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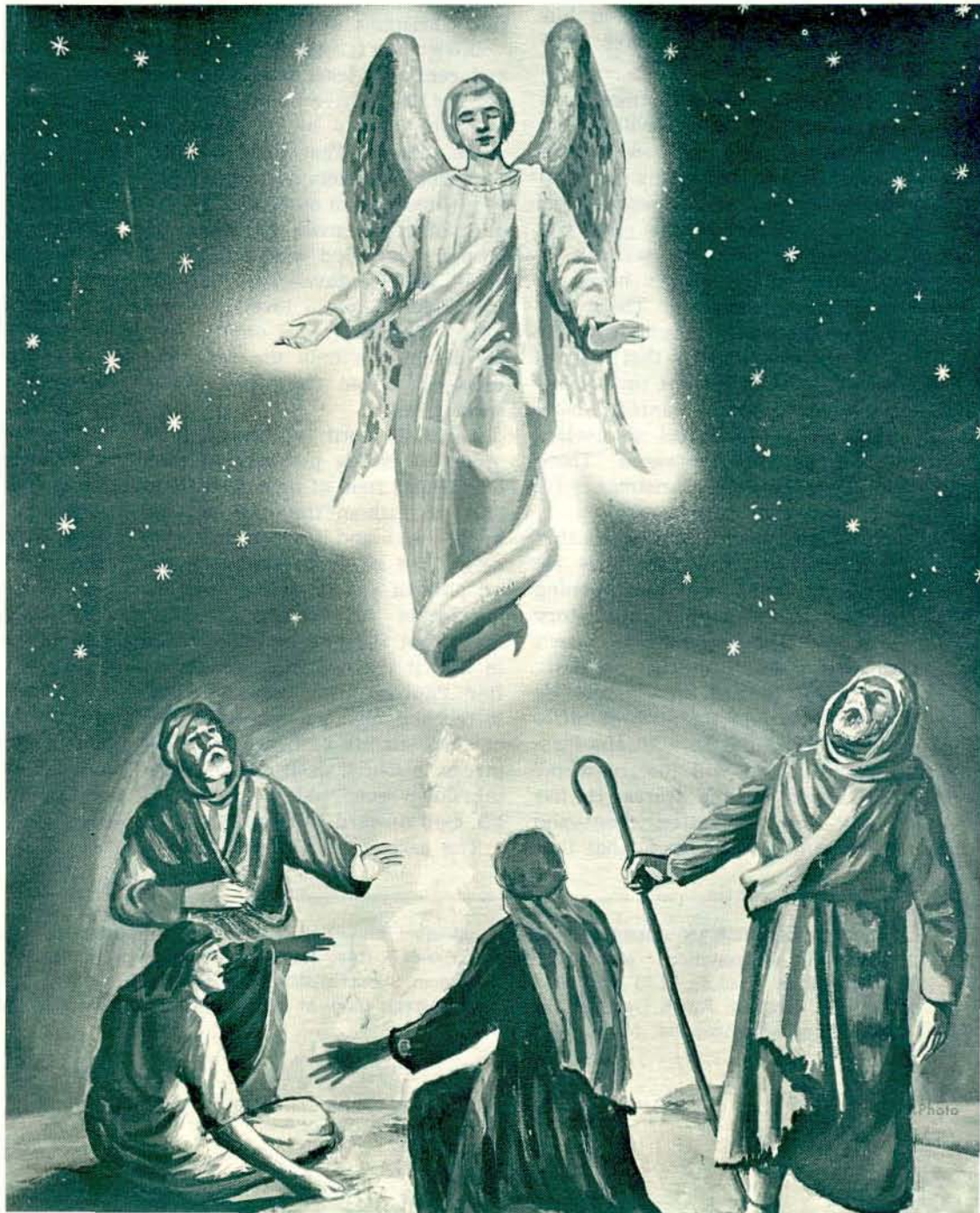
Vol. 2

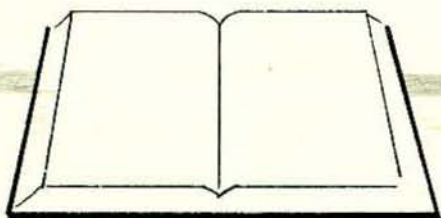
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December ~~28~~, 1964

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LUTHERAN

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According to the Word

God's Great Gift

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

The season of Christmas is a season of joy. There will be an exchange of gifts and good wishes. Somehow heaven seems so near at Christmas time and hearts seem so warm. Some of the gifts will carry with them the warmth of affection in the giver's heart, as they are intended to. There will also be the lonely, forgotten hearts at Christmas; hearts that once—seemingly such a short time ago—were young and "wanted." Now they are old and feel so useless and sometimes unwanted. There may not be any Christmas gifts for them this Christmas.

It was to such lonely hearts that God came that first Christmas. He came to announce the opening chapter in the greatest love story ever told. There was a heaven-sent Christmas wish of "Peace on earth, good will toward men." But—He does more than that; words, after all, are "cheap." So with His message of "good will toward men," He "wraps" up the dearest He has—His only begotten Son—and sends Him down to man that first

Christmas Eve. He knows too that this "love story" begun at Christmas is but the prelude to its climax at Calvary. Still—He sent Him that first Christmas Eve.

Gifts aren't valued in dollars and cents; at least they shouldn't be. It's the motive behind the gift—in the giver's heart—that puts value into it. That little bouquet of dandelions from your little boy or girl may mean more than a bouquet of roses given by others as an obligation. God wasn't obligated at all, still He gave—gave because He loved. "God so loved . . . He gave." He didn't love only a few; He didn't love only the deserving ones—He loved the whole undeserving world.

The little word "so" in this little group of words presents to each one of us a field of adventure. Paul tried to fathom the love of God in its length and its breadth and its height and its depth—and gave up. "It passeth understanding" was his conclusion. It couldn't be understood, but it could be experienced in life. It reached deep enough to find Paul on the Damascus road. It reached high enough—this love of God—to lift him into heavenly places in Christ Jesus. It is reaching down even today, seeking to lift men upward to Himself.

The season of Christmas needs

to become a time of stillness and searching of hearts. We are so apt to be carried away by the outward enthusiasm and activity. We are so taken up with the chaff that we fail to see the kernel of Christmas which does not consist of things but a Person. The shepherds of long ago on the hills of Judaea returned with joy from their visit at the manger that first Christmas Eve. They saw many things on that journey; they heard many wonderful tales as they searched for the promised Savior. But the one thing that led to their inner peace and joy was the fact of having seen Him and in Him they had seen the fulfillment of their own longings as the verification of the Word.

What has this Gift of God come to mean to me personally? That is the question that we need to ask ourselves as we again hear the story of the Christ Child in the manger. This Christmas Gift of God is available to all. However, only those who personally accept Him will reap the reward of "peace on earth" in their hearts.

May not the tinsel and the gifts and the noise of commercials this blessed Christmas season drown out the still voice of God as He speaks through His Son, offering life to all who believe.

—Karl G. Berg

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Christmas Message

THE blessed Christmas season is here. For the child of God it is a season of joy as he remembers that the Savior has come. But the Savior can be lost in the maze of Christmas activity.

On that first Easter, Mary stood in the garden weeping, for, "they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." At Christmas time, too, Christ can be taken from us, unless we be on guard. He can be buried in an avalanche of earthly concerns.

Some found Christ that first Christmas. Others were not aware of His presence in the world, even those in the town of Bethlehem, perhaps. Will all of us find and rejoice in Christ afresh at this season when we commemorate His coming?

As we think of those who found Christ that first Christmas, we note some striking things. They believed in the miraculous.

It was not unbelievable for them that angels should reveal the news to them. They believed in such beings.

It was not unbelievable for them that prophecies written hundreds of years before should be fulfilled. They expected them to be fulfilled. They had confidence in the Scriptures. When Herod asked the wise men where the King of the Jews was to be born, they could tell him "thus it is written through the prophet."

When they saw the star, it was not just a natural phenomenon, but for them it was a message from God. They had a childlike faith in God working on behalf of man in all things.

They were sincere and seeking. They wanted to see for themselves. They were not to be led by the scoffing opinions of others. They were willing to forsake other things that they might find the Christ. Some traveled great distances, oth-

ers left their flocks. They sincerely sought.

If we would find the Christ, we too, must be sincere. We must seek Him with all our hearts. He does not force himself on anyone. If we seek, we will find.

We must believe in the miraculous. Some in our day would make of our Lord someone easily understood, who rarely if ever performed miracles. Only the simple, uneducated, old or young, believe in miracles, they say. They thus are burying the Lord of the Scriptures by rational unbelief. God is mighty small to them. God is almighty. His Son is omnipotent. Angels serve Him. Nature reveals Him. He is the Lord of heaven and earth. The unbelievable is to be believed. Without such faith, the true Christ cannot be found.

We must have confidence in the Scriptures. Without faith in God's Word, the Bible, there is no way we can know Christ. We may have emotional, psychological, or intellectual experiences, but not really know Christ. We have been given God's Word that we might know. Therefore to the Bible we go with simple childlike confidence, and we find Christ, and peace. When confidence in the Bible is destroyed, men lose their faith. Christ spoke of the curse that will be upon those who destroy the faith of even the little ones.

May you all find Christ afresh this Christmas. Do not let anyone, anything, take Him away or hide Him from you. If you do, you cannot have Christmas.

I would greet all of you. God has been good to us. Let us all present ourselves to Him anew.

Thank you for your faithfulness in the support of the Association. It is inspiring to learn to know more of you. May God bless you, everyone.

Sincerely,
Pastor John P. Strand

The Christmas Carol Jesus Sang

by William Allan Dean

Have you ever stopped to consider the first of all Christmas carols?

SOMEHOW it would not seem like Christmas without singing "Away in a Manger," "O Little Town of Bethlehem," "Joy to the World," and "Silent Night, Holy Night." How much we would miss without the sound of these carols ringing in our ears and the words bringing joy, peace and comfort to our hearts. But we so often forget Jesus' Christmas carol.

Jesus' Christmas carol is recorded in Hebrews 10:5-7: "When he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God."

These words were first recorded in Psalm 40. The Lord Jesus picked up the message of the ancient Psalmist and breathed into it a newer and fuller meaning as He came into the world. This is His Christmas carol.

The innkeeper at Bethlehem was a prominent man in the village. That night he was especially important. Every weary traveler wanted to get next to the innkeeper, for he alone could provide rest and shelter in an overcrowded inn. But today no one knows who he was. He's been long since forgotten.

The shepherds are unknown. They were very important as they told what had happened out there on the hills of Bethlehem. Again and again, they told the story in the following weeks and months. Perhaps years later they still gath-

ered groups around them and told about the night that the angel host broke through the sky above them with the glorious message and how they found the Babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. Yet no one today knows the names of the shepherds.

Even the wise men are unknown. Tradition says there were three, but that's only because three kinds of gifts were brought: gold, frankincense and myrrh. There may have been many more than that. They must have been wealthy and important men, scholarly men, students of the starry skies, students of history, students of prophecy; and they came a long, long journey. All Jerusalem was stirred by these foreign visitors who arrived seeking the King of the Jews! But no one knows today who were the wise men. They're comparatively unimportant.

The scribes felt that they were important. When Herod asked them where the Christ should be born, they immediately quoted from the Scriptures. They were the religious leaders of Israel and everyone looked up to them; but today we don't know any of their names either. Joseph and Mary, Simeon and Anna, those whose names we do know, are remembered only because of their relationship to the Babe who was born in Bethlehem that Christmas Day. Who is He? We find the record in His Christmas carol.

"Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." The carol is introduced by the word "then." The time was right for the Messiah's coming. Heathen religion had proved its utter failure. The heathen Athenians, though they had hundreds and thousands of gods, had erected an altar to the unknown god, lest they miss one

god. Yet with all of their gods, corruption had swept over the Greek world. The world, flooded with religion, was still full of envy and strife. Heathen religion had proved a failure.

But not only had pagan religion failed, Israel's worship had become mere hypocrisy. When the Lord Jesus came into the world He said to the Father, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not . . . in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin, thou hast no pleasure." God had commanded His people to bring such offerings, but they had reduced the worship of God to a mere formality. Isaiah, seven centuries before, had described the emptiness of Israel's worship:

"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the callings of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood."

This condition had invaded the most religious of the Jewish people, the Pharisees; it had contaminated the very priesthood itself and all of Israel's worship had become an empty, vain mockery, characterized by hypocrisy and falseness. Surely it was time that God stepped in! And "then," when pagan religions had proved their utter inability to satisfy the sin-burdened heart of man; "then,"

when Israel's worship had been degraded into a mere empty form; "then," in the fullness of time, the Eternal Son of God came down out of the glory, and took upon himself human form, saying to the Father, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God."

FULL OF PROPHECIES

From beginning to end the Old Testament had been crammed full of prophecies concerning Him. The first promise of a coming Redeemer was given to the man and the woman in the garden in Genesis. God had said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." From that day God had been promising with more and more specific definiteness the coming of the great Redeemer. In Genesis 12 He assured us that He should come of Abram's seed. In Genesis 49:10, He had given the promise that He should come from the tribe of Judah. He had assured David that the coming King should arise from his family; and from that first promise in Samuel, God had reiterated again and again that out of David should arise a King that was to deliver mankind from their suffering and establish a reign of righteousness and peace. In Isaiah 7 He assured us that this one should be a virgin's son. In Micah 5 He had said that He would be born in Bethlehem, David's royal city. In Isaiah 9 He promised: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given . . . and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

For centuries the prophets had been looking forward to the coming of this Son of God. And what was the purpose of His coming? He sang about it in this first Christmas carol. "Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God! He came to do the will of the Father who sent Him. He came not to magnify himself; He came despised and rejected of men. He came a man of sorrows and ac-

quainted with grief. He came to declare God's righteousness to a sinful world that didn't want God's righteousness; He came to bring peace to men that were estranged and far off from God. He came to provide God's salvation.

How clearly the angels declared it as they broke the news to the shepherds on those hills of Bethlehem: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." He is the Christ, the Son of God. He is the Lord of Glory, He is the King of Kings, and He has come down out of Ivory Palaces to be your Savior. He has come to do what heathen religion had failed to do; He has come to do what Israel's worship in hypocrisy and empty formalism could never accomplish. He has come to save His people from their sins. "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." And so He laid aside His glory, and He who was rich for our sakes became poor that we through His poverty might become rich.

Yet Mary brought forth her first-born Son and laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. *No room for the Lord of Glory, no room for the Christ of God, no room for the Savior of sinners, no room for Immanuel, the Son of the Most High God.* No room for Him in the inn! And how sad it is that ever since in a world of sin and corruption, in a world making its uncleanness under a cloak of religiousness, *there's still no room for the Son of God.* He comes to be the Savior of sinners, He comes the Lord of Glory stooping to take upon himself human flesh. He comes the Christ, the King of Kings, and still there's no room for Him in human hearts.

"Lo, I come . . . to do thy will, O God." That will of God was very costly to Him. Harken to His Christmas carol; let it ring in your hearts above all other Christmas carols.

Go, tell the sheep on the fields of Bethlehem that here is the Lamb of God, the one who has come to

be the perfect sacrifice, to take upon himself the sin of the world.

Go tell the shepherds, guarding their flocks, that here is the Good Shepherd who has come to lay down His life for the sheep. Go tell the people of Bethlehem, the village whose very name means the House of Bread, that here is the living and the life-giving Bread, and when men feed upon Him they shall never hunger. Go tell the wise men, coming with gifts so neatly wrapped, that here is one in whom is wrapped up all the Wisdom of the Godhead bodily, wiser than all the wise men of the East, one who knows all the secrets of eternity.

Go tell Simeon the priest that here is the Great High Priest, after the order of Melchizedek, a sinless Priest, whose intercession is effectual with God our Father and who ever liveth to manage our concerns for us. Go tell King Herod, proud of his glory and boastful of his power, that the one who is born in Bethlehem's manger is the King of Kings. The days shall come when Herod's glory shall be stripped from him; Rome itself shall go down into decay and ashes, but this King shall reign forever, for God has promised that of His kingdom there shall be no end.

Go tell the star that guided the wise men to the place of His birth that here is the bright and morning Star, whose coming to gather His own unto himself shall herald the near approach of the breaking of the eternal day.

Go tell them to listen while the Babe of Bethlehem sings the sweetest Christmas carol ever heard. "Then," when all religion had failed, when all men's hearts were failing them for fear and they found no deliverance from sin and corruption, *then* He came and sang this song to God His Father, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God."

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**SECOND
ANNUAL NATIONAL
LUTHER LEAGUE
CONVENTION**

**“FOLLOW
HIS
STEPS”**

**ASSOCIATION OF
FREE LUTHERAN
CONGREGATIONS**

Dec. 31—Jan. 3

Medicine Lake Free
Lutheran Seminary
and Church
Mpls., Minn.

SPEAKERS

EVENING SPEAKER

Rev. Clair Jennings
Faith Free Lutheran Church
Minneapolis, Minnesota

BIBLE HOUR

Rev. E. Tornow
St. Paul's Free Lutheran Church
Fargo, North Dakota

MISSION HOUR

Rev. H. Schafer
Grace Lutheran Church
DeKalb, Illinois

Rev. J. Strand, President
Association of
Free Lutheran Congregations
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Dr. U. Saarnivaara
Professor of Systematic Theology
and Biblical Exegetics
Minneapolis, Minnesota

COST

Approximate cost for entire convention will be \$20.00.

ADVANCE REGISTRATION

Detach registration form and mail to:

Mrs. Bob Rieth
Route 1
Stacy, Minnesota

Advance registration preferred.

REGISTRATION FORM

Name _____

Address _____

Age _____ Sex _____

Church _____

Pastor _____

MAIL TO:

Mrs. Bob Rieth
Route 1
Stacy, Minnesota

Theme Song: "Each Step I Take"

THURSDAY

CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Chapel
Church Headquarters
3110 Medicine Lake Boulevard

LODGING

Howard Johnson Motel
Highway 100, edge of
Richfield and Edina

Registration at 3110 Medicine Lake Boulevard	6:30
Evangelistic Service Pastor C. Jennings	8:30
Buses leave for motel	10:00
New Year's Watch Night Service at poolside. Meditation— Rev. Strand	11:15
Back to quarters	12:05
Lights Out	12:45

FRIDAY

Rising	8:00
Swim Hour	8:00 -8:30
Buses leave for Chapel	9:15
Breakfast at Headquarters	9:30
Bible Hour - Rev. Tornow	10:30
Singspiration break	11:30
Mission Hour - Rev. Schafer	11:40
Noon Hour	12:30
Relaxation	1:30 -2:15
Bible Hour - Rev. Tornow	2:15
Recess	3:15
League Presentations "Follow His Steps"	3:30
1. Daily Living - Connie Broden	
2. Companions - Grant Torgerson	
3. Vocations - Erling Aaserud	
PTM Banquet - Karen Moe in charge	5:30
Evangelistic Service - Rev. Jennings	7:30
Buses leave for motel	10:00
Devotions	10:30
Lights Out	11:00

SATURDAY

Rising	7:00
Morning Swim	7:00 -7:30
Buses leave motel	8:15
Breakfast	8:30
Bible Hour - Rev. Tornow	9:30
Recess	10:30
Practical Hour - Rev. Schafer	10:40
Business Session— Election of Officers Luther League Project	11:40
Noon Hour	12:15
Outing	1:30
Supper	5:30
Film, "In His Steps"	6:30
Evangelistic Service - Rev. Jennings	7:30
Buses leave for motel	10:00
Devotions	10:30
Lights Out	11:00

SUNDAY

Rising	7:00
Morning Swim	7:00 -7:30
Buses leave motel	8:15
Breakfast	8:30
Bible Class - Dr. Saarnivaara	9:30
Worship Service	11:00
Prof. Soberg in charge Rev. Strand speaking	
Dinner	12:15
Closing Evangelistic Service Rev. Jennings	2:00

Note: Bring swim suits for the morning swims and ice skates for the Saturday outing. (Adult Counsellors to be secured for the motel.)

Our Christmas Sermon

Luke 2:7

by Pastor Fritjof B. Monseth,
Valley City, N. Dak.

THERE was an acute housing problem for Joseph and Mary that first Christmas Eve. If ever they needed lodging it was that night when Jesus was born. But "there was no room for them in the inn." They therefore had to find shelter in a stable and after His birth "she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger."

Maybe we have criticized and condemned the innkeeper and others of Bethlehem for their spiritual blindness, for their indifference to a young mother's need, and for their unwillingness to go out of their way to make room for travellers? Their attitude seems so selfish and so heartless.

However, I am wondering if we will have room for this same Savior this Christmas 1964? (1) Will

the most natural thing in all the world for those who have received His gift of salvation to talk about His love and grace and will and power. Like the apostles of old, they cannot but speak the things which they have seen and heard.

St. Paul said, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel" (I Cor. 9:16). He preached that gospel not only from a pulpit, but in his daily conversation from house to house. The woman of Samaria who experienced salvation felt impelled to tell her neighbors about the Lord.

Has the Lord done anything for you that you feel you must share with those you can reach?

(2) Will there be room in your activities for the Lord this Christmas season? Will you be counting on Him as your partner in all that you do? Or is there room for the Lord only for a little while on Sundays? Is there room in your kitchen and household activities for the Lord? I believe it will make a tremendous difference for you mothers if you make room for the

room in his daily activity.

(3) My third question is a very personal one, "Is there room in your heart for the Lord this Christmas?" That's the most important question of all. If there is room in your heart, then I know there will be room for him in your conversation and daily activity. A human heart can be so full of many things that there is no room for the Lord.

The Pharisees described in the Gospels were so full of pride and other sins that there was no room for Jesus. Many people who lived in the time Jesus was on earth had no room for Him because they were so entangled in the affairs of this life.

We are glad to say that there were some folks living then who did make room for Jesus. They opened their hearts and their homes for Him.

There was Zacchaeus, the tax collector. He had lived a life of greed and dishonesty until the day he met Jesus. His whole inner life was exposed. He was convicted of his utter sinfulness and in response to the invitation Jesus gave him, made haste and received Him joyfully. His heart and home were completely transformed. His whole attitude toward money and toward his fellow men was marvelously changed, all because he made room for the Lord in his life.

I think of the change that took place in the heart of Lydia, the business woman described in the sixteenth chapter of Acts. She permitted the Lord to open her heart to His Word. She made room for the Lord, and do you know what happened? Her home became a restful haven for travelling missionaries who needed restoration of body and soul.

Philip, the evangelist, had made room for the Lord in his heart and, therefore, there was room for Him in his home. We learn that his whole family was affected by the step Philip had taken. His four daughters had been made new creatures in Christ and had a clear ringing testimony. The Bible rec-

[Continued on page 10]

The Lutheran Ambassador

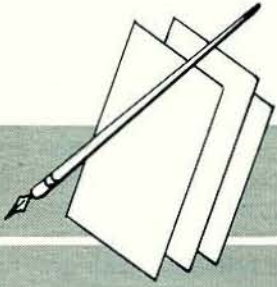


WILL THERE BE ROOM?

there be room in our daily family chats during this season? Will it seem awkward to talk about Jesus? We shall all be talking about many things—about gifts we received and about gifts we gave—about money we spent and about money we owe. We'll be talking about relatives and friends, about company and trips, but how much talk will there be about our blessed Lord whose coming to earth we are to celebrate? Will there be room in our family conversation for the Lord? I know there will be where He has been received. It's

Lord in the midst of your busy activities. He will be with you and take away the monotony and drudgery of your many tasks. He is there not only when you read your Bible or when you kneel to pray.

Do you who are in business have room for the Lord or are you struggling alone with your many problems? I truly believe it is possible for every Christian business man to be a partner of the Lord. What a thrilling experience to be a co-laborer with God! That's true for every person who allows the Lord



EDITORIALS

A SAVIOR IS BORN

As we write today (Nov. 30), the world has joined in tribute to Sir Winston Churchill on his 90th birthday. Every century of human history has had its great men and the twentieth century will number Sir Winston among its very noblest. When free men needed to be rallied against insidious foes, he dramatized the cause around which to gather.

Some weeks ago the world mourned the passing of another nonagenarian, former president Herbert C. Hoover. Feeder of millions, engineer, statesman, he departed this life secure in the esteem of free men.

But how poor the deeds of even the great men and women of history seem in comparison to the great love of God in sending His Son Jesus into the world, and to the great condescension of the Christ who left heaven's glory to give even such as we are the possibility of sharing that glory!

And how short the lifetimes, even of those who attain to fourscore years and ten, compared to the reaches of eternity in which the Lord God prepared salvation and to those endless ages in which the redeemed shall eat bread in His kingdom!

Once again this year, in a world like ours, we stand in amazement before the mystery of the Incarnation—God in human form. Only those who acknowledge that the acts of God must forever remain partly incomprehensible will experience the sight which rewards faith. Only those who confess their abject spiritual poverty in the face of God's holiness will know the meaning of the angel's announcement, "A Savior is born." Some years later the grown Jesus was to say it this way, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick."

Pray God for the simple faith which lays hold of that which it cannot understand and like Jacob at Jabbok's edge will not let the Lord go unless there is a blessing. Pray God for the honesty and simplicity of soul which cries with the publican, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Such a suppliant will not be turned away empty, but will share the wealth of Him who is rich unto all who call upon Him.

"In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son" (Heb. 1:12a). The

name of that great Word of God to us is "Jesus," which means "Savior." Well, then, did the angel proclaim on the hills near Bethlehem, "a Savior is born." Let not that message be lost on any who share in the first Adam's sin.

THE OTHER WISE MAN

Henry Van Dyke has written a little story which, he said, came to him in a miraculous way. It is about a fourth man from the East who would fain have journeyed to Bethlehem and who did at last arrive, but too late. He has called the story, "The Other Wise Man."

Artaban, for that was his name, set out to join Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar at Borsippa in Babylonia. He had ten days in which to make the long trip. If he did not arrive by then, they would leave for Jerusalem without him. Artaban took with him three jewels—a sapphire, a ruby and a pearl—tribute to the newborn King. The jewels were his through the sale of his house and possessions.

But misfortune beset Artaban. On the way to Borsippa he stopped to help a fever-stricken Hebrew lying on the road. When he was sure that the man would recover, Artaban went on but he missed the rendezvous with the other Wise Men by hours. They had already left for Jerusalem.

With the sapphire Artaban bought camels and provisions for the journey to see the King of the Jews. When he arrived in Bethlehem he learned that Joseph, Mary and Jesus had fled three days before to Egypt to escape Herod's wrath. But while in Bethlehem with the ruby he bribed a soldier in search of babes to be killed. A child's life was spared.

Still deeply disappointed, Artaban pressed on to Egypt in search of the Christ Child. Always seeking, he never found the holy family. But he found many to help—the hungry, the naked, the sick, the captives. He travelled in many lands.

Thirty-three years passed in the life of the other Wise Man and still he had not found the object of his quest. Weary and worn he came for the last time to Jerusalem. It chanced to be the time of the Passover and he heard that one who called himself the King of the Jews was to be crucified. Sensing that at long last he would see the King, Artaban proceeded to Calvary thinking that he might be able to ransom Jesus with his treasured pearl. But he was met by a slave girl dragged by her tormentors. She cried to him pitifully. Was this his great opportunity or his last temptation? Believing that it would please God if he paid the ransom for the girl, he gave up the pearl. She was free.

The earthquake which occurred that day dislodged a roof-tile that fell and struck the aged Artaban, still short of Calvary and a glimpse of the King. The old man died in the arms of the girl he had aided, but not before he was assured, "Verily I say unto thee, Inasmuch as thou hast done it unto one

of the least of these my brethren, thou hast done it unto me." The Other Wise Man had found the King.

It is only a story. But the message is a true one and the truth is old. For Jesus said that in serving the needy and the lonely we help Him. Remember that this Christmas as we honor the One whose own life was lived in serving others, whose own death was a ransom for all.

A JOYOUS CHRISTMAS

Christmas has come, with its sunlight
Our fears all dispelling,
Come with the Child
Of whom voices angelic are telling,
Come from above,
Bringing glad tidings of love;
Glory to God
In the highest.

N. F. S. Grundtvig

As the happy Christmas comes once more, each of our readers will recall the Christmases of yesteryear that they have known. Our own first memories of Christmas go back to a small mid-Saskatchewan town where the plains and the parklands of that province meet. There, in the dining room, we had our tree with real candles on it. By today's standards our gifts were not so lavish but Father and Mother

managed one big present for each child. And though a man or woman in later years receives a gift one hundred times in worth, he will not be as joyful or as thrilled as by those gifts of childhood. And, oh yes, horses and sleighs were common in those days and added an excitement to winter that we miss now.

Times and places have changed, but the meaning of Christmas has not. Nor will it ever change. A Savior has come. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. In hearts brimming with gratitude we take that greatest of all gifts into our hearts and lives. Or, we ought to. May the blessed Lord Jesus find a dwelling place in every heart.

The Lutheran Ambassador takes this opportunity to greet its readers everywhere—on the mission fields, friends in still other lands, people in hospital waiting rooms, residents of nursing homes and institutions, students in college and seminary libraries, pastors of the church, service men and women away from home, and the many friends within and outside the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, scattered over the United States and Canada. To all of you, a most joyous and blessed Christmas.

With songs we hasten Thee to greet,
And kiss the dust before Thy feet,
O blessed hour, O sweetest night
That gave Thee birth, our soul's delight.

H. A. Brorson

1964 WMF BIBLE STUDIES

"The unfolding of thy words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple" (Ps. 119:130).

In our Women's Missionary Federation we are thankful to God for the way in which He used the Bible studies on "The Christian Women" to help unfold His Word to us this past year. These lessons, as well as the new series beginning in January, were written by Eula Mae Swenson of Fargo. Eula Mae's home town is Hatton, N. Dak., where she is a member of Zoar Lutheran Free Church. She is presently a teacher in the Fargo school system.

The Bible lessons for the new year will take the form of biographical studies entitled "Profiles of Faith." Let us be diligent in prayer that God may have His way in the preparation of the study guide, as well as in the heart of each woman as she studies His Word. May our WMF meetings be a rich time of fellowship as we

come prepared to share blessings received in private preparation. And as we hear Him speak to us through His Word may we be "doers of the word and not hearers only."

[Continued from page 8]

ord tells us that they all prophesied.

What if Zacchaeus and Lydia and Philip had refused to make room for the Lord Jesus when He came knocking at the door of their hearts? What if they had said, "Go thy way, and when we have a convenient season we will make room"? In all likelihood it would have ended in eternal tragedy for him and his family. I have seen it happen in some cases. It is tragic beyond words.

Let us give heed to the call of the Lord Jesus at this Christmas time. May there be room in your heart and home for Him. That is

one step you will never regret in this life nor in the life to come.

"Now Jesus at the door is knocking!

Hark, how He pleads our souls to win!

Who hears His voice, the door unlocking,

To sup with Him He enters in!
How blest the day, my soul
how blest!

When Jesus comes to be thy guest!

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh" (John 6:51).

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (II Cor. 8:9).

WMF BIBLE STUDY

- (a) Gen. 3:21 This first reference to the sacrifice of animals for covering, points us to Jesus our perfect Substitute. What redemption plan did God have for fallen man? Heb. 9:11-14; 9:22; 9:26-28.
- (b) Gen. 3:22-24 Will this tree of life ever again be a part of man's habitation? Rev. 22:2, 14, 19.
9. What was the first question asked in the Bible? Gen. 3:9 How does this question and the one in Gen. 4:9 summarize what God is asking His children in the Christian church today?

PUNISHMENT

God is just and holy. He cannot tolerate sin. What was the greatest punishment of our forefather's sin? Isaiah 59:2; Rom. 5:12 Only eternity will restore that perfect fellowship with God that Adam and Eve experienced in Paradise. However, as forgiven sinners, what is our blessed privilege? Rom. 5:1, 2 Discuss God's punishment of sin as He dealt with the serpent (3:14-15), Eve (3:16), Adam (3:17). Adam and Eve saw the terrible fruit of sin in their own family (Gen. 4:1-6). What anguish the memory of their fall must have brought them!

PROMISE

God's grace is evident even in the midst of punishment. Gen. 3:15 is the first direct promise of a Savior. Whom was the Lord referring to when He spoke of the serpent's seed? Of the woman's seed? Satan would be permitted to afflict Christ, but Christ's stroke against Satan would be fatal. With Calvary behind us, it is in Christ that the seed of the woman crushes the serpent. Christ is victor over Satan, sin, and death.

The historical record of Eve after the fall is sparse. If she believed in God and looked for redemption in His promised salvation, it was reckoned to her as righteousness (Gen. 15:6). References we do have indicate she did not forget the Lord. Note her comments at the birth of her sons (4:1; 4:25-26). No doubt she remembered God's promise of a Savior and waited for its fulfillment even in her lifetime.

Eve's profile has been a warning to us. We have seen the subtle, cunning deceit of Satan destroy perfect fellowship with God. Let us take heed to the warnings of Prov. 16:18, "Pride goeth before destruction. . ." Therefore, "watch and pray. . ." (Matt. 26:41).



PROFILES OF FAITH

Introduction: The WMF Bible study for the new year will be a biographical approach as we look for evidences of a living faith in the lives of Bible women. A profile is made when an object has light cast upon it. As we see these women in the light of God's Word, we have a picture of their life. We will recognize their aspirations, frailties, and limitations as being similar to ours. Through their lives we shall be challenged to greater devotion in our own lives. If we as Christians are walking in the light (I John 1:7) we also are making a "profile of faith" to the world around us. If we are faithful, God's Word promises we will see these profiles in the faith face to face in eternity. Together we will praise and serve our Lord. Heb. 12:1-2. As we look to Jesus let us claim His promise in II Corinthians 3:18.

EVE

We view Eve with mixed emotions. She knew a life without sin and experienced perfect fellowship with our heavenly Father. Yet, she who had so much, chose to rebel against God and His Word. Have you ever wondered—How? Why? How *could she*? Let us review the life of Eve in: 1. Paradise, 2. Pride and its Consequences, 3. Punishment, 4. Promise.

PARADISE (Read Gen. 1:26–31; 2:15–24)

1. Why were Adam and Eve different from the rest of creation? 1:26–27

2. What authority was delegated to Adam and Eve? 1:26–30

3. What privileges were theirs? 2:8, 9, 15; 2:23, 24; 3:8a; 2:25

4. What restrictions did God place on them? 2:17

..... Unlike other creatures, man is able to say “yes” or “no” to God. He can choose to obey or disobey his Maker. S. deDietrich has written in *God’s Unfolding Purpose*, “The stars in the sky follow their prescribed orbits, the animals of the field obey their instincts, but man has this unique and frightening ability—he can refuse to be obedient to his Creator. For God does not want slaves, but sons.”

Discussion: We are told “good and evil” in Hebrew means to “know all things.” Why would God have that withheld?

PRIDE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES (Gen. 3)

1. Who tempted Eve to disobey God? Gen. 3:1–5; I John 3:8

..... Compare Eve’s temptation with Jesus’ temptation in Matt. 4:11 as to (a) source, (b) opportune time, (c) approach, (d) use of God’s Word, (e) promises given, (f) reaction of person being tempted. Pause and compare Eve’s temptation with your own experiences.

2. II Cor. 11:14 speaks of Satan disguising himself as an angel of light. How is this deceitful approach used in Gen. 3:4–5?

3. John 8:44 tells us Satan is a liar and the father of lies. What basic truth does Satan deny in Gen. 3:4? (Note Rom. 6:23)

..... What false promise does he give in Gen. 3:5?

4. What did the serpent question in Gen. 3:1?

5. As Eve argued with the serpent, he became bolder in his assertions. By now his subtle questioning had already had its influence on Eve.

(a) “Did God say?...” (Gen. 3:1) What was Satan attempting to do?

..... (try repeating this question 3 times emphasizing a different word each time.)

(b) “God said . . . You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree. . .” (Gen. 3:2, 3). Instead of concentrating on God, what was Eve thinking about?

(c) “The woman saw that the tree was good for food. . .” (Gen. 3:6). Newman has written, “Our great security against sin consists in being shocked at it. Eve gazed and reflected when she should have fled.”

Discussion: Why is it dangerous for us to look and contemplate on forbidden fruit?

(d) “. . . it was a delight to her eyes. . .” (Gen. 3:6). How does Eve’s experience bear out the authenticity of James 1:13–15?

..... What could Eve have done, even at this point? James 4:7–8

(e) “. . . she took of its fruit and ate” (Gen. 3:6). At that moment what irrevocable choice had Eve made?

..... Whose word had she accepted as truth?

(f) “She also gave some to her husband, and he ate” (Gen. 3:6). Why do you suppose she wanted to share the forbidden fruit with her husband?

Discussion: How can these six downward steps be repeated today? What does Satan still appeal to? I John 2:16. How can Christians best counteract the subtle work of Satan? I John 2:14b.

6. What were the first reactions of the fallen couple? Gen. 3:7

..... Gen. 3:8b

7. Adam and Eve knew they had done wrong. They knew that God was aware of their disobedience. How did Eve try to justify herself? 3:13

..... How did Adam excuse himself? 3:12

..... Whom, then, did they dare to blame for their transgression?

Discussion: Is this a typical reaction when we have erred? How do we do it today?

8. Adam and Eve had grieved the heart of God with willful disobedience. But God still loved them. He had already begun His long-range plan to redeem fallen man. How do the following references bring this out?



PARISH



Edited by Mrs. David C. Hanson

A SHINING SECRET!



"There," said Mother, as she fastened the star to the top-most branch of the Christmas tree, "I think that will do. How do you like it, children?"

"It's not so bad, Mom, not so bad." This was Peter speaking. "But then, you had Penny and me to help you."

Penny stepped back and looked at the tree with breathless awe, "Oh Mother," she said, "it's the most beautiful Christmas tree I have ever seen. Why, it's just like a shining secret!"

"Perhaps that's because Christmas is a shining secret," Mother said.

"What do you mean. . . . Christmas is a secret?" Peter asked. "Why everyone knows all about Christmas!"

Mother smiled, "I mean that Christmas in the deepest sense is a secret. It started out as a secret, and through the years it has unfolded as a secret. Some day, when there is no more reason for us to celebrate Christmas, the shining secret will still be with us."

"I don't understand, Mother," and Penny's face wore a bewildered expression.

"Well, perhaps this would be a good time to explain," Mother said. "Come and sit down for a while, and I'll tell you a story that may help you to understand."

Mother seated herself in a comfortable chair near the window, and the children sat nearby. Through the window they could see the snow falling in feathery white flakes. The leafless trees were taking on soft new shapes as the snow rested on their branches. Mother began:

"This is not a story of fairy princesses or knights of the round table; it is a story of ordinary things for ordinary people. So, if you are a little girl with

pigtails, or a small boy with freckles, it will be just right for you.

"Long, long ago at the time of creation there was one little star to whom God spoke. It was just an ordinary little star—no different than the others. It went about its business of shining in a very ordinary way without any special feeling of importance.



"That is—it was that way until God spoke. One morning, God leaned into time and space and whispered to the star a shining secret. With that secret in its heart the little star glowed, and glowed, and glowed. Its face became brighter and shinier than ever

before. It shone right out of its ordinary self. It was no longer an ordinary star—it had become the star of the ages.

"On and on it shone, past all the pleasant places of heaven, through the dark clouds of human trouble and sin and sickness. The shining star travelled through the years blazing a path of light into this dark world of ours until it came to rest above a barn in Bethlehem.

"Now at first this was just an ordinary little barn—just a hole in the wall, really. It wasn't large or fine looking. In fact, it wasn't nearly as fine as some of the neighboring barns.

"That is, it was that way until God spoke. Then one morning, God leaned into time and space and



whispered to the barn a shining secret. With that secret in its heart, the barn grew, and grew, and grew. It didn't look any bigger, yet it grew until it filled all the world with its importance. It was no longer an ordinary barn—it had become the barn of the ages. No

other place in all the world knew what it knew. The barn was so full of the shining secret that it could hardly stay in its place by the side of the road. All around it saw men who were sad and afraid, and the little barn wanted to cry out, 'Oh, if you only knew what I know!'

"But it did not cry out, for God had said it was to sit by a road in Bethlehem and wait. God is like that, you know. Sometimes He sends a star on a long, long journey through the years to tell a shining secret. But sometimes He says to a barn in Bethlehem, 'Be still, and know that I am God.' Always some must go and some must wait. This is God's way, and it is a good way.

"So the barn waited and waited until it looked up into the sky that was full of stars and there was the star, glowing with a very special secret. The star winked and said, 'I know a secret!' And the barn blinked its single eye of light that was one tiny window and said, 'I know it, too.' They smiled hap-

pily at each other. There, in the quietness of the night, they waited together.

"They were waiting for a woman. For not many miles away in the village of Nazareth, God had spoken to someone. She was just an ordinary woman. She had no important position, nor had she done anything special in her short life. She really wasn't very different than the other women of her time, but she did have an especially gentle and loving heart.

"That is—it was that way until God spoke. One morning God leaned into time and space and sent His angel Gabriel to whisper to the woman a shining secret. The woman kept the secret in the depths of her heart, and was so filled with the wonder of it, that it overflowed and shone in her eyes. It made its way into the gentle pressure of her fingers as she touched the hands of her carpenter husband. She was still an ordinary woman—no better than others, but now she possessed a shining secret—a secret that set her apart as the woman of the ages. And she went about singing, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.'

"Perhaps she sang that song as she looked down a very ordinary road that led to Bethlehem. For it wasn't an ordinary road to Mary. She had an idea that at the end of that road a shining secret was waiting. She and Joseph set foot upon the road, and her heart was filled with the wonder of the miracle she carried within her.

"As she rode along the way on a very ordinary little donkey, she whispered in his ear, 'Oh, if you only knew what I know.' But the donkey didn't know, and he only switched his tail and plodded on. Right on his back he was carrying a shining secret, and he didn't

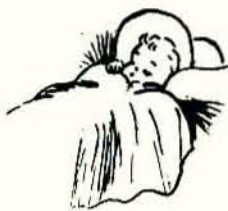
even know it. Some people are like that, you know; all their lives they are so close to a shining secret that they could reach out and touch it. But they never lift their eyes from the dusty roads of life long enough to understand.

"The woman lifted her eyes to the starry skies and suddenly, there was that star, making a path of light across her face. They smiled at each other in the darkness as the donkey stopped before an inn. As Mary looked at the crowds of people and the noisy inn, she could not feel that her journey was complete. But then she saw the little barn blinking a friendly window at the star above, and Mary knew she was there.

"These three who knew the secret were together now—the star, the barn, and the woman; and there was nothing to wait for any more. Now it could be told—the secret for which the star had travelled, for which the barn had waited, and about which the woman had been singing. This was the moment God had promised, and for which the world had been

waiting. Yet it was no different than any other moment that had been ticked off by time.

"That is—it was that way until God spoke! And then it became the moment of the ages. For in the stillness of that first Christmas night, God leaned into time and space and spoke. And the word He spoke was a darling Baby, cradled first in the arms of the woman, and then laid to rest in a manger. The barn spread its sheltering roof above, and the star looked down through the night with great joy.



"It didn't matter to the star that it would never shine so brightly again, for the star knew that down in the manger lay the 'Light of the world,' beside which all other lights would seem dim; and the star was content. It had had its shining hour and it would never

be really ordinary again.

"The barn knew, too, that one day it would fall into decay, but it didn't care. For one moment it had held the Lord Jesus Christ, and that was enough. It would never be an ordinary barn again.

"The woman must have guessed, too, that in the years to come she would recede more or less into the background as her firstborn Son, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, went about His Father's business here on earth. But she did not complain. She had carried a shining secret in her heart, close to where the little Son of God had rested, and no one could take that from her. She would never be quite ordinary again."

The story had ended, and Mother, Peter, and Penny sat very still in the darkening room. "So you see," Mother said, "Christmas really is a shining secret, isn't it?"

Penny was puzzled, "But Mother, you never did tell us what the shining secret was. What did God say to the star and the barn and the woman?"

"I was hoping you would ask," Mother said, "for it is a shining secret that has never been completed. God is still whispering it to us today. I think that what God said to the star, the barn, and the woman was simply this, 'Jesus is coming!'"

"Then we can share the secret, too," said Peter, "for Jesus is coming again!"

"That's just it," said Mother, "and that shining secret still has the power to touch ordinary things and ordinary people and fill them with heavenly glory and importance. Jesus is coming!"

Peter smiled at his family, "I know a secret," he said, "and some day I'm going on a long journey like that star and tell everyone that Jesus is coming!"

"I know a secret," said Penny, "and I'm going to sit like a contented old barn by the side of the road and not mind a bit if my days are ordinary."

"I know a secret, too," said Mother, "I learned it from a woman who held it close to her heart where

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The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem is built over a grotto believed to be the site where Christ was born.

—RNS Photo

CHRISTMAS OFFERINGS

We come not with a costly store,
O Lord, like them of old,
The masters of the starry lore,
From Ophir's shore of gold;
No weepings of the incense-tree
Are with the gifts we bring;
No odorous myrrh of Araby
Blends with our offering.
But faith and love may bring their
best,

A spirit keenly tried
By fierce affliction's fiery test,
And seven times purified:
The fragrant graces of the mind,
The virtues that delight
To give their perfume out, will find
Acceptance in Thy sight.

Author Unknown

(from *The Lutheran Messenger*)

PRECIOUS CHILD, SO SWEETLY SLEEPING

Precious Child, so sweetly sleeping
In a virgin's fond embrace,
Heav'nly hosts their watch are
keeping
O'er Thy humble dwelling place.
Blest Messiah, new-born King,
Let my heart its tribute bring.

Anthems joyous now are ringing
In the skies of Bethlehem;
Angels their sweet song are sing-
ing,

"Peace on earth, good will to men."
Precious Jesus, at Thy birth
Heaven's peace is brought to earth.

Thou hast come to bring salvation
To this sin-cursed world below,
That Thy blood redeemed creation

Thine abounding love might know.
Enter each believing heart;
Pardon, grace, and peace impart.

Take my humble adoration
While on earth below I dwell.
Let my songs in exultation
Of Thy boundless goodness tell,
Till in heav'n above, my King,
Endless hymns of praise I sing.

Anna Hoppe

(from *The Concordia Hymnal*)

"And the angel said to them, 'Be not afraid; for behold I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord'" (Luke 2:10, 11).

Christmas

Quotations

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THERE comes a moment in December when to rescue Christmas—and oneself—one must invite it to the quiet hearthstone of one's soul, shutting out for a while even the carols. But Christmas will not stay there for long. It has work to do. Christmas will invite you to go out into the tensions of life with it. Outside—often within view of the sights and within hearing of the sounds—are sorrow, fear, hunger, injustice. The bright hearthstone of Christmas grows cold when want looks wistfully in the windows from the darkness. Could that be what has happened? Christmas must give its light to have its light. Have we tried too hard—and too successfully—to 'keep' Christmas?

If Christmas is to be anywhere, it must be everywhere!—Kenneth L. Wilson in *Christian Herald*, Dec., 1964.

IT is a sobering fact that millions who 'keep' Christmas each year live and die no better off than if there had been no manger birth at Bethlehem. Many are 'good' people with moral viewpoints and religious interests, but they have missed the fact that Christmas involves a great and gracious Gift, a Gift that must be received to be possessed. "For unto you is born this day . . . a Saviour which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2: 11). Neglect or ignore this Saviour and one completely misses the point and blessing of Christmas.—Editor in *Moody Monthly*, Dec., 1964.

THE Passover Lamb, the Prophet like Moses, had come. The Shepherd, the Lord's Anointed, the Rejected Stone of the Psalms, was in a cattle stall. Emmanuel (God with us), the Righteous Branch, the Root out of dry ground, of whom Isaiah sang; the One anointed to preach glad tidings to the meek and liberty to the captives, to bind up the brokenhearted and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, was bound in swaddling clothes, helpless, in a manger.—Arthur Earle Frid in *Christian Life*, Dec., 1964.

MAY the rays of light from the Christmas star that reach upward in purposefulness, outward in sharing and downward in humility shine upon each one of us at this sacred season of the year.—Billy Graham in *Decision*, Dec., 1964.

THERE was no 'church' that first Christmas morn, nor were there stained-glass windows and resounding organ. There was no decoration for a tree, nor neatly-dressed congregation to guide the shepherds and wise men at the adoration of the Christ Child. But there was an angel's song, the eternal song that would never end, "Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." God's promise was come true that Christmas morn, His Gift to mankind.—Carl W. Larson in *Bible Society Record*, Dec., 1964.

[Continued from page 14]

the head of the little Lord Jesus lay. Who one moment held an Infant that she loved, and then lived to see Him die so that other men might live."

It was quiet in the living room where Penny, Peter, and Mother were each thinking of the shining secret, Jesus is coming. Quietly, Penny spoke for them all as she whispered, "Dear Lord Jesus, I can hardly wait."

(Adapted from a story in *Stories I Love to Tell* by Gladys Mary Talbot. Used by permission, Moody Press, Chicago)