joy, for a Saviour is born to you this day!"

Thus the prophecy to Joseph is literally fulfilled and God's only Son takes His place upon the earth in human form, made in the likeness of man. Born to die! Given life to give His life!

But how easily the Saviour is replaced by Santa, the manger obscured by materialism, the Christ crowded out by commercialism! Nevertheless, again God's messengers seek to remind the world of the reason for Christmas — the birth of the Christ of the Cross, the Saviour of sin-sick souls. Matthew reminds us that "the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." Mark emphasizes His coming "to give his life a ransom for many." Luke re-echoes Matthew's statement that Jesus came "to seek and to save that which was lost." John re-affirms God's purpose in sending His Son "that the world through him might be saved." Peter proclaims as of old that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Paul testifies that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

What do YOU see in the manger of that Bethlehem inn? Just a baby? The fulfillment of the angel's message? The hope of the world? It is possible to see there YOUR SAVIOUR, the Son of God, born humbly in order that He might die nobly for the sin of the world — your sin and mine! "Unto YOU is born this day a SAVIOUR, which is Christ the Lord" — YOUR SAVIOUR, MY SAVIOUR — the Babe of Bethlehem, the Christ of Christmas!

**Rev. J. F. O'Neil, Rector
St. Mary's Anglican Church**

It was in the quiet stillness of a winter's night that God spoke his most mighty Word to men. It was a Word of good cheer. In fact, it was the most welcome Word that the world has ever received. But the wonder of it is in the way it came. It did not come like a flying saucer bearing some mysterious ultimatum from on high. Neither was it a Word spoken in a language that only a few could understand. Rather this Word was spoken in the universal language of love. The beloved Saint John put it this way, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father — full of grace and truth."

This is the message of Christmas. This is how God would make friends with us. Not by proxy, not by letter, but by coming Himself in the form of a Babe and within the circle of a family. Only Love could do this. And Love is at the heart of Christmas.

Now I don't need to remind you that your response to this act of love reveals where you stand in relation to God. It surely can be nothing less than the response of the shepherds and wise men of old and that is WORSHIP. For that is the key to peace and goodwill among men.

**By Rev. Earl S. Bull
Richmond Hill Free Methodist Church**

The incarnation means the salvation of man: "Thou shalt call His name JESUS:" announced the angel Gabriel, "for He shall save His people from their sins." The very name Jesus means "Saviour". The writer of the book of Hebrews declared, "But now . . . hath He appeared to put away sin." The purpose of the appearance of Christ was that He might strike from the enslaved soul the shackles of sin and set him free. He has appeared to pardon the past and plan the present of each person who will receive Him by faith into their heart and life.

The incarnation means the sanctification of man. In Mark 1:7-8 we hear John the Baptist saying, "There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water; but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." This baptism with the Holy Ghost is a unique function ascribed only to Christ. This prerogative was purchased with the price of His own blood, "Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." (Heb. 13-12).

God the Father had promised through the prophet Joel that the time would come when He would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, and the fulfillment of this promise was made possible by the incarnate Christ. This truth was forcefully proclaimed by Peter on the Day of Pentecost, Act. 2:32-33. This outpouring of the Spirit purifies and empowers the heart of the believer by removing the remnants of original depravity. Truly, Christ is "able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him."

The incarnation means the glorification of God. On that first Christmas day when the incarnation took place, heaven was athrill with the wonder of it. The Angelic host proclaimed "Glory to God in the highest." His is the glory of the only begotten of the Father, and all mankind shall come to know that He is full of grace and truth.

Then, too, glory accrues to the Father, through the redemptive work of Christ. Transformed souls, emancipated from the bondage of sin through the love of God and the blood of Christ, will sing and shout "Glory to God in the highest" throughout the endlessness of their immortal existence. Well could the angels afford to announce "Glory to God in the highest" at the sight of the Babe of Bethlehem's manger.



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