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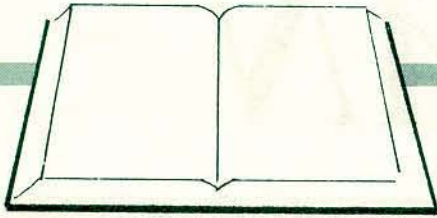
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Candles All Aglow

Luoma Photos



According to the Word

UNTO US

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" (Isaiah 9:6).

Christmas is a time when we exchange gifts. We have seen this year, too, how people stand in long lines at the post office waiting to dispose of their packages.

How did this custom originate? Why do we do it at this particular time? Whether we are conscious of it or not, I think it is because God gave. We wish to give because He did.

Of course we give in a different manner than He did. We give gifts to our nearest relatives and closest friends. But when God gave He remembered all. He did not discriminate, exclude or overlook a single one. He gave His great Christmas gift to the whole world, and to each one of us personally.

There came a gift to this world that Christmas night 1970 years ago from heaven, from God Himself. It had a Bethlehem postmark on it. It came in a very coarse, ordinary wrapping. We read: "wrapped in swaddling clothes, in a manger."

BUT THE GIFT ITSELF! Never has anybody seen its equal. Even the

angels were amazed. They desired to look into it, but they could not understand the "mystery of godliness."

God's own Son sent to us from heaven. "**Unto us**—a son is given." Not only peace, not only forgiveness of sin, not only assurance of His love and saving grace, but He comes personally, as a free gift of eternal life, to **we** who were under the sentence of eternal death and condemnation.

Your and my address is on the package, written by angels. Don't you see it? "**For unto you** is born this day in the city of David a **Saviour!**" What good news for sinners! A Savior, **for us, for me.** A Savior who can save from the guilt of sin, from the power of sin, and from the eternal consequences of sin.

Do I hear someone say, "This may be good news for you, but not for me. I am a hopeless case. It does not concern me"?

I guess God expected someone to say that; therefore He speaks thus through the angel: "I bring you good tidings of great joy which is **for all people.**" This Savior who brings such great joy for all who receive Him is **for all people.** When God says all it means all, He means you.

But you must receive Him. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:11-12).

Have you received Him?

With Him you get that great joy that the world can neither give nor take. A joy that lasts forever, unspeakable and full of glory.

Did you ever watch children when they are hunting for packages under the Christmas tree? They are looking for one with their own name on, written by mother or dad. Have you observed how their faces beam as they open their respective packages. "Thank you, Mother; thank you, Daddy," they said.

How we need to be like children.

It doesn't cost much to say "thank you," does it? But how few people are saying "thank you" to God today, for His unspeakable gift.

Some do not even look for the address on the package; but it is there in the Word.

Read Isaiah 9:6 again, and see: It could be for **YOU!**

Lars Stalsbroten

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The Christmas Race

by Mrs. Eugene (Beverly)
Enderlein
Minneapolis, Minnesota

The laughter of rosy-cheeked children faded away as they boarded the school bus. As the large orange vehicle drove away along snow-covered streets, the young mother standing at the window smiled as she thought about the excitement of her children this last week of school before Christmas vacation. Barbara Jensen glanced at her toddlers, Timmy and Susan, happily playing with blocks and listening to Captain Kangaroo's story for the morning. A measure of quietness had settled over her home, and this was a perfect moment to tip-toe to the bedroom with her Bible, as she liked to do each morning before she started the duties and activities of her busy day.

In the quietness of her room, Barbara opened her Bible to Hebrews

12:1, 2. "These are such rich verses," she thought, as she silently read them and tried to quiet her racing mind, already bursting with the responsibility of so many jobs to be completed in these two weeks before Christmas:

"Since we have such a huge crowd of men of faith watching us from the grandstands, let us strip off anything that slows us down or holds us back, and especially those sins that wrap themselves so tightly around our feet and trip us up; and let us run with patience the particular race that God has set before us.

"Keep your eyes on Jesus, our leader and instructor. He was willing to die a shameful death on the cross because of the joy He knew would be His afterwards; and now He sits in the place of honor by the throne of God" (Living N.T.).

"Yes, dear Father," she prayed, "I do have a race set before me...

the Christian life, to be lived victoriously. I do want that. And, oh Lord, more closely at hand is this race of preparation for Christmas. I do want to honor my dear Lord Jesus at this time of His birth. I want to be wise about not getting caught up in the hustle and bustle of the way the world prepares for the holiday season, yet I have so much to do. Show me, dear Father, how to run the Christmas race with patience and joy. Please fill my life! Guard me from becoming entrapped by unnecessary duties and unimportant commitments. Keep my eyes on Jesus. I do want others to see HIS joy in my life. I need your power, dear Father," she prayed. "Take over in my life, and help me to run this race victoriously."

"Mommy, come and see! Timmy spilled the Rice Krispies all over the kitchen floor!" called Susan. With a trustful "Amen" Barbara rose to an-

swer the plea. Even as she scooped cereal into the wastebasket, she felt the peace and strength of God, and tried to put her mind in order as she thought of her Christmas duties.

"I do have to finish sewing those jumpers for Susan and Carol," she thought. "I must finish the puppets for Timmy. Perhaps the cookies and breads could be baked by the end of the week, and then next week could be given over to the children. Oh dear!" she suddenly remembered, "I must finish knitting Jim's sweater! That will take hours. Oh, if only that design hadn't taken me so long. ... Yes, of course," she planned mentally, "the rehearsals for the Sunday School program, and the baskets of goodies to be packed and delivered to the pastor's home and other favorite friends."

"I know," she thought. "I'll plan a systematic schedule. Each day will have a goal, and I'll plan for family times and special devotions, too. If I really stick to it, I'm sure to get all these things done, and yet show the joy of the Lord. Today will be sewing day," she planned happily as she ran to the jangling phone. It was her new neighbor, Marie.

"Barbara, I just hate to bother you," she apologized. "But we think Ricky has appendicitis. Doctor Thompson is going to meet us at the Emergency Room. Could you possibly keep our two little ones until we return? I'll make up the baby's formula and bring plenty of diapers."

"Of course, Marie," Barbara responded, to another mother's dilemma. "Just bring everything over." She had been praying for an opportunity to show Marie how wonderful Christ is. In fact, she really had hoped to have her over for coffee after the holidays and share with Marie as warmly as she could how much Christ meant to her. "Of course, I just must forget about that sewing!" she reprimanded her inner disappointment.

The day passed quickly. For Barbara, it was an endless round of changing diapers, keeping a strange baby fairly contented and three preschoolers busy. But the day ended victoriously for her. As she knelt by the bedside that night, she prayed, "Oh, thank You, dear Father, for keeping me in Your control today.

Thank You for giving me joy with the children, and a cheerful heart this evening. Thank You for bringing little Ricky safely through emergency surgery, and most of all, for allowing me to share with Marie the fact that we committed little Ricky to **Your** care, and prayed for Your protection in his life. Thank You for her open heart to listen. Dear Father, I pray for her salvation."

An entire day of sewing followed, and another day of shopping and house cleaning. Thursday morning dawned crisp and cold, inspiring Barbara to start baking her Christmas specialties. Each day she renewed her commitment to the Lord, to show forth the love of Jesus and the joy of His coming to those around her. Today she hummed as she laid out the eggs, flour, sugar and other ingredients for cookies and breads. She even planned to mix a bowlful for Timmy and Susan. They would enjoy pressing cookie cutters into the dough and decorating their homemade treats with sparkles and colored sugar. She quickly dried her hands in her apron as she heard a firm knock at her door.

"Pastor Kenyon!" she exclaimed in pleasant surprise. "Come in out of the cold."

As the pastor unbuttoned his coat, he cheerfully greeted the little ones. "Barbara," he explained, his face growing serious, "I have a special favor to ask of you. There aren't many whom I can trust to be a real help in this situation I'm going to tell you about...but I do feel that you will be willing to help, even though it IS Christmastime and I know you are busy." He proceeded to tell her of a young father whom he had counseled at the state prison in a nearby city. "This man has made a genuine commitment to Christ, and he is burdened that his family come to trust in the Lord, and, of course, stick by him until he is released from prison. Barbara, will you help? I have the name and address of his wife, and I feel that a visit from you would be the means of reaching her and their children for the Lord."

As soon as she heard these words, she knew she must go. Why, this could mean the salvation of a family! She smiled and replied, "I'd be happy to

go to see her. I'll go right this afternoon if Grandma Jensen is free to babysit."

The afternoon was a highlight in Barbara's life. The young woman, Shirley, had been friendly and warmed quickly to Barbara's genuine interest in her. She was glad for someone to talk to, and freely shared their unhappy past, especially the awful experience of her husband's conviction for robbery. She wept and shared her loneliness and the fear of the future for herself and their family. Almost moved to tears, Barbara sensed the love of Christ filling her for this unhappy woman. She told Shirley of her husband's decision to turn his life over to Christ, not only for forgiveness of past sins, but for power for his future life. "He still loves you, Shirley, and he is so concerned that you come to know Christ as your best Friend, too. We've found in our family that the Lord Jesus knits a family together and rekindles love for one another. I know that He can do that for you, too."

Two more good talks with Shirley helped the week to end quickly. But Barbara was falling behind in her hopeful goal of Christmas preparations. The dough never had gotten mixed that day and the knitting bag was untouched. The Christmas program rehearsal had gone so well, and tomorrow would be Sunday. Only one week until Christmas! As she felt the frustration stealing into her emotions, she quickly resisted it with a prayer. "Father, keep my priorities straight. I want to glorify YOU. Keep my eyes on Jesus and help me to be obedient to Him." She was so glad that the Christmas program was such a fine one, and would not merely entertain pleased parents and visitors, but would also point the viewers to Christ as their personal Savior and King. Oh, how she hoped that Marie and her family would want to attend!

The week moved along swiftly, and the hours left until Christmas Eve were getting less and less. Barbara surveyed her list and tried scratching off the jobs that now seemed unnecessary and impossible to accomplish. Instead of elaborate gift wrappings, she decided that Carol, her third grader who delighted in crafts and art

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A Teacher's Gift

Strains of Christmas carols filled the room. This was a special day for all the students as vacation would start tomorrow. Today all the classes would have their Christmas parties. The carols came from the principal's office through the amplifier system.

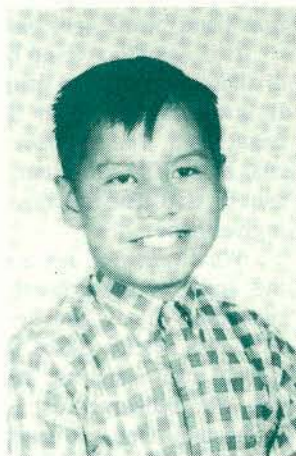
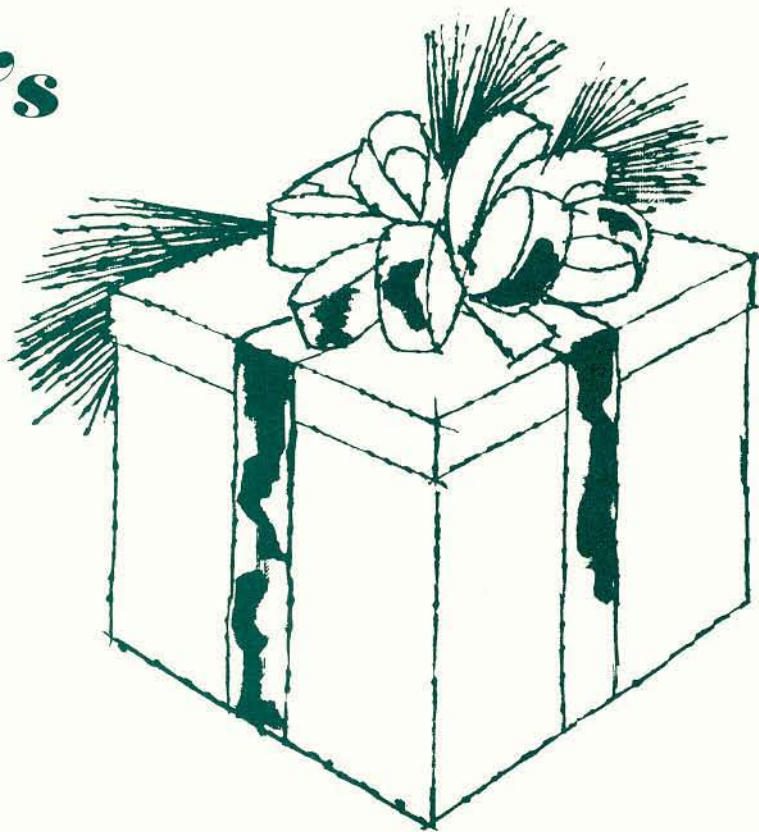
In the corner was the usual decorated tree, being admired by the pupils who had arrived early. Each one wondering, "Is there a gift for me?"

An unusual burst of noise at the door evidenced the fact that the "dorm" boys had arrived. Red, smiling faces, with gifts in their hands, they greeted others joyfully. One boy broke away from the group and came up to me, his teacher. "I brought a gift for you. I hope you'll like it." Amazed, I took the gift all nicely wrapped and quickly surmised to myself, "It looks like stationery." But to the boy I said, "Oh, thank you, Tyronne, but put it under the tree until party time."

This little nine-year-old Sioux Indian boy lived in the dormitory because his parents were separated. Summers were spent way out on Thunder Butte Reservation with his dad. He was seldom checked out for weekends. So I wondered where he had received money for a gift.

Soon the time came to open the gifts. There he stood, very close to me. So I picked up his gift and opened it. Removing the paper, I saw "Picture Puzzle for children ages 6 to 10." He said shyly, "I got it from the matron at our Christmas dorm party last night. I wanted to keep it but I wanted to give you a gift, too." Such honesty! "Oh, Tyronne," I said, "It's so nice! It has been years since I received a puzzle. Let's keep it here in school and you can be the first to put it together." How easy it would have been to say, "Oh, you keep it." But I couldn't embarrass him before his classmates.

His gift had brought a great lesson to me. First, this child gave all he had to someone else. How willingly



Tyronne Marrowbone

do we share our possessions with others? At Christmas time when we think of our Heavenly Father giving His only Son to die for our many sins, we must pause to consider if our lives are being lived in true fellowship with our Savior. Let this little true incident bring the message, "Are we giving our all to Him Who willingly died that we might have eternal life?" The price of the gift was great, so let us treasure it while there still is time. Remember also, "A little child shall lead them."

—Mrs. Arnold McCarlson
Eagle Butte, S. Dak.

CHRISTMAS

Christmas comes but once a year
And it always brings good cheer;
For on that night so long ago
The Lord came down to us below.

In swaddling clothes, in manger lay
The Son of God upon the hay,
And in the sky, a star came forth;
An angel host was His escort.

The shepherds on that Christmas
night
Were almost blinded by the light.
A song rang out o'er Bethlehem:
"Peace on earth, good will to men."

This message came from angel host
And rings today from coast to coast.
For Jesus was the Child that lay
In manger bed upon the hay.

We thank Thee, Jesus, for Thy birth
In human form upon this earth,
To save the fallen human race,
That we may see Thee face to face.

Some day in that eternal Home
We there shall meet before Thy throne,
And then forever reign with Thee
Throughout all eternity.

—Henry T. Quanbeck
McVile, N. Dak.

A Christmas Greeting From Our President

CHRISTMAS IS NEW AGAIN
UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN
Alice Meynell

Given, not lent,
And not withdrawn—once sent,
This Infant of mankind, this One,
Is still the little welcome Son.

New every year,
New born and newly dear,
He comes with tidings and a song,
The ages long, the ages long;

Even as the cold
Keen winter grows not old,
As childhood is so fresh, foreseen,
And spring in the familiar green.

Sudden so sweet
Come the expected feet.
All joy is young, and new all art,
And He, too, Whom we have by heart.



Rev. John P. Strand, President, AFLC



The most precious can become common-place. The first love can be lost. The Christmas Gospel can be boring. This ought never be, because the message is always new.

Christ came to save a humanity in deepest need. The need is here today in ever tragic starkness. The only Remedy is still here. The Christmas truth, while ages old, is ever new. Unto us has been given a Savior.

It is easy to give up hope. Many have. This is reflected in the despair of those who take to drugs, alcohol, permissiveness, and godless living. It is also reflected in those given to scornful criticism and legalistic negativism. The pharisee is no better off than the libertine. Neither have real hope. The Christian, however, is different. He has faith in a Savior sent by God. The message of the Savior is always thrilling to him, because it gives hope.

What a Savior Jesus is! "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old" (Isa. 63:9). Jesus understands. Jesus redeemed from sin and its eternal consequences. We need an understanding Savior. We need the One Who redeemed us, bought us from sin to righteousness before God. We need the One who carries us, watches over us constantly.

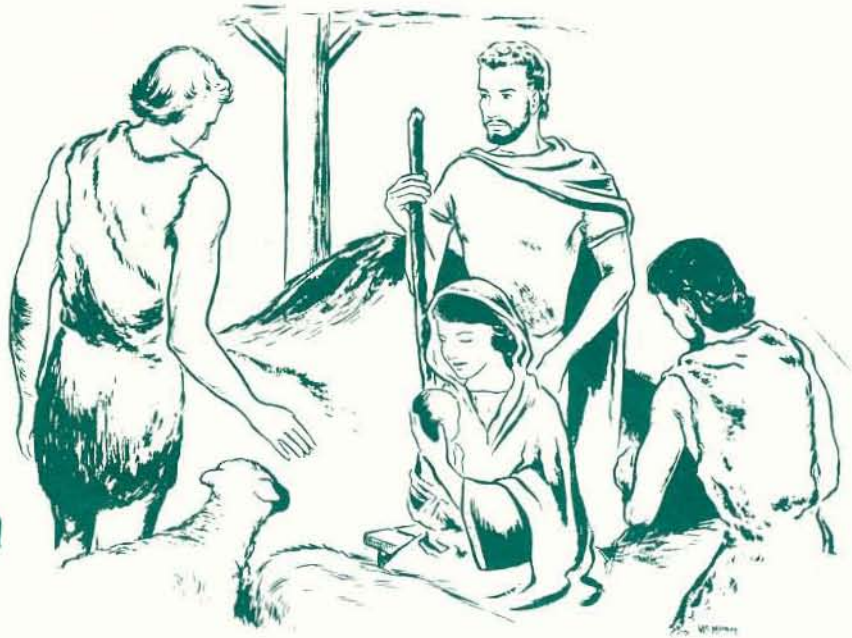
"He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and will gently lead those that have their young" (Isa. 40:11). Jesus loves His own. As a shepherd, He feeds them. He looks after the little ones of faith. He carries them in His bosom. Wonderful! And how gentle He is with those with particular needs. Do you find yourself here?

"He will not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set justice in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isa. 42:4). Jesus will not fail. There will be justice on earth some day. All efforts of men to make this a glorious earth will fail. Jesus will not fail. What a day that will be when He comes in person to establish justice on earth. That day may be near. Hope!

Let us rejoice anew this Christmas in our wonderful Savior.

I greet you with thanksgiving in my heart for your fellowship in the Gospel. The Association family, and her multitude of friends, thank God for each other and our common faith and work. We rejoice again in the old Christmas Gospel that is always new! May you have a blessed Christmas!

CHRIST came to meet the needs of men



by Rev. Robert Rieth,
Kirkland, Washington

"I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all people" Lk. 2:10.

Christmas has come to be symbolized by family gatherings, great parties, outward festivities, glitter, tinsel and the permeating feeling of joy and goodwill among men. Many today are growing tired of the celebration of Christmas and see little use for it. What a tragedy that man has forgotten the meaning and the purpose of Christmas. To have a birthday party without the guest of honor seems to be sheer foolishness. The joy of the party is to share with the person who is remembering the anniversary of his birth. Today many are doing this very thing with Jesus and the meaning of Christmas. Christmas was never intended to be a time of outward trappings and faked rejoicing. It was to be a time for remembering the birth of the Savior of all mankind, Christ our King, Who is able to meet the innermost needs of the hearts of men by the forgiveness of sin and the restoration of peace and fellowship with God. Only those who have come to Him will have any reason for celebrating Christmas and only those who have found their joy in Him will find happiness in remembering His birth. We should not be surprised that the world does not under-

stand and that they tire of a celebration in which they do not know Him who is being honored. It is no wonder they tire of playing the game of joy, and peace, and love, and thanksgiving, when these are not the natural thoughts of their hearts.

Men have never before had so much in the material realm. They have never before been able to have such comfortable homes or to work at such pleasant jobs with such added benefits. It is a time when man's thoughts and lives are centered on the physical and temporal aspects of life. Man has sought to solve his problems and to meet his own needs through educational, social, economic and political means. Many have turned to humanistic rationalism and to psychotherapy to the degree that it has become fashionable to blame all of one's problems on his past. While it is true that man's past, his home and his environment are important, man is still responsible for his sins in the eyes of God. We see a sick society as we look around us. People are looking for answers in excess—some through work, some through recreation, some through social activities, some through dropping out of social activities. Crime is rising. Alcoholism, drug abuse and addiction are daily issues on the front pages of our newspapers. The youth are dropping out of the society which the people of our country have struggled to build

while the adults themselves are desperately trying to find meaning and fulfillment in life. Man is desperately afraid. He is seeking something to meet the inner cry of his heart and to give him peace and joy.

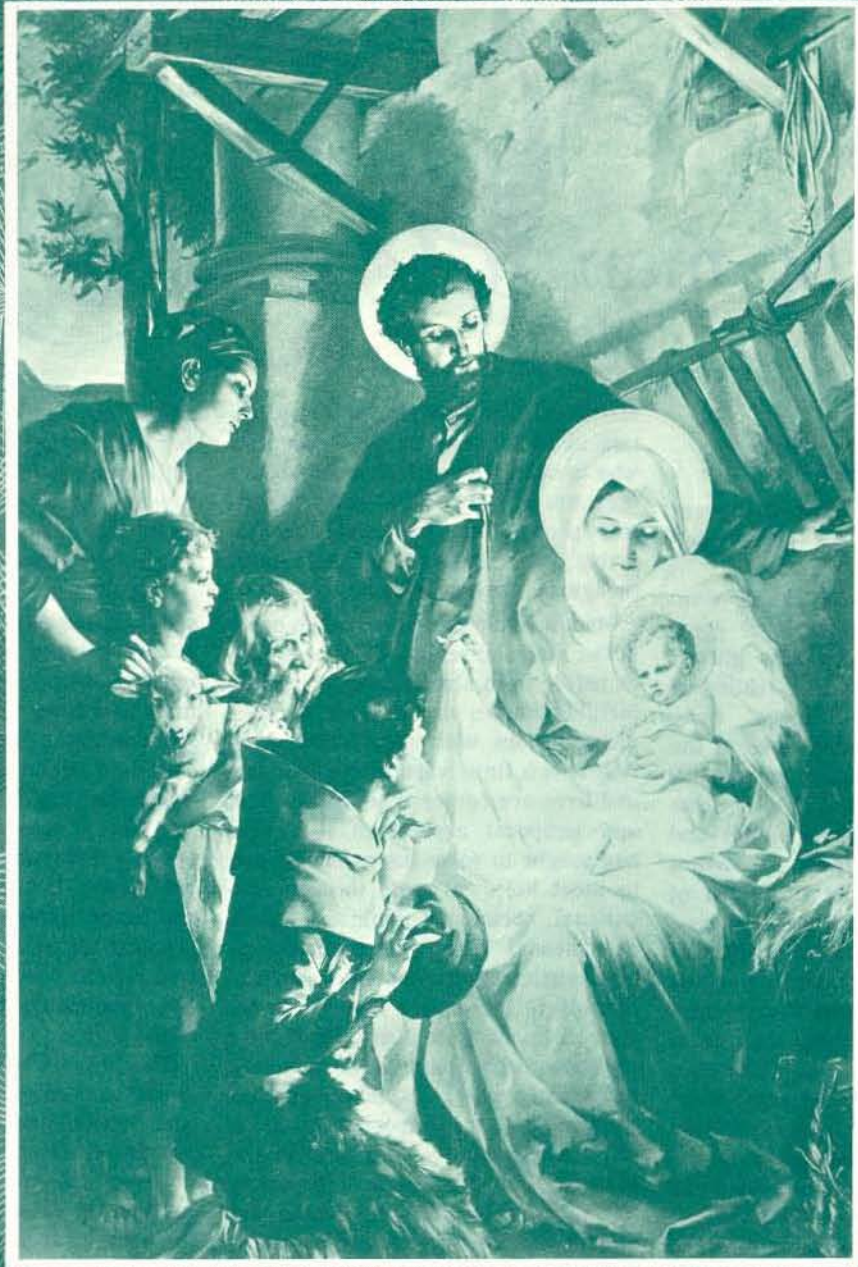
Man has been seeking these answers in the outward embellishments of life but the real meaning of life must be found within us. Only when man is willing to receive God's gift, His Son Jesus, into his heart will he ever find peace and satisfaction. For many there is not a sadder nor lonelier time of the year than Christmas because everyone is emphasizing joy and peace, but there is so little joy and peace in this world. One of Satan's greatest delusions is that man can find inward peace through excitement and momentary gratification of the flesh.

The joy of Christmas is that Christ came to meet not only the physical and mental needs of men, but that he also came to meet the innermost needs of the soul. Man has changed his type of dress, his pattern of life, his mode of transportation, his means of communication, and the appearance of his environment, but man has not changed his inward need. He cannot change it. Man's greatest need is within himself and only Christ can satisfy. We have feelings of loneliness, fear, insecurity, inadequacy and guilt. Every man knows that he should be

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Adoration of the Christ Child

RNS Photo





THIS WAY TO PEACE

There is certainly no lack in talk about peace today. But there does seem to be a dearth of the real thing. These two observations are heightened at this Christmas season which celebrates the coming of the Prince of Peace.

The great reason why there is much talk but little evidence of peace in our world is because so many folks have never come to grips with Jesus Christ as Savior. Some years ago, eight, in fact, **Look** magazine ran a feature article at this time of year called "Christmas in Crisis." This was just after the Cuban missile threat. The Editors said some good things in their opening statement and then they printed the statements of ten world figures telling why they thought it was a Christmas in crisis and what could be done about the latter.

The same thing could be done today for 1970 has been another in a succession of crisis years. But the opinions given would vary little from those set down in 1962, unfortunately. You see, out of the ten prominent people, only two thought it necessary to mention Jesus Christ by name in discussing Christmas, and one of them, as a Jew, did not accept His divinity. Two others made reference to Jesus, but not by direct name.

This, then, points up so much of the problem. People will recognize the occasion of Christmas. Some will say nice things about the Child born in a stable and of the man Jesus, throwing a great many bouquets His way. If the Nobel Peace Prize committee had been functioning in the days of Christ, they would surely have given Him the award one year.

But if adulation of Jesus stops here, and for a great many it does, the whole point of His coming has been missed. True, He was born in humble circumstances. True, He was peace-loving. True, He desired that men should live in peace. But more than all of these, He came to give Himself as a ransom for the world's sins. He did this, as Martin Luther stated it so well, "In order that I might be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve

Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness."

How unfortunate that people miss the way here. They see the outward problems very clearly. They may advance some revolutionary solutions. Recognition of God's existence and even of dependence upon Him may be set forth in their speech. And yet they keep Jesus Christ at least an arm's length away so that He cannot be for them what He is uniquely, the Savior, the Prince of inner Peace.

The Christmas Story does not stand alone. It is not simply the tale of the birth of a man-child under the lowliest of circumstances, albeit with some wondrous accompaniment. The Christmas Story receives authentication or validity as it is seen in relation to the events which took place over 30 years later.

In but a brief ministry this Man talked about a kingdom not of this world; He performed many miracles and went about doing good; He insisted that religion must be of the heart. Angered because their self-righteous hearts had been made uncomfortable, the religious leaders aroused enough support among the citizenry to force the crucifixion of Jesus.

The angel had said to Joseph concerning Mary, his betrothed, "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). This He accomplished on the cross at Calvary. He, God's Son, died for the world's sins. This is the clear testimony of Holy Scripture, and that God raised Him from the dead for our justification.

The way to peace for man is to come individually to the mercy seat of God the Father, through confession of sin and through simple faith. Then God can bestow His blessing of life and of true peace. His peace does not mean an absence of trouble, but an anchor of hope that will not drift, even in the kind of world we live in.

It is the discovery of this way to true peace, the only way there is, that **The Lutheran Ambassador** covets for all people, not least its own readers, also at this glad season of the year.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Perhaps no task in all the year pleases us better than the extending of the Season's greetings to our wonderful family of leaders. This year particularly, as we near the 200th issue of this publication we are mindful of those whom it has been our privilege to serve over all that time. Your loyalty and interest have meant much to the success of this magazine.

Then there are those who have joined this reader "fellowship" in one of the years between, eight of them. Lastly, this Christmas issue is being sent by readers to their friends and to some of them this paper will come as a complete stranger. We trust, however, that for you, too, these pages will contain something that will warm your heart at this Christmas-time.

To all who have shared their writing talent or helped in some way in the production of the **Ambassador**, and to all of you who read, a most hearty Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



**Rev. O. J. Haukeness
Everett, Washington**

After nearly fifty years in the ministry one may look back and think of the years in that work. Things pleasant and things otherwise may come back to one's memory. There is in the ministry as in all callings in life hardship and difficulties, but also many good and blessed memories. I will agree with one of our professors at the Seminary when he said that the ministry is a rich and rewarding life. You will find many fine people who will be your friends for the rest of your life. True, you may meet with difficult situations and people who seem unapproachable, but those are few compared to the many fine Christians whom you meet.

As many years were spent on the prairies in western North Dakota, in eastern Montana, and in Canada, one would remember the many snowstorms and blizzards that at times would rage for days, blocking the roads, so it took a long time before regular travel could be resumed. We could be without train service for about two weeks at a time. Telegraph and telephone wires were down, so communication with outsiders would be impossible.

Of the years in the ministry, about seven years were spent in Saskatchewan, about 200 miles northeast of Regina. There were long winters with temperatures down to sixty degrees below zero. The summer temperature would at times go to the other extreme, up to 109 degrees above, one summer. As the days were long during the short summer season, everything would grow very rapidly. Signs of daylight could be seen before two o'clock in the morning, and it would stay light until after ten o'clock in the evening.

These long summer evenings would have their advantages. We could gath-

Memories of a Home Mission Parish in Canada

er for services at the regular time and no lamps were needed. At a place where there was no church building the congregation met out in a grove, with people sitting among the trees. A chair was brought out for the pastor and a table would serve as altar and pulpit. Later a church was built. The community was interested and the attendance grew. When winter came with extreme cold, it was difficult to heat the church, so the congregation met in the homes. Schoolhouses were also used.

When one had seven preaching places, one congregation 40 miles northwest and one 60 miles southeast, and the others scattered in between, it was not possible to meet often. There, up in the woods, the car could be used only six months out of the year. It was also difficult and expensive to rent horses, so one often had to walk, at times walking up to 24 miles in one day.

There as elsewhere, Christmas was a specially busy time for the pastor. With many preaching points, and most of them did not only have services but also Sunday school programs, the pastor had to leave home early and could not spend Christmas at home. That was a sacrifice both to the pastor and also to his family. The temperature could, in the winter, drop to 60 degrees below zero, and then it was not easy to be out. It was also dangerous.

In some places roads were almost impassable. At a small town where they had no Christian services before, the only way to get there was to walk four miles along the railroad tracks. People seemed to appreciate that they could hear the Word of God. To walk would not always be easy for the pastor or for his family, as they liked to be along. Sometimes a picnic home was brought and on the way home we rested and ate lunch. Wild flowers

were discovered and small sweet strawberries were picked. This gave zest to our sandwiches. The five-year-old girl would tire and needed to be carried a bit. (After all, eight miles is quite a walk.)

Part of life is also Christian fellowship. It was a blessing to have Christian parishioners call at the parsonage. Ideas could be shared and plans laid for the work. When the nearest synodical pastor is 125 miles away, as was the case in Canada, and roads blocked by snow for all of the winter, to visit back and forth with other pastors was out of the question. It was therefore always pleasant when spring came and plans were made for district meetings when we could meet with the rest of the brethren. District meetings, spring, summer, and fall, and Luther League conventions in the summer, were a break in the daily routine, not only for the pastor but also for the wife and children. Some pastors in the district were about 200 miles away, and when we would go west to Alberta for meetings we had to travel about 500 miles. But hardships and difficulties can also have their compensations. When one has good health no one should complain, and it is true as one has said that it is better to wear away than to rust away.

When the time came that we were to leave the parish, one old man threw his arms about my neck and sobbed bitterly, saying, "Maybe no one else will want to walk in to give us God's Word."

It is a joy and compensation for a Home Mission pastor to see that the Word of God bears fruit and that people come to faith in Christ. In spite of outward difficulties and struggle the ministry has its great reward. God's Word shall never return void and empty, but shall accomplish what God has sent it for.



The Dream That Failed

Dr. Iver Olson, Minneapolis, Minn.

Mikkel sat on the steps of his farm home, his gnarled hands folded over his right knee. He gazed over the place once so lively with youngsters, but now so empty and almost forlorn. It was November, but the weather was remarkably pleasant to be so late in the season. The tall, brown pigweeds in the patch that used to be the flower bed rustled perceptibly in the autumn breeze that played in the farmyard. Grass had been growing everywhere these last years; along the stubborn hedge, beside the unused sheds, and over the formerly well-trodden path that led to the barn. It had not always been so, for the busy feet of seven children had been everywhere. Mikkel Thorson had at times been angry with his youngsters for cutting up the yard so much. The grass just couldn't grow then; but now it grew everywhere—as if in mockery. In the weeds behind the machine shop could still be found the remains of tractors and hay loaders that boyish hands and ingenuity had made from discarded parts of threshing machines and binders.

Mikkel was dreaming of the days that were past. He had homesteaded this place in the nineties. At first he had lived alone, but in 1896 he had married Karen Nestegaard; to-

gether they had planned and worked to build a home out of the homestead. Then came the children—seven of them by 1912. Karen and Mikkel toiled industriously to provide for their children; there were hungry mouths to be fed and little bodies to be clothed. Somehow they had managed; they had seen two of the girls through high school, and all of the children off to a fair start in life. They had all left home now, and Mikkel and Karen were alone on the farm. No longer able to work the place himself, he had rented it to his neighbor, Oscar Johnson. Mikkel and Karen managed to live on their one-fourth share of the grain crop—supplemented by the meager income from two cows they still owned. Sheds and granaries were unused and weather-beaten, and the fences were down; a young poplar was forcing its way up through a Deering binder that was rusting near the woodpile.

But Mikkel was dreaming of the future, too—of Christmas now only six weeks off. It was Karen who had put this dream into his head. It happened this way: Carl, their oldest, who was farming in Canada, had written them that he was coming home for Christmas. They hadn't seen him for fifteen years. He was married now to an Irish-Canadian girl whom Mikkel and Karen had never met; they had a nine-year-old daughter. After years of successive crop failures Carl had finally reaped a bumper crop, and wished to visit his childhood home this year; he was bringing his wife and daughter, too.

If Carl can come, reasoned Karen, why can't the others come, too? Mike (that wasn't his real name, but a contraction to distinguish him from his father) was unmarried and operated a grain elevator in North Dakota; he could surely come. Eivind was an oil salesman in Chicago, and certainly could take time off at Christmas. He had a good income and a fine car; he could take his wife and

eight-year-old son, pick up Hans and his wife (she was a Yankee and a Catholic) in Minneapolis. Hans drove a lumber truck in Minneapolis, but business should not be so rushing between Christmas and New Year. It was a little more difficult for Hilda; she was married and lived in Duluth, and her husband's aging parents lived with them. Mikkel had heard that the old folks were not so well of late. Selina also lived in that city; her husband was a piano tuner, and she gave music lessons to supplement the family income. Hermina taught grade school in the central part of the state, and they rather expected her to come home unless other attractions drew her to the Cities; she was engaged to a basketball coach she had met at Normal. Perhaps they both could come. Wouldn't it be grand, Karen had said, if they all could come for Christmas this year and bring their wives, husbands and children for a real family reunion? And that was what Mikkel was dreaming of when the shades of approaching darkness bade him go indoors.

It was late when the couple fell asleep that night. They talked and reasoned. Yes sir, that's what they would do. They would write each one of their children the very next day and set forth their plan. They would get Mabel, Oscar Johnson's girl, to write for them; she was a good hand at English—Karen felt that some of the in-laws might not relish a Norwegian letter. They would invite all their children to come home for a family reunion at Christmas. How wonderful that would be. They would have a Christmas tree with all the trimmings carefully preserved since the children were at home. They would have an extra table in the kitchen so that they could all eat at one sitting on Christmas Eve. Then they would march around the Christmas tree and sing the old songs they used to sing.

They were busy next day. Karen

dictated, Mabel wrote, and Mikkel commented. The letters went out in the afternoon mail. Within a week came one favorable reply, then another; before the end of the month it was all arranged. The sons and the daughters with their wives and husbands and children would be coming home for Christmas.

The days of December were full of dreams for Mikkel and Karen. They planned and worked; new life and energy came with the dreams. Yes, they would make it. They would clear out the bedroom now used as a store-room; by the use of sheets and blankets they would partition the large room and sleep over the kitchen. They would make it. There was lefse to bake, and a host of other things to do. Mikkel had his own plans, too; he would have a gift for every last one this year (Karen was the one who usually bought the presents when the children were small); no sir, he wasn't going to skimp this time. He visioned himself sitting at the head of the table. In true patriarchal fashion he would read the Christmas story from Luke 2 as his father had done in the old country—and he would read it in English at that. He would practice a few times beforehand so as not to stumble over words that night; he would get Mabel to help him with the more difficult words like "Quirinius" and "swaddling." And Karen vowed that the supper dishes could stand till next morning. Right after supper they would all go into the front room, move the tree over into the center of the room, march about it and sing both the old songs and the new American ones that the children knew better.

Happy days they were, these days of dreams.

Christmas Eve came, and so did the children. The old home gleamed with an invitation of rustic brilliancy. The tables were spread with the best, though now antiquated, chinaware that Karen possessed; they were loaded with the finest of foods that she could prepare. Most of her culinary arts had been learned in the old country; but her daughters had also taught her how to prepare delectable American dishes. Both were in evidence tonight. Two tall candles in the center of the table flickered every

time the door was opened or closed. Eivind and Hans with their families were the last to arrive, and they had come at five o'clock. The happiness of reunion was genuine enough; there were so many things to tell, and so many questions to ask. It was a boisterous group that began to be seated at the table. Karen was everywhere finding chairs and directing each one to his place.

When all were seated, Mikkel took his place at the head of the table. His hour had come. He nodded uneasily to Karen to bring him the book.

"Ain't ya got no Eskimos or Injuns 'round these here parts?" broke in the eight-year-old Chicagoan, reaching almost across the table for a choice piece of lefse.

This evoked a burst of laughter from the guests; but his example served them as a signal to begin. Each one helped himself to whatever was nearest, and passed it to the left. They hadn't noticed Mikkel and the book! Or had they? The Christmas story was perforce omitted. Mikkel laid the book languidly aside, and each one ate to his heart's content. Merriment prevailed. Mikkel said little; but the others vied with each other in praising every article of food and their mother's quality of cooking.

The repast over, the men repaired to the front room while the women remained to clear the tables. Mikkel took a chair in the corner by the Christmas tree so as to be near it when the time came to move it into the center of the room. The piano tuner from Duluth was a pro-German and tried to engage Carl in a discussion over the war. Mikkel moved uneasily. Carl was always reserved and said little; fortunately for him, but none the less unfortunately for Christmas. The coach from Minneapolis turned the discussion into the recently completed World Series in baseball. He and Hans soon led Eivind into a heated debate over the relative merits of the National League and the American League. They contended that the National League was the better of the two for possessing superior hitters; Eivind insisted that it is pitching that counts, and there the American League excels. Each bolstered his argument by citing instances from this and that game over

a period of several years, this pitcher and that batter. It was all foreign to Mikkel; his head swirled in a deluge of championship games and batting averages. He felt just a little bit more at home when Carl and Mike began to speak of the difference between Canada and the United States in their methods of grading wheat.

But then the women came. The Yankee Catholic tried to impress especially the Irish Canadian farm woman by speaking in glowing terms of the bridge tournaments in the city, some of which lasted until dawn. There was the chance to meet celebrities and socialites that were worth knowing. Nothing in the rural areas could quite measure up to this form of entertainment. The Duluthians admitted that bridge might be all right, but it couldn't be compared with Norwegian whist—the game which became so popular after the churches discontinued using the Norwegian language. Perhaps they could teach the rest? Soon they were seated about the table in the space that Mikkel had intended for the Christmas tree, deeply engrossed in this new venture while the men continued their debate on baseball.

Karen had disappeared, and Mikkel rose to go, too. He then discovered the need of a receptacle now made conspicuous by its absence; he went into the kitchen, and returned with two cracked saucers that might serve as ash trays. Karen was in the kitchen; she had started to wash dishes after all. Although he seldom did this, Mikkel found a towel and began to help his wife with the dishes. Neither spoke.

The music teacher seated herself at the piano and offered to play some selections from Wagner's "Götterdämmerung." How foreign that music sounded in the kitchen on Christmas Eve! The player complained that the piano was out of tune, and turned to some of the lighter hits of the day. Several of the others took their places by the piano and sang the songs they had heard on the radio. There was something about being buried out on the prairie, a lariat with a love-knot in it, a dream and something about light-brown hair, and a

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Live What Christmas Means

Joanne Hanson, Minneapolis, Minn.

"The unforgettable Christmas begins with mink!" These words leaped out at me from a department store's Christmas catalog.

And I thought how prone we are to identify our Christmas with gifts (be they mink from Neiman-Marcus or crew socks from Sears), greeting cards, decorated homes, lovely trees, greens and candles, and more food than we can eat.

In "How the Grinch Stole Christmas," Dr. Seuss wrote about the grinch who wanted to do away with Christmas in a certain town. He disguised himself as Santa Claus, stole all the gifts, all the turkeys, even all the Christmas trees, and the logs for the fire in every home. Then he watched to see how upset everyone would be to find Christmas ruined. To his great surprise, the people of that town still celebrated Christmas! He couldn't keep them from singing the joyous carols, and as he listened, he thought, "Maybe Christmas doesn't come from a store.... Maybe Christmas...perhaps...means a little bit more."

It's a fascinating story...but Dr. Seuss rather missed the point. Christmas means a **whole lot more!** And there are no maybe's about it!

Christmas is not unforgettable because of gifts (be they big or small), festivity and merriment. It is a haunting fact that Christmas can so easily

mean little else than a yard of tinsel, a paper wreath, a gift or two, and a day at home for me. It comes and goes. Such an experience could be summed up in the adage that "Christmas is over and business is business."

I recall how as a child we kids wanted to prolong Christmas. We loved the gifts best of all, both giving and getting. For several days after Christmas had passed, until the tree was taken down, we would find sundry items around the house, wrap and label each one, and exchange gifts over and over again. We called it "Let's Play Christmas." It was a game for us—but I wonder how close it comes to being real-life stuff.

In the November 2, 1970, issue of U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT there appeared an article entitled "Shoppers Signal a So-So Christmas." The prophetic word is that frills, mink and fine jewelry will be less appealing this year because the swing is toward sensible gifts—toward a more practical Christmas. Costly luxuries are selling slowly. The customer is economizing more this year—he is more value-conscious. His tendency is to turn away from the expensive merchandise. But, the article concludes, "Christmas is not going to be a completely drab affair."

So don't despair! the world cries. We will give and get less expensive things, perhaps, but give and get we will—gifts nevertheless there will be. So it won't be completely drab—a bit drab, yes, but not completely so.

Christmas from the world's point of view is entirely embodied in the carnival spirit of gift exchanging and merrymaking.... "At Christmas, play and make good cheer, for Christmas comes but once a year."

I recall with nostalgia Christmas at home on the farm "years" ago. Times were harder then but, ironically, everything seemed simpler. It seems more complex now that "weight of jewel or plate" is prime, and we must give if we want to get.

So, like the grinch, I would "steal"

all the things that have come to comprise the world's Christmas. Tear it all down—no gifts this year, no elaborate feasts, no greeting cards, no decorations. Down with all facades. In this way, let's somehow learn the true meaning of Christmas.

But wait! As surely as the true meaning of Christmas is not gained by giving or getting or by festive merrymaking, neither is it gained through a mere sacrifice of external trimmings and venerated ideas.

I know what motivates these iconoclastic tendencies in me. The breathless rush of the season, the clutter and confusion of those last few days before Christmas, the fever of hurry-scurry everywhere...it possesses me, and I don't like it. I yearn to be calm and to enjoy the season in depth. I want time to watch the "beautiful light of a candle's flame"—to have leisure to go out alone under the "silver silence of the stars." I want to hear again the angel's song in silence and reverence, and to ponder it deeply: "To YOU is born this day a Saviour" (Luke 2:11).

To hear "again" the angel's song? Have you heard it once? To know that Savior, the Lord Jesus, personally, is the true meaning of Christmas. Kneel and call out His name!

May this little prayer, translated from the German, express our heart's desire:

"Dear Lord Jesus, all the angels adore Thee, and we adore Thee, too, our God and our Saviour. Thou who art seated on the heavenly throne, Thou who dost uphold heaven and earth with Thine almighty arm, dost not disdain to be carried in a mother's arms and to be laid in a manger. Now therefore do not despise our poor hearts. To be sure, the stable where the ox and the ass and the sheep stood is cleaner than our hearts. And yet a stable had no need of Thee, nor was it changed in any wise by sheltering Thee. But our heart needs Thee, and Thou canst change it, if

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something which he isn't. We can wear a mask of security, serenity or tranquility with which we attempt to impress others, but in our own hearts, when we are honest with ourselves, we have a frustrated, sinking feeling, for we know that we do not have the real qualities that we are trying to claim.

Christmas is a beautiful time of the year; a time of traditions, of family gatherings, of community festivities and celebration, but no man will have joy or peace with himself until he first has peace with God. Christ is inviting you today to know the real peace, joy, tranquility and serenity of life. He wants to grant you forgiveness for your sins.

Are you celebrating Christmas without the Christ child? Do you know the real meaning of Christmas? People blame the stores for commercialism and desecrating the observance of Christmas but that is no excuse. How you observe Christmas is a personal matter. Have you accepted Christ into your heart? Does He have His way in your life and in your home? We should celebrate Christmas, His birthday, in such a way that all may know that He is the honored guest in our homes. This Christmas can bring Him closer to your heart and to the hearts of those around you. May the true joy of Christ within the heart and home be yours this year.



JESUS CAME

Oh glorious Christmas morn!
Jesus, our Savior, is born.
Oh, hear the angels sing,
"For YOU is born a King!"

He lies in manger small,
Yet He's the Lord of all.
He came for you and me,
He came to set us free.

—Caroline Neipp
Ridgecrest, California

SETTING UP THE CRECHE

We put fresh straw down around the tree
And set up the manger carefully.
I hung one white angel, so did Jean;
We both hung the star that shines
between
And unwrapped the Baby and Wise
Men—
They seemed so glad to be back again.
Mary lovingly bent o'er her Child,
Joseph's dear face wore a kindly
smile.
We thought, "How much we'd like
to have been
Children long ago in Bethlehem.

—Marlene Moline
Lansing, Iowa

HE CAME, HE'S COMING AGAIN

Mrs. L. C. Dynneson
Nogales, Arizona

"Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift" (II Cor. 9:15). Again our hearts and minds are turned to things eternal as we approach the Christmas Season, the birthday of our King. God worked to prepare a people for His coming, and yet He came unexpectedly to many. Some were looking in faith and received Him, the unspeakable gift. He came, He grew to manhood, and God said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." He made disciples, prepared them, and sent them out. His hour came, He suffered, died, and arose for our justification. Shall we not praise Him?

Today we find ourselves preparing again for Christmas. **He came, He's coming again.** Are we preparing for this? Are we going to be able to rejoice when He comes again as the shepherds did at His first coming?

Let us make ready! Many like to houseclean before Christmas, to have everything at its best for the family and guests. Spiritually, we must let God's Spirit do His work of cleansing us. Let Him convict us through the Word, let us confess our sins to God, receive forgiveness, and truly be con-

strained by God's love. **May new areas in our lives be dedicated to Him for His occupancy.**

While we rejoice in this preparation, we think of inviting others. We visit, we write, we plead, we wish for them a place in God's kingdom. We give greetings; it cheers, gladdens, and encourages along the way.

Then there are the gifts to be acquired, wrapped, and given. We must recognize what God has given us and what He can give. To get a gift in order may take time. Christ purchased us with His blood. His Spirit may have to trim until we are conformed and presentable at His coming. God may have to do many things to get us in a position to possess and use our gifts to the benefit of His body, the Church. As our families and friends rejoice because of the different gifts, we, too, should rejoice as God bestows different gifts to members of His body. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us..." This should make us rejoice as we see Christ's body function and cause us to minister to one another. We read in II Timothy 1:6, "Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee."

JESUS CAME; He gives gifts— are we receiving? Accept your gifts, work with them, use them. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).

Food — My how we prepare food for Christmas! There shall be feasting and no lack. Spiritual food is God's Word; God's Word is truth. Shall we feast on it? Let us read the Word, meditate, and let God speak to us. Then let us talk to God in prayer and step out on His promises. It will satisfy and make us grow.

Clothing — We wear what we think is best for our Christmas apparel. Our spiritual garb is the best — Christ's righteousness. It costs us the giving up of our filthy rags of our own righteousness. This means submission and nakedness. Then He clothes us with the white robe of His righteousness. With this we are ready for His coming.

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the pony in the hayloft



Mrs. C. H. Heizer, Blackwell, Okla.

Our children were reared in depression times when money was scarce but, just the same, we observed Christmas and it was always a merry time. We started saving our gift money early in the fall and a few days before the holiday the fun really began. That was when we began to shop, and to smuggle things into our own secret hiding places. It is still amusing to remember that our ideas were pretty much the same because all too often when we started to hide something, we found something. However, they were all well wrapped, and family ethics forbade pinching or prying.

That meant that we must not bother the brightly wrapped package, but we did make it a game to try to get the owner to tell what it was, and who it was for. Of course, small children find it hard to keep a secret, and the game made for a lot of fun.

Then on a certain Saturday before that certain Christmas, the children's

daddy took them to town and they came home with four of the smuggest little faces I ever saw. The cat that had caught the canary couldn't hold a candle to them. They asked me to help them hide the gifts for each other and their daddy but carefully avoided saying anything about mine.

I knew by the way that their eyes danced that they had pooled their money and bought something for me, but I didn't know just what. Then, too, they didn't seem to be at all uneasy so I felt sure that it wasn't in the house. So, as they suspected I would, I began teasing to see if one of them wouldn't give the secret away. But I had no luck. Even little

Ruth who was only four glued her lips together whenever I mentioned that I would have no gift.

But, two days before Christmas the silence ended with a bang. The school-age children, their daddy and I were eating breakfast when little Ruth woke up, and ran into the kitchen. "Oh, kids," she shouted, "I had an awful dream. I thought that Old Dolly broke her halter, climbed up in the hay loft, and stepped on Mother's cold cream!"

I feared an angry reaction, but the idea of the children's pony climbing the ladder to the hay loft was so funny that we all roared with laughter even though the secret was out.

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Day by day we wait with joy for our guests and **that day**. Are we waiting, watching in prayer for the blessed appearing of our Lord? Having this hope in us purifies us.

The day arrives and it is good when family and friends come—reunion is sweet. When guests arrive, our little differences (which may have been evident before) melt and disappear because our attention is not on self but on our guests. When Jesus comes again, He will have the place of honor. Our eyes will be on Him for He is worthy to receive glory, honor and power.

Then there is much melody at Christmas. It is so good to sing and make melody in our hearts. As the angels sang that Christmas night, "Glory to God in the highest," we, too, at the coming of our King will shout our HALLELUJAHS. "Salvation to our

God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.... Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever" (Rev. 7:12). He came, He's coming again. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

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Thou wilt make it Thy lodging.

"Come, then, dear Jesus, forgive our sins. Cleanse and sanctify our hearts. Come to all the families in our street, in our church. Do not pass anyone by, so that all may kneel at Thy manger with the angels and the shepherds and sing and pray. 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men!'"

The world has its wealth and gold, but may our hearts know and keep Christ as the True Treasure.

Then we can live what Christmas means. Not one day but every day.

THE PEACE OF CHRISTMAS

All is white.

All is bright.

It's Christmas Day;

A time to be gay.

So let's have fun!

Everyone.

But why are we sad?

We should be glad.

Christ was born

On this morn.

"Peace on earth, good will to men!"
Where is this peace then?

Is there no peace?

Is there no release?

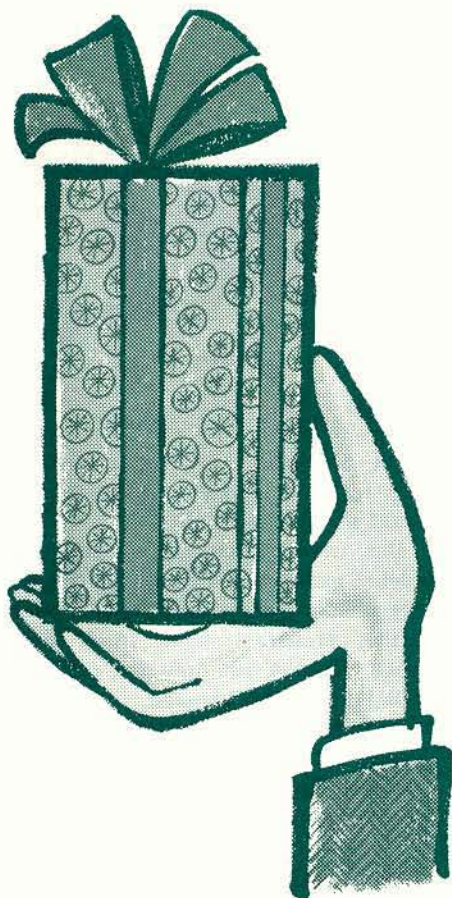
Is there a way?

We can pray.

Yes, it's true!

"My peace (said Christ), I give to you."

—Joel N. Holloway
Minneapolis, Minn.



THE GIFT

Sten Nilsson

I was lonely, terribly lonely. It was my first Christmas as a pastor, and in order to conduct the early Christmas morning service—the Julotta in Swedish—in the little country chapel which I served along with my other church, I had to travel there Christmas Eve and stay overnight.

Christmas Eve is a very special family time to us Swedes. It is the day of the year, the most festive evening of all, a "love feast" to be spent in the circle of one's family. But here I was away from my family for the first time.

I walked alone down empty roads, pitying myself, and feeling none of the joy of Christmas. Even the large Christmas tree at the railroad station, bright with its electric lights, did little to inspire me. And the message for tomorrow's service—so important, because many in Sweden attend no other service during the year—would not "come." Could it be because of my own joylessness?

I made my way to the sexton's home, where I had been invited to stay, and joined the family in lighting the traditional candles and listening to Christmas music on the radio. Then came the time to exchange gifts. A parcel had come from my mother, and I opened it slowly and deliberately while my hosts delved into theirs.

The thick brown paper came off first, then the fancy Christmas wrapping, though it seemed a pity to destroy its beauty. Finally, with my curiosity at its highest pitch, off came the soft white tissue paper and there in my hands was a gift so precious that I was flooded with emotion. My whole body tingled. I tried to control my feelings so as not to dampen the joy of those around me who were discovering the surprises of their own gifts, but inside myself I wept and laughed and was lost in my feelings.

My father had died at Christmas-time when I was ten years old. We had never had a picture of him, so I had forgotten how he truly looked and was left with only vague memories. But somewhere my mother had found a group picture in which he appeared, taken only months before he died, and from that picture a photographer had made an enlargement.

And now in my hands I held his picture. Here I was face to face with him and my heart was flooded with deep emotion as long-forgotten memories came back to me. Then I knew that I had a Christmas message for my people the next morning, for just as the Christmas gift had given me my father anew, I saw that the first

Christmas gave us our heavenly Father anew. We see His true image in Jesus, who said of Himself, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." Men had forgotten what God was like and had therefore lost a true understanding of His will and way. But He came to us in Jesus and revealed Himself. Now we know what God is like. He is like Jesus.

The author is a Methodist pastor from Storveta, Sweden, who arranges Christian Ashrams in the Scandinavian and northern European countries.

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A CHRISTMAS WISH

I wish that I might lead to Christ's
dear feet—

Those nail-marked feet—
Some straying soul, some wandering
one

Who has no Christmas in his heart
or home.

The year has been so blank and dark,
And my devotions but a spark,
A glimmering light, uncertain, dim.

So poor the service I have rendered
Him

Who loves me so,
That while I smile this Christmas Day,
And join my friends in mirth and
play,

I cannot let the day depart
Without an honest look into my heart.

Be this my prayer:

"O Jesus, let my earnest word be
brother to my deed,
And let my uttered love to Thee be
more than creed;
And when upon the threshold of
another year I stand,
With joy may I stretch forth to Thee
A full and not an empty hand.

—Author Unknown



Bringing Home the Christmas Tree

Roger C. Huebner, D.D.S.

THE WORLD WAS POOR

The world was poor before He came,
In sinful wand'ring lost.
There was no one to take the blame
And die upon the cross.

But God was rich with mercy's might
And plenteous with love;
The very Son of God one night
Stepped from His throne above.

He who had walked in golden halls
A helpless baby lay,
A sacrifice for sinful man,
Asleep upon the hay.

—Marlene Moline
Lansing, Iowa

CHRISTMAS (GIFT)

GOD
r-e-a-c-h-e-d
D
O
W
N
...
S S SiN POW!!
erless
G(RACE)
justasifI'd
never sINNed
! JOY !

—LaVerne Nyflot
Lake Bronson, Minn.

CHRISTMAS IS LIFE

Love
Light
Future
Eternity
! Sweet, joy-
ous, wonder-
ful peace.
Three came—
lams
Three came—
gifts
He came—
Life
We come—

CHRISTMAS

—Nancy Gunnarson
Lake Bronson, Minn.

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projects, could help wrap the packages simply. It would be great fun! Paul, their fifth grader, would have to deliver the baskets of goodies to the pastor and other friends. She just couldn't get to it in the three remaining days until Christmas. Anyway, Paul would be blessed by this experience of giving! Jim's sweater seemed like the hopeless task, unless today... but then the telephone rang. It was Shirley.

"Barbara, I must tell you something important. The children and I want to go to visit our dad at the prison. We baked some cookies and bought some dime-store presents, and we want to tell him personally that we do forgive him. And Barbara... that little booklet of 'Four Spiritual Laws' that you gave me has really helped me to see that I need Christ in my life. I know He's the only hope for our family."

Barbara listened attentively, tears of thanksgiving filling her eyes. "Thank you, dear Lord Jesus," she whispered softly.

"Barbara," Shirley continued, "we are wondering... I mean, we don't want to impose on you... but would it be possible for you to drive us out to the prison this afternoon? We don't have a car and we have no one else to turn to. Oh, Barbara, it would mean so much to us!"

Barbara felt that she just couldn't. How could she take out an entire afternoon so close to Christmas when she was already behind in her work? But she must. Of course, she must do it!

That afternoon as dusk settled over her town and the colorful lights began to twinkle, she drove into her driveway at peace with God. The Williamses were a united family now... united in Christ, and determined to make a new life together. It would not be easy, but with a loving pastor and helpful Christian friends, and especially the Lord Jesus as their Guide, they would do it. As she opened the door, she was greeted by choruses of "SURPRISE!" Becky, Pastor Kenyon's daughter and her faithful babysitter, and the children had thrown their energies into the house and it was neat and clean! A pot of stew was bubbling on the stove, and what

was that? The counter top boasted of three tins full of cookies. Becky had baked the dough that Barbara had hurriedly tucked away into the refrigerator when she received Shirley's call earlier that day.

Christmas Eve arrived. The Jensen children excitedly placed colorful packages under the Christmas tree. Barbara smiled as she visualized Jim's loving look and understanding chuckle when he would open his package. It would be a beautiful ski sweater, half finished! They would laugh together, and there would be restful evenings ahead when she would knit the sleeves as they sat on the couch together by the glow of lights from the Christmas tree. The puppets for Timmy would never pass a manufacturer's inspection, but he would be thrilled with them. Turkey aroma filled the cozy little house, and Christmas bread was baking. Soon Jim would be home, and Grandma and Grandpa would arrive for a delicious dinner before they would leave for church. But best of all, the joy of the Lord filled Barbara's heart. She had almost doubted that her work would ever get done, but she had experienced more joy in Christ than she had ever known before during this busy holiday season.

"Mommy, Marie is on the telephone," called Paul.

"Hello, Barbara. We are wondering if we can ride along with your family to the Christmas Eve Program you told us about. We... well, what I'm trying to say is that God has really been so good to us, just like you said. Ricky is fully recovered now. Christmas just won't seem like Christmas unless we can join you for church."

Praises to the Lord filled Barbara's heart as she happily responded to Marie's request. "How wonderful our Lord is!" she thought. "He does far more than we ask or think!"

And in Heaven the angels rejoiced over a child of God who had run the Christmas race well.



[Continued from page 12]

woodpecker pecking away at a tree. Mikkel couldn't understand it, and Karen wasn't listening; once when she looked at him there was a tear on her cheek.

It was after twelve and tremblingly near one when the girls thought of refreshments. Had mother forgotten? Hilda and Hermina went into the kitchen, but their parents were nowhere to be seen. One look at each other conveyed the necessary intelligence, and they proceeded to cook coffee. "I don't blame them for retiring early," Eivind broke in between sips of coffee. "After all the work they have gone through to make ready for us this year, they must be tired. They're old and need rest, you know."

—Reprinted from **Christmas Echoes**, 1940



CHRISTMAS ACROSTIC

C is for Christ-Child
Holy Baby so small

H is for heaven
He opened for all

R is for Ransom
For our sins paid

I is for Infant
In a manger laid

S is for Shepherds
Who went to the stall

T is for Tidings
That Christ came for all

M is for Message
That Jesus is King

A is for Angels
Who glory did sing

S is for Savior
Who died for our sin

Let's open our hearts
And let Him come in!

—Caroline Neipp
Ridgecrest, California

15. The way of the righteous will often involve affliction and suffering. What promises do we have for suffering Christians? (Ps. 30:5 and Ps. 50:15)

Although at times the ungodly may appear to prosper at the expense of the righteous, it shall be only for a moment; ultimately the way of the ungodly shall perish. Therefore, if you are a child of God, rest in the Lord. Your blessedness is better than the ill-gotten gains of the ungodly, and will last longer.

16. Why can neither the godly nor the ungodly live in this world without the providing and protecting hand of God? (Matt. 5:45 and II Pet. 3:7-9)

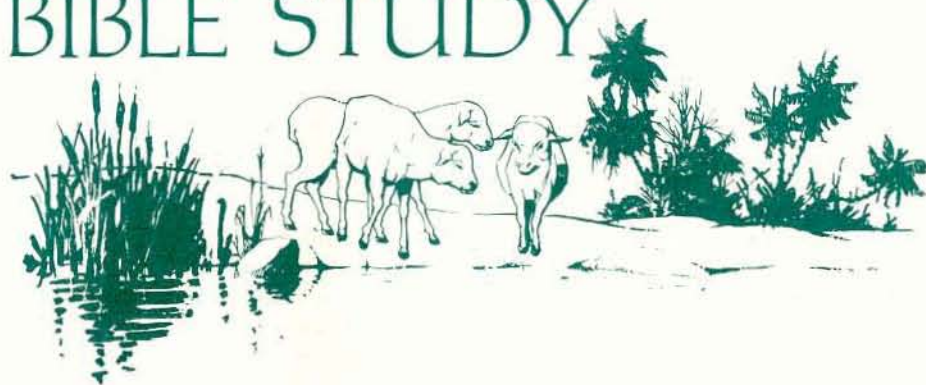
17. In the searchlight of the Holy Spirit, on which road am I walking today?

Search me, O God, and know my heart today;
Try me, O Savior, know my thoughts, I pray;
See if there be some wicked way in me;
Cleanse me from every sin, and set me free.

Lord, take my life, and make it wholly Thine;
Fill my poor heart with Thy great love divine;
Take all my will, my passion, self and pride;
I now surrender, Lord, in me abide.



WMF BIBLE STUDY



(The Studies for 1971 will be written by
Mrs. Jay Erickson, Ferndale, Washington.)

INTRODUCTION

Lesson I

January, 1971

This year we shall study some selected Psalms. When language fails us, these Psalms often express our deepest selves; our yearnings for God, our grief over sin, and our inexpressible joy. They are like marble steps, already walked by millions of feet, yet unworn and clear-cut still. It is also interesting to see how the Christ of the New Testament is revealed in the Psalms. May the Lord give us divine help as we seek to open some of the sacred treasures of the Golden Book for the nourishment of God's children and for guidance to seeking souls.

Psalm 1

THE BROAD ROAD AND THE NARROW WAY

We learn from the Psalms that in God's sight there are only two roads by which men travel. The penitent sinner cries to God for mercy, believes God's promises, and rejoices in the assurance of forgiveness of sin. Then he dedicates his life to God for service. The wicked sinner is stubborn and rebellious. He wants to go his own way and live for the comforts and pleasures of this life. If he continues on this road, it will lead to an eternity without God and without hope. May we examine our hearts and find out on which road we are traveling.

When we meditate on God's Word it is well to ask, "How does this relate to me personally?" The Holy Spirit can use the Word to fill the deepest needs in our lives, whether it be that of conviction, instruction, reproof, or comfort and strength.

1. What are three reasons for studying the Psalms?

Psalm 1 pictures two men on earth. 1) A man in his sinful state of disobedience and rebellion, refusing God's offer of salvation and facing a dreadful eternity. 2) A man who has repented of his sin and has been restored to a right relationship to God, serving Him joyfully and anticipating eternal life forever with God.

God has a claim on our lives both by creation and redemption. Yet each person exercises a free choice of taking the high road of fellowship with God or the low road of eternal separation from God. "Blessed" in this Psalm means to be in a right relationship to God because of one's choice to leave the low road and to take the high road of reconciliation and fellowship with God. This choice results in a transformation of life. It becomes evident in the company one does not keep; in the things one does **not** do, as well as in that which one now loves and uses with delight. The "blessed" man has a changed attitude toward sin, and also a new attitude toward the Word of God (From **Favorite Psalms** by Edna Carlson).

This transformation called "conversion" may be likened to the butterfly which sheds the old cocoon and emerges as a new creation with colorful wings. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

Sin is progressive as indicated by the three verbs mentioned in verse one. 1) Walk—may indicate beginning. 2) Stand—suggests a closer bond of fellowship. 3) Sit—points to permanence and settled enjoyment. We all will be mixing with the ungodly in daily business, but the child of God must seek his real fellowship with the people of God. We tend to become like those whose company we keep.

2. What is the downward progression of the ungodly as expressed in verse one?

It is not enough to read the Bible as a duty, we must come to it with **delight**. Avoid filling the mind with foolish literature or television shows. Open God's Word with a prayer that the Holy Spirit may guide you into the truth. Meditate on one verse at a time until there is spiritual digestion and nourishment for the soul.

3. What does it mean to "meditate" on God's Word? (verse 2 and Ps. 63:6)

4. What are the two classes of people mentioned in Psalm 1?

5. What does Jesus say about the entrance and goal of the two roads traveled by all people in Matt. 7:13-14?

6. When does a believer become "like a tree—planted"? (I Sam. 10:9 and Jn. 1:12)

7. What are some characteristics of a true believer as recorded in verses 2 and 3?

8. How was it possible for Joseph and Daniel to prosper even in their wicked surroundings? (Gen. 39:3-4 and Dan. 1:8-9)

9. What do we learn about Daniel's prayer life from Daniel 6:10?

10. In verse 4, the ungodly are likened to chaff. What is chaff?

11. What are the two conflicting forces at work in the world as mentioned in this Psalm?

12. What will be the final outcome of those who align themselves with the forces of evil? (Ps. 9:17 and Rev. 20:14-15)

13. What will be the future of those who align themselves with the forces of righteousness? (Rev. 21:23-27)

Living Letters has a good translation of Philippians 3:9, as follows: "And become one with Him, no longer counting on being saved by being good enough or by obeying God's laws, but by trusting Christ to save me; for God's way of making us right with Himself depends on faith—counting on Christ alone."

14. If the Bible calls **our own** righteousness "filthy rags," how then do we obtain Christ's righteousness? (II Cor. 5:17 and Is. 61:10)

The Christian Life

by Raynard Huglen, Editor
The Lutheran Ambassador

PART V—Conclusion

Review

In the past four sections of our general theme we have talked of many things. We have considered Baptism and the new life begun then, and the awakening experience of the one who remains in his baptismal covenant. For those who depart from that fellowship with God there must be a conversion experience through which life is restored.

We spoke of justification, of the Christian life as surrender to the Lord, and of assurance. Some time was spent in a consideration of what being a Christian is as well as what it is not. Then a good deal of attention was given to the "highest good" of a Christian, the will of God.

That same subject was continued last time as some practical questions were asked and I stated that the truly Christian question to ask is what **ought** I do, rather than what **may** I do? And we concluded with a discussion of five visible marks of a Christian life and the place of the Lord's Supper in the Christian walk.

As indicated last time, this final article in our series will be devoted to the earthly responsibilities of the Christian and also to that other touchstone of his life, the fact that his real citizenship is in heaven.

The Christian as a Member of Society

To write on such a topic in the few paragraphs at our disposal means that a great deal will be left unsaid, but that has been the risk we have had to take in this entire series.

Before going further, let me make

it clear, lest there be any misunderstanding, that the chief desire of a Christian disciple is to win others to the faith he holds most precious. The last command of the soon-to-ascend Jesus was that His disciples in turn make other disciples, even to the ends of the earth. The Christian, then, is a person under divine orders to evangelize.

But it is also true that a Christian has social responsibilities in the world, that is, to seek the welfare of his fellow man also in temporal affairs. In fact, he would seem to have even greater responsibilities than others because he has come to a deeper and fuller understanding of what love for other people is through his own acceptance of God's love in his heart. The Ten Commandments, insofar as they deal with relationships with other people, and we accept the last seven as doing that, are social in nature and if fully practiced would produce a most pleasant situation.

All of which is to say that a Christian, whom we have already characterized as a lover of God's law, will attempt to be toward other people as God would want him to be. Love is the fulfillment of the law and he will seek to have a right attitude toward his neighbor.

Let us note some passages, primarily of the New Testament, which have social implications.

1.) Matt. 5:16—"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your **good works** and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

2.) Eph. 2:10—"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for **good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

3.) Jas. 2:14-17—What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith

save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead."

4.) I Jn. 3:17, 18—"But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and truth."

5.) The Parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37. In this well-known parable Jesus tells how one man aided a person in need who was of another kind when two of that man's own people had passed him by. I take the words of Jesus to the lawyer, "Go and do likewise," to mean that His followers are to show compassion to others no matter **who** they are.

6.) Gal. 6:2—"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." And Gal. 6:9, 10—"And let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to **all men**, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."

7.) Gen. 4:9—"Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?' He said, 'I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?'" That question is not answered in so many words, but the clear implication of Scripture is that man is responsible for his brother.

8.) Matt. 25:31-46—Too long for quotation here, this familiar judgment scene portrays a division of people on the basis of how they have responded to human needs about them, in the persons of the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the poorly clothed, the ill and the imprisoned. Jesus declares

that service to the unfortunate becomes in reality a service to Him.

Further Scriptural References

In the next place, I want to refer to several other Old Testament sources with definite social intimations.

1.) Isaiah 1. Speaking to a religious people, the Lord deplures religious ritual divorced from righteous living. Perhaps the social concerns can be summed up in verse 17—"Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow."

2.) Isaiah 58. In one of the highwater chapters of his book Isaiah records the word of the Lord, summarized in verses 6 and 7—"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?"

3.) Amos. As the reader will know, Amos is the prophet of social judgment and righteousness. Very definitely he attacks the oppression of the poor (8:4), dishonest weights and measures (8:5), the sale of contaminated and inferior wheat (8:6) and moral degeneracy (2:7).

The Christian not only will not be guilty of the offences listed above, but he will resist them in others and oppose social injustice. I remember when Bishop Trevor Huddleston of South Africa was described as "God's angry man" as he deplored his country's racial policy of apartheid. To be angry for God is high commendation.

What can be expected of a Christian as far as social attitudes go? As a general statement we can say simply that he will be like Jesus in his attitudes. To be more specific, let us put down three points.

1.) The Christian is sympathetic to, and concerned for, the needs of others. General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, included this paragraph in an address to his Social Officers: "To help the poor, to minister to them in their slums, to sympathise with them in their pov-

erty, afflictions, and irreligion, was the natural outcome of the life that came into my soul through believing in Jesus Christ" (G. S. Railton, **The Authoritative Life of General William Booth**).

The Christian's sympathy and concern are translated into acts of giving and assistance in the ways that seem most effective to him.

2.) The Christian is against injustice and oppression. He stands for equality of opportunity for all. He prays for the grace to be fair and open-hearted in his own dealings with others.

3.) Allied with the previous one, he accepts people for what they are and builds from that point. He does not pre-judge others and endeavors to see individuals as persons and persons as individuals.

These things, it seems to me, typify Jesus Christ and His followers are to imitate Him.

The Real Citizenship

I have always liked best the American Standard Version rendering of Philippians 3:20—"For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." Exegetical niceties aside, the word "citizenship" is more appealing than "conversation" of the King James Version or "commonwealth" of the Revised Standard Version.

The Christian really and truly believes that his citizenship is in heaven, that is, beyond this life and world. The writer to the Hebrews asserted, "For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come" (Heb. 13:14). And the Apostle Peter wrote, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

Our Catechism declares, "It is the will of God that all His rational creatures should praise Him forever in perfect holiness and happiness."

That "forever" begins here in this life, where there is a living, personal

relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The life is as real as that which we speak of as eternity, but there is one big difference. Here it is lived in the presence of sin, there there will be no sin.

The late Professor M. O. Wee, in his book, **Shall I Live Forever?**, writes, "The difference between eternal life on earth, and in heaven is one of degree. Here it is imperfect, in part; yonder it is perfect, complete. Here it is hampered and hindered; yonder it is unimpeded and undisturbed."

"Eternal life possessed and lived under earthly conditions, necessitates strife and struggle against sin within and without; in heaven sin and sorrow, temptation and evil—shortcomings and failures—shall be no more. On earth sorrow and joy mingle, in heaven is known only gladness and everlasting peace."

The Christian on earth has two goals. One is to live a life which will glorify God (Matt. 5:16). That life will be a life unto Christ and therefore unto others (see II Cor. 5:15). He will be a person very much interested in this world and life, doing the best he can to be salt and light in society.

But at the same time he will be a person with an upward look. He remembers that "the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." Spiritually, he never really "settles down" in this world. He lives ready to move when the signal's given.

The Christian is a person of two worlds. But his real citizenship is in heaven.

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away'" (Rev. 21:1-4).

CHRISTMAS
IN OUR COUNTRY CHURCH

(Mine happened to be Hope Lutheran Church of Sisseton, S. Dak.)

It was Christmas in the country
'Round the church upon the hill;
And the bell it would be ringing
"Peace on earth, to men good will."
We children had been learning
Our annual Christmas parts;
Great was the anticipation
In our eager childish hearts.

Mom and Dad had both been busy,
'Cause with all their other chores,
They must get us to the "practice"
Even though 'twas cold outdoors.
Then at last the waiting ended,
That important day was here;
All would go to the country church
And be a part of the Christmas cheer.

The program time was 2 p.m.,
The setting must be right.
Window shades had all been drawn
To keep out all the light.
The congregation's tallest men
Were asked to mind the tree.
We had to use real candles,
There was no 'lectricity.

Gifts for friends and neighbors
Had been placed around the tree
That reached high up to the ceiling;
What a beautiful sight to see!
The church was filled with people,
There was not a vacant seat;
Seems that everyone had gathered
For this splendid Christmas treat.

There was music by the choir,
Their numbers were the best;
Seems I still can hear the voices,
Although some are now at rest.
"Silent Night, Holy Night,
All is calm, all is bright."
These songs of Christmas spirit
Make the season seem just right.

"It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old."
And then "Joy to the World,"
The sweetest story ever told.
Program over, sermon ended,
Gifts and treats were shared by all;
This was Christmas in our country
church
For everyone, large and small.

—Ellen Nielsen
Sisseton, S. Dak.



WOMEN
for Christ

GOD'S GREAT GIFT OF LOVE
Mrs. Leif Fostervold, Atwater, Minn.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). There can be no peace and joy on this earth apart from Christ Jesus.

As we look at the world today, it is like a troubled sea, so much unrest everywhere. It is as if dark funnel clouds are hovering everywhere, ready to dip down and destroy all living things. It was much the same when Jesus came as a Babe that night at Bethlehem. There is still so little room for Jesus in the hearts of men.

God's promise, all through the Old Testament, foretold His great and glorious plan of salvation, through His Son. He was to come as a light into this darkness. He was to reign as Prince of Peace. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined" (Isa. 9:2).

He comes to the heart, through the Word Incarnate. John 1:14: "And the word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." John 12:46: "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness."

God reveals His love for this dark and sinful world. Here we are, all guilty, but God's grace abounds. He gave His all that you and I might have eternal life. But each one of

us must be willing to accept His Great Gift to us.

The greatest verse in the Bible, John 3:16:

God — the greatest Lover
so loved — the greatest degree
the world — the greatest number
that He gave — the greatest act
His only begotten Son — the greatest Gift
that whosoever — the greatest invitation
believeth — the greatest simplicity
in Him — the greatest Person
should not perish — the greatest deliverance
but — the greatest difference
have — the greatest certainty
everlasting life — the greatest possession

The grace of God that bringeth salvation appeared to all men. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Eph. 2:8, "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

As we are looking forward to the Christmas season again, may there be the peace and joy in our hearts that only God, through Jesus Christ, can give. The real Christmas is coming again when Jesus returns, and suddenly, as a thief in the night, comes as a cloud with power and great glory. Not until that day will there be complete peace. It will be an awesome day when Jesus returns as Ruler and King. God admonishes us to be ready when He comes. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (II Cor. 9:15).

A CHRISTMAS
 PRAYER



Dear God:
 I like to think that Mary and Joseph
 knew
 That they had a special place within
 Your Plan;
 When on that day they traveled to
 Bethlehem,
 And found only a stable bed to lay
 the Christ-Child on:
 There was no room in the Inn.
 Also today our hearts, and minds,
 and rooms, and world
 Are filled with many things.
 Help us to clear them out, dear God,
 Discard the worthlessness,
 Make room for Him,
 That He may come and dwell in us,
 Till we can go and be with Him
 Eternally. This is my plea.
 Amen.

—Mrs. Jacob Meyer
 Lucan, Minn.

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