

The Simply Wonderful and Wonderfully Simple Christmas Story

In the effort to say something that has never been said or apply something that has never been applied, we often miss the essence of the Christmas story. It was prophesied hundreds of years before that God would visit the earth, live sinlessly, die the vicarious death for our sins, be buried and rise again from the dead. And it happened just as He said. We agree with the foretelling Scripture that says, *"This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes"* (Psalm 118:23).

In a portion of the great Christmas story we see:

1. The Proximity of the Lord's Visit

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night" Luke 2:8). What a joyous thought - Christ the young king, in the same country with the common men, women, boys, and girls! Christ was born to feel and experience this life as we know it. *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"* (Hebrews 4:15). God moved into our small planet and became one of us. God did more than come near; He became one of us (II Corinthians 8:9).

2. The Promise of Our Lord's Visit

"And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" (Luke 2:9, 10). The shepherds were having a relatively calm, non-eventful evening, when suddenly the angelic messenger shows up with the floodlight from Heaven representing the glory of God. The shepherds were terrified; wouldn't you be as well? So, the angel's initial word was *"fear not."* What a foretaste of life with Christ! He takes the fear out of the darkest night; joy in the saddest situations, meaning in a world full of questions, and blessing in a cursed earth. Then the angel says, *"I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."* Gospel means good news. Even at Christ's birth we begin to understand the "reason for the season," not just to have little girls and their mothers coo and make on over the precious infant (and there is nothing wrong with that), but the main reason He came was to die on the cross, be buried and rise again (I Corinthians 15:3, 4), which is the Gospel, which translated means *"good tidings!"*

The result of the good tidings is *"great joy, which shall be to all people"* everywhere! Sometimes there are blessings that come to some, but not all. At this time of year my heart goes out to those not as fortunate as others. Some will not even have a Christmas tree to put gifts under, but that won't be as big a blow as to not have gifts at all. The best gift can come upon all, without denial because of station, birth, or culture. *"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price"* (Isaiah 55:1).

3. The Peace Surrounding Our Lord's Visit

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:11-13).

The mightiest angelic choir ever assembled came to give praise and honor to the Son of God when His designated visit came to pass. One of their major themes was *"peace on earth."* This coming Tuesday, I shall be in speaking just after a young man, home from Iraq, gives his testimony of the reality of God in his life. He is home early because he lost sight in both eyes due to a bomb explosion on a dusty roadside in Iraq. As we think of our young people living in harm's way or even dying, it is good to remember their mission is peacekeeping, more than war raging. It is the terrorists that are creating the problems. Our kids are over there trying to eliminate the problems. This is a great time of year to pray

for those in uniform. Let us pray for their peace and protection.

In this world we "*shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...*" (Matthew 24:6, 7). One day our Lord will return and bring peace on earth. "*And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more*" (Micah 4:3). Until Christ returns and sets up His kingdom of peace, let us propagate the gospel to one and all. The promise of personal peace is to all who believe! Jesus said, "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*" (John 14:27).

- Pastor Pope -

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