

Christmas Eve Lessons & Carols 2009

Peace and Goodwill Come in the Christ-Child

In the Name JESUS. [Amen]

Even the world gets the message of *Christmas* in general: *Peace on earth, goodwill toward men*. That is something most all of us want – peace, goodwill. But that’s the rub of *Christmas*. We are **wishing** for peace on earth and goodwill toward men. But we look around and don’t see it. We look in our own lives and it is all too often lacking. Yes ... every once in a while the world gets it right – and even in the midst of war there will be a momentary “cease fire” at *Christmas*. If **that** isn’t ironic! “We’re going to stop shooting right now ... it’s Christmas. Peace and goodwill you know. But after the New Year we’ll start up again where we left off.”

Where there should be peace – at least where we want peace – there is strife ... and war. Where there should be goodwill – where we want goodwill to exist – there is, instead, ill-will ... and even hatred. And that is **not** just in the world and lives around us! We struggle with it too – striving to get ahead ... fighting to get our share of the pie (so we think) ... and warring with family, neighbor, and co-worker over whatever petty little “turfs” we have set up. It’s not just the ill-will of the world around us – toward us or our next-door neighbor or our neighbor across the ocean – but the ill-will that crops up in our **own** lives all too often ... our own prejudices ... our own wishing others ill (either to get even with them or get ahead of them). That’s the real problem.

And, once again I say, that’s the rub of *Christmas*. *Christmas* **is** all about peace and goodwill – but not because of **our** wishful thinking ... not because **we** want it to be so ... not because **we** actually accomplish it; for then it would be just as temporary as the peace we have around the world ... in our own neighborhoods ... and right in our own backyards. *Christmas* is about **God** making peace with sinful people like you and me – because **we** are quite unable to make peace with God on our own. *Christmas* is about **God** showing **His** goodwill toward fallen, sinful mankind.

We sometimes wonder at the fear that Mary and the Shepherds exhibit when the angels come to them to announce *Good Tidings of Great Joy*. Afraid of God’s angels? Why? But, then, why not?! After all, they represent God! And look at

how Adam and Eve behaved in the presence of God – after they had disobeyed His command and sinned ... eating from the forbidden tree. They were **afraid of God** ... and hid from Him – as if we could ever really hide from God. We all know the feeling – either as a child (hiding from our parents after disobeying them) ... and even now as adults (trying to hide our shame when we have sinned against people and God).

But did you catch that little promise – the First Gospel – as God was reprimanding Adam, Eve, and satan? ***And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.*** [GEN 3.15] One day the Lord would send a Savior – who would be born of a woman ... born under the Law [GAL 4.4] ... a Child who would be born **unto us** ... a Son given **unto us** ... and **for us** [ISA 9.6].

He is the Son that God the Father did not withhold [GEN 22.16] – but gave that we might have forgiveness, life, and salvation in Him. He is the Prince of Peace who brings true and lasting peace on earth and goodwill toward men. He is the ***Rod out of the stem of Jesse*** – a descendent from the line of David according to the flesh He received from Mary. He is the Righteous ***Branch*** – the Child who leads the way to everlasting peace and tranquility between God and mankind. [ISA 11.1, 6] It is because of the Child born of the Virgin Mary in a stall in Bethlehem because the world was too occupied to receive Him – the Child Whose Name is called JESUS because He is the Lord saving His people ... **all** people ... you and me and all our families and friends ... from sin – that we have peace.

Jesus, born in Bethlehem, is the fulfillment of all the hopes and dreams and prophecies of the Old Testament. It **all** pointed to Him – and to the work He came to accomplish ... the work of saving us from our sin. Glory be to the Son of God Who came in human flesh – our Lord Jesus Christ!

In the Name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]