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OUT OF DARKNESS INTO LIGHT	Earl Kaurala
THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT	Mark Aho
THE PEACE OF GOD	Elmer Yliniemi
CHILDREN'S PAGE	Gwen Wilson
SILENT NIGHT	Joseph Mohr
A JOYOUS CELEBRATION	Alvin Holmgren
HOSANNA TO CHRIST	Isaac Watts
THE GUIDING STAR	William Chatterton Dix
THE PERFECT GIFT	Ken Storm
A SONG IN THE HEART	Shirley Lampinen
THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE	Arne Nordahl
WHILE SHEPHERDS WATCHED	Nahum Tate

Come, Holy Jesus

Thou didst leave thy throne and Thy kingly crown
When Thou camest to earth for me;
But in Bethlehem's home was there found no room
For Thy holy nativity.
O come to my heart, Lord Jesus;
There is room in my heart for Thee.

Emily Elizabeth Steele Elliott, 1836-97

God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

II Corinthians 4:6

Out of Darkness into Light

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. (John 8:12)

Memories of past Christmases flood our minds during this special time of the year. Sharing stories with family and friends of what Christmas was like in the "old days" is part of the Christmas celebration. Especially delightful are the stories of the young ones; for example, a seven-year-old who says, "I remember when I was little..."

One of the enduring Christmas memories from when I was little has to do with the ten-mile drive to my grandparents' home on many a December evening. The ice crunched under the tires as we drove slowly through the snow-covered countryside. As the oldest, I got to sit near a window, which I carefully scraped so that I could peek through at the shadowy trees lit only by the stars and the moon. What I was really waiting for, though, were the Christmas lights along the way. They weren't fancy, and would go unnoticed today: a simple artificial wreath with one red bulb, just like the one we had in our kitchen window, was all that decorated most homes. As we neared our destination, however, we drove by a house in front of which the owners had planted evergreens. These were always lit with blue lights only. To my little eyes, those lights cast what seemed to be almost a holy light, softly mysterious and somehow noble.

"I'm a little candle, shining in the night," the children sing. We adults are also candles. The radiance set within us by the fires of God's love reflects our joy into the darkened countryside of this world. Our joy is very much akin to the joy of Mary as she began to comprehend how highly favored she was by God's proclamation given through Gabriel. Even though Gabriel's message carried tidings of joy, Mary doesn't seem to have grasped the enormity of what had taken place until her visit with Elizabeth. During that visit, she received verification of the significance of what had happened earlier. Mary consequently erupted in a song of rejoicing: *My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. (Luke 1:46-47)*

Likewise, we, also, find ourselves rejoicing before the Lord as the enormity of his commitment and regard for us is revealed through the Gospel message of life and salvation. Truly, the words

of Mary then resound in our own hearts: *For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. (Luke 1:49)*

**"He that is mighty
hath done to me
great things."**

The sheer beauty of the Lord's residing within our hearts is a light visible to the world. As God's children, we are citizens of a city set upon a hill. The light of that city radiates the love of God and the joy such love brings to the individual Christian heart.

Sometimes it may seem that our poor candles couldn't possibly make a difference in alleviating the darkness of this world. However, think of the humble Christmas decorations of my youth. One tiny bulb was capable of breaking the darkness around it, shining a special Christmas gladness into the heart of a little boy. We must not look to our own human weakness; rather we must continue leaning upon the Arm of Strength who is the source of the light abiding in our hearts.

Jesus, the Light of this world, was born under extraordinarily humble circumstances. His earthly parents traveled the considerable distance to Bethlehem so that Scripture might be fulfilled. The slow, plodding journey must have been extremely uncomfortable for Mary; and, then to get there, only to find that there was no room in the inn!

Jesus, the Saviour of mankind, came into this world as an infant, vulnerable and totally dependent upon his earthly parents. Nonetheless, there was great joy in Heaven. The dark skies burst into light and song to the glory of God as angels proclaimed good tidings of great joy to shepherds who were tending their flock during the night. For Jesus' birth, there was no glittering palace, ladies-in-waiting, or royal entourage. He was born into an ordinary family, in a common stable, and his bed was a feeding trough.

God's ways surely are not the ways of man. The flesh of man would expect that Jesus would come forth into this world among much pomp and splendor. Naaman, the leper, (II Kings 5) expected a dramatic performance by the prophet, Elisha, to whom he went to be freed from the devastation of leprosy. How angry he became when he was told to dip himself seven times in the muddy waters of the Jordan River. *He thought, He will surely come out to me, and*

stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. (II Kings 5:11)

We may live in the 21st century, but God's ways have not changed. The Living Word is shared in simplicity as it is revealed by the Holy Spirit. Its effect is to humble the hearts of those afflicted with the leprosy of sin to a realization of their inability to heal themselves. This Word reveals man's broken condition, and brings to light the release from sin through the sprinkling of the blood shed by the mature Jesus as He paid the penalty for the sins of all mankind. What joy there is in Heaven over each sinner who is born into the Kingdom!

As God's children, we are ordinary people. We can make no claims for our own fleshly goodness. However, we have been entrusted with a most precious and wonderful mission. God has given to us the privilege of sharing his eternal Word so that burdens might be lifted, souls might be saved, and lives might be gladdened by the presence of Jesus in them. In truth, the humble-looking wreath of the joy of salvation that hangs in the window of the heart of a Christian shines forth as a blinding light, shattering the darkness of unbelief through the power of the spoken Word. The promise of Jesus' words in John 8:12 is that those who walk with Him will never flounder in darkness. Their lives will be lived as children of the day, not of the night. May God so strengthen each one of us.

May each of you have a most blessed and wonderful Christmas. May the joy of the Lord fill your hearts, and may you be bathed in the soft and gentle light of the Saviour.

*In Christ,
Pastor Earl Kaurala
Alston, Michigan*

Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

Psalm 97:11

The Christmas Spirit

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2:10-14)

This is a gift from God. His desire is that all men would be partakers of his great gift, for How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? (Hebrews 2:3)

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)

Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes -- is He not found wrapped in the Word of God? -- lying in a manger, in the hearts of those who have come to know their own corruption, and have need of God's grace (for the dung hill is not far from the manger).

He lives in the hearts of believers who are ready and willing to preach that Gospel message, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee (Mark 2:5); go in peace, for Christ Jesus shed his blood, died and rose from the grave, and lives forevermore that you may live, also.

Let us rejoice this Christmas season in that great gift that He has given us. Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. (Revelation 22:20)

May the Christmas Spirit be with you,

*Pastor Mark Aho
Ashburnham, Massachusetts*

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: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John 1:11-14

The Peace of God

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. (Matthew 10:34) Where is the peace that God's Word promises through Jesus Christ? The Old Testament promised that Christ would bring peace. *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)*

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the angels announced it with these words: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2:14)* Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, filled with the Holy Spirit after he got his speech back, said Jesus would *give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. (Luke 1:79)*

During the earthly ministry of Jesus, He promised peace to those who believe on Him. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)*

The world understands peace to be the absence of war on the earth. Therefore, man strives to obtain peace by removal of evil by force.

Jesus said, *My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. (John 18:36)*

God first created and established the family in the Garden of Eden. By the fall of Adam and Eve, the whole human race was defiled. God had to reconstruct a new world in which Jesus is the head. *The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit . . . The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. (I Corinthians 15:45, 47)* *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (II Corinthians 5:17)*

Jesus separates his peace from the peace as the world understands it. What He brought was reconciliation between God and man. Paul wrote, *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1)* He continues by saying, *Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of*

one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. (Verse 18) Peace comes forth from our justification by faith in Christ Jesus. Faith is necessary if we are to have peace. Those who do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are in a state of alienation from God and his people. This is what Jesus meant when He said, *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.* The presence of Christ brings a sword. *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)* This Word of God cuts through old habits and exposes our selfishness and sins. The gospel of peace creates a struggle in our souls. The old Adam fights against the new man.

Those who refuse to believe in Jesus destroy even the closest family relationships. *For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. (Matthew 10:35-36)* His brothers asked Him to depart and go to Judaea, saying that if He could do such great things, He should show them to the world. *For neither did his brethren believe in him. (John 7:5)* Later, according to Acts 1:14, they did believe on Him: *These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.*

We are still in the church militant, and live in a state of spiritual warfare. Corruption is great in our flesh, and Satan is a great deceiver. He comes as an angel of light. In the Church, there will be false shepherds and false sheep (John 1:8-10), wheat and tares, and good and bad fish (Matthew 13:24-30, 47-50).

When Jesus returns, all the unrighteous will be separated from the believers. Jesus Christ will be on the throne, separating the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:31-34, 41).

Jesus knew there would be persecution of his disciples, and He warned them, but this was not against his peace principles. Jesus offers us his very own peace. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. (John 14:27)*

"My peace I give unto you."

The peace of Jesus stands every trial and test in our lives. No matter how big or small our trials may be, we can trust Jesus to

give us his very own peace in the midst of them. *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)* What does this mean? It means that the peace that God gives is beyond all intellectual understanding.

Just previous to this verse, Paul tells us to give all our concerns and worries to God, and go to Him in prayer and thanksgiving with all our needs.

When I was still in the bondage of sin and unbelief, Christ took my sins on Himself and died in my behalf so I could be set free and have everlasting life as a gift of God. This didn't seem reasonable to my mind. When my sins were forgiven and washed in the blood of Jesus, I experienced a peace that cannot be described intellectually. A new world opened up to me. All things became new in Christ.

There are other times in my life, and I am sure in your life, also, when our trials and concerns so overwhelm us that we are about to despair. That is when the greatest peace can come upon us. It is a gift of God which cannot be explained with logic. We experience his love and presence in a way that cannot be explained, for it reaches beyond this world.

Luther wrote, "True peace stills and quiets the heart, not at the time when there is no misfortune, but in the very midst of it, when outwardly nothing but discord meets the eye . . . Worldly peace consists in removing the external evil which is creating the unrest . . . But Christian or spiritual peace works just the opposite way so that, outwardly, the misfortune remains. Enemies, sickness, poverty, sin, the Devil, and death are there; they do not stop, but completely encircle the believer. Yet he has peace within, strength and comfort in his heart." [*What Luther Says*]

May the peace of God abide in your heart.

*Pastor Elmer Yliniemi
Frazee, Minnesota*

*A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it:
whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.*

Proverbs 17:8

CHILDREN'S PAGE

Dear Children far and near,

Our Christmas story is found in the first chapter of Matthew and the second chapter of Luke.

Behold, a King is Born

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. (Matthew 1:18) Joseph was very upset. He knew this child that Mary carried in her womb was not his, and he did not know if he should still marry her.

Joseph thought much on this matter, and his heart ached, for he loved Mary very much. As he was sleeping one night, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS. (Verses 20-25)

Joseph woke up, and knew that God had spoken to him. He was at peace, and took Mary as his wife.

This Gospel of Matthew does not give us the details of Jesus' birth as does Luke, so we will go to Luke, and read of the night that Jesus was born.

Joseph and Mary had traveled to Bethlehem. This was the city of Joseph's birth, and he and all people had to return to their birth city to be taxed.

It was while they were here that Mary's time came to have her baby. *And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the

field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2:7-14) Those angels must have been quite a sight, so beautiful.

The shepherds went to find the child. They found Him, just as the angel said. Oh, what a special night that was for those shepherds! They were the first people to see the newborn King. They bowed before Him. After they had worshipped the Christ Child, they told everyone they could about baby Jesus.

I am so happy that Jesus was born, and I do hope you are, too. Jesus had to come to die for us so that we might not live with our sins. He saved us so that we may live in Heaven with Him.

Just as the shepherds were so excited to tell anyone and everyone about the baby, Jesus, we should also tell people about Him. That is what Jesus would have us do. I do know how hard that can be, but it will be good if we all can talk about our wonderful Saviour.

I pray that all you fathers, mothers, and children have a blessed Christmastime, and may Jesus be the great reason for celebrating.

*God's peace,
Gwen Wilson*

Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.

Psalms 112:4

"This charming song is of humble, rustic origin. It was written in 1818 by a young priest of a village near Salzburg, Austria (the city of Mozart), and was set to music by his friend, Franz, a schoolmaster of a neighbouring hamlet. On Christmas Eve of that year, the two men, with the help of a choir of village girls, sang it in church."

Hymns Ancient and Modern

Silent Night

Silent night, sacred night,
Bethlehem sleeps, yet what light
 Floats around the holy pair:
 Songs of angels fill the air --
Strains of heavenly peace,
Strains of heavenly peace.

Silent night, sacred night,
Shepherds first see the light,
 Hear the hallelujahs ring
 Which the angel chorus sing:
Christ the Saviour is come,
Christ the Saviour is come.

Silent night, sacred night,
Son of God, O what light
 Radiates from thy manger bed
 Over realms with darkness spread --
Thou in Bethlehem born,
Thou in Bethlehem born.

*"Stille Nacht", Joseph Mohr, 1792-1848
Franz Gruber, 1787-1863*

A Joyous Celebration

The praise of the Lord is the most delightful sound on earth, and it is certainly the sound that we will hear in Heaven.

Our present world echoes many sounds that tell the story of our human experience. We hear much of the competitive excitement that culminates in two opposite emotions: the triumphant shout of victory or the muffled sigh of defeat. There are also sounds of pleasure and pain, of hope and disappointment.

All of these are occasioned by our varying human experiences, and they have an end. But the praise of the Lord that arises from the heart of a saved sinner is on a different plane. Our joy is in Christ; it is not a joy for this life only, but for eternity as well.

When Virgin Mary responded to the news that she was to be the mother of the Messiah, she said, *My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. (Luke 1:46-47)*

When the aged Simeon held the child, Jesus, in his arms, he was ready to depart from this world in peace because his eyes had seen the Lord's salvation. Anna, the Prophetess, joined in giving thanks to God because she knew that this child was the one who came to bring the promised redemption. The Gospel message is a joyous sound.

Praise of God originates in the certainty that, through Christ, we have access to the Father, and that, in Christ, we have the full forgiveness of all of our sins. The Christian joy grows out of a personal faith in Jesus Christ. This kind of joy cannot grow in any other soil.

Many people feel sorry for Christians because, in their view, Christians have no freedom and, consequently, no joy. They perceive Christianity to be only a life of sacrifice and tears. Not having experienced the emancipating power of the Gospel, they cannot possibly know the joy of salvation. When a sinner hears and believes the Gospel, the joy of the Lord becomes his strength. This joy is not mere human sentiment, but a deep and enduring joy that is anchored at Calvary, where the atonement for sin was made, and in the victorious message of the resurrected, living Lord, who said, *Because I live, ye shall live also. (John 14:19)*

I do not mean that there are no tears in a Christian's life. It has been rightly said that the joy that cannot weep is a joy that has no firm foundation; it is a joy suspended in space. Tears are often the anchors of joy. In the midst of sorrow, a child of God can

rejoice with sanctified joy. Our lives are described in God's Word as *sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.* (II Corinthians 6:10) I believe that I am safe in saying that joy in the Lord and sorrow over sin are inseparably bound together. If one is lacking in the experience of godly sorrow that works repentance, he is also lacking in the joy of the Lord.

The Holy Spirit is the source of our salvation assurance, and of our joy. It has been said that joy and thanksgiving are like twins. The prodigal son's experience shows us this truth. His return was not marked by a festival of sorrow in remembrance of what had been wasted in his life, but it was a joyous celebration because the Father had received him home, safe and sound.

*Pastor Alvin Holmgren
Seattle, Washington*

Hosanna to Christ

Hosanna to the royal Son
Of David's ancient line;
His natures two, his person one,
Mysterious and divine.

Blest He who comes to wretched men
With peaceful news from Heaven!
Hosannas of the highest strain
To Christ the Lord be given!

Isaac Watts

The Guiding Star

William Chatterton Dix was the son of a Bristol surgeon. Most of his hymns were written during illness; many of them for use at St. Raphael's Church, Bristol, England. He wrote this one on a Sunday morning during a sickness that kept him away from early Communion. He was only eighteen years old.

As with gladness men of old
Did the guiding star behold,
As with joy they hailed its light,
Leading onward, beaming bright:
So, most gracious Lord, may we
Evermore be led to Thee.

As with joyful steps they sped,
Saviour, to thy lowly bed,
There to bend the knee before
Thee whom Heaven and earth adore:
So may we with willing feet
Ever seek the mercy seat.

As they offered gifts most rare
At thy cradle rude and bare;
So may we with holy joy,
Pure, and free from sin's alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to Thee, our heavenly King.

Holy Jesus, every day
Keep us in the narrow way;
And, when earthly things are past,
Bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide,
Where no clouds thy glory hide.

In the heavenly country bright
Need they no created light;
Thou its light, its joy, its crown,
Thou its sun which goes not down;
There forever may we sing
Hallelujahs to our King.

William Chatterton Dix, 1837-98

The Perfect Gift

God created man in his own image, for *God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness (Genesis 2:26)* In that perfect state, man would have continued to live in a flawless environment, dwelling in the beautiful Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve would never have known sin and death if the wicked one had not appeared on the scene to tempt, to cast doubt, and to beguile Eve. However, because of the Fall, man's image, though once perfect, became forever tarnished. *For the wages of sin is death . . . (Romans 6:23)* God's Word had been transgressed. His warning had gone unheeded then, and, sad but true, his warnings for the most part go unheeded today. Adam and Eve fell first into unbelief and then into actual sin, which always is the end result of unbelief because unbelief spawns actual sin. Unbelief bars the door of Heaven to all who are consumed in it. Because we are all descendents of Adam and Eve, we have all inherited this nature of sinfulness, and with it, the condemnation of our righteous God.

Thanks be to God for his great grace wherein He provided a way for us to be reconciled unto Himself. He prepared for you and me reconciliation in the form of a perfect gift, as stated in the conclusion of our earlier reference: *but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)*

Christ, the innocent Lamb of God, came to take away our sins so that we, through faith in Him, could be made righteous before our God. Paul explained, *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. (Romans 3:24-26)*

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. (Psalm 32:1-2)

The question that we must all ask ourselves is: do we truly believe in this Jesus whom God hath sent? Have we personally received this heavenly gift, and through Him, forgiveness for our sins? Have we truly ceased to labor for righteousness, but by God's grace laid hold of the righteousness freely extended to all who, by faith, believe in Christ Jesus alone? If we forsake our own labors

and stand in the merits of Christ only, then we are in Him, and He in us, and we are new creatures. *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. (II Corinthians 5:17-18)*

We rejoice today in this revelation given to the Apostle Paul: *Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:26-27)*

Thanks to God that we do not have to trust in our own righteousness, or our own feeble efforts, which crumble into dust. Our treasure is in Heaven, at the right hand of the Father, interceding there for us. Soon we, too, can be there with Him in his glory.

*Pastor Ken Storm
Tapiola, Michigan*

A Song in the Heart

Our Sunday school has held an afternoon service once a month for six years at a nursing home in Monroe, Washington. The Activities Director asked us one day to hold another service at the Alzheimer's ward.

This ward was extremely warm, and at times the smell was very obnoxious. It was hard for me to go to this service because of these problems, but the small group of us continued to do so at the request of the lady who was concerned that those people never had a church service because of their "perceived" limitations. "Perceived," I say, because I, too, was very reluctant to go, and would look around at those who were pushed into the room and think: How hot it is; how unpleasant smelling it is; and I don't think these people are getting a thing out of this.

Yet, God had a way of showing how wrong I was. Last Thanksgiving season, we went there, and, as usual, we sang songs. Gene Mixon and my husband, Stan, said short sermons from the Word of God. I sat up front next to a lady who stared vacantly towards the wall, and, as this day was especially difficult, I wished I was elsewhere.

It was decided that we would close the service with the song "Jesus Loves Me." Since we used a book provided by the nursing home that had words a little different than what we're used to, I had to look down at the book as I sang along. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a movement. The foot of the woman next to me, the one who always had such a vacant look on her face, was tapping out the words against the leg of her wheelchair. I looked up to see the same vacant look, then back down at her moving foot. Sure enough, it paused when it should and tapped when it should. The verse came to my mind that is found in Jeremiah 31:33, *But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

Does it say *in their minds*? No, for we know that this mind may leave to a place that we don't understand. It says *write it in their hearts*. Did I look at these services in the Alzheimer's ward differently after that? Yes. Even if the conditions hadn't changed in those rooms, I learned what the Activities Director had known, that these people needed to hear the Word of God. How important it is for us not to feel that we can tell who can or cannot understand

what is preached. We should pray for such people, that their spiritual needs are being met.

Is it a glamorous mission field? Oh no, but such an important one! This God taught me by using the lady who sang with her foot.

*Shirley Lampinen
Snohomish, Washington*

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

Luke 6:38

The Christmas Message

The Christmas message is from God to the children of men about a Saviour born for them all. It is also a message of peace, hope, joy, and love, as we read in God's Word. The glad tidings his angels proclaimed were, *Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2:10-14)

We notice that these tidings created such a great joy in the shepherds' hearts that they said one to another, *Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. (Verses 15-17)*

About four thousand years have passed since the first message of the Gospel was proclaimed to Adam and Eve. *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. (Genesis 3:15)* Throughout time, the prophets repeated this message of the Messiah to the children of Israel.

After hearing the angels, the shepherds left their flocks and went with haste to see the Saviour of the world, whose prophesied coming was fulfilled at last.

The question today is whether Christ is to each of us a Saviour, and if this Christmas Gospel of peace, joy, hope, and love is in our hearts by faith. If this Christmas peace and joy is not in your heart, it is necessary and very important that you repent and seek God's forgiveness by Jesus Christ through the proclaimed message of his Gospel. Then you will be able to celebrate Christmas, and understand its glad tidings with God's peace and faith in your hearts, just as the shepherds did on that first Christmas.

I will all of you a joyful Christmas and a blessed New Year.

*God's peace,
Pastor Arne Nordahl
Vancouver, Washington*

"Nahum Tate was Poet Laureate to William III. This hymn, with its perfect word-picture of the Nativity, has enriched the spiritual life of the world, but its author died in a debtor's prison. The tune, "Winchester Old," first published at the end of the sixteenth century, lay buried in an old Psalter for many generations until, in 1861, Dr. Monk gave it the publicity it deserved by inserting it in *Hymns Ancient and Modern*."

The Fellowship Hymn Book

While Shepherds Watched

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

"Fear not, said he (for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind),
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.

"To you, in David's town, this day,
Is born of David's line
A Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;
And this shall be the sign:

"The heavenly Babe you there shall find
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands
And in a manger laid."

Thus spake the seraph; and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels, praising God, and thus
Addressed their joyful song:

"All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace:
Goodwill henceforth from Heaven to men
Begin, and never cease!"

Nahum Tate, 1652-1715

We send all of you, our readers around the world, wishes for great joy this Christmastime. Let us continue to thank God for his heavenly gift, our beautiful Saviour, Jesus, our Lord, who is the way, the truth and the life to us, now and forever.

*In God's peace and love,
Your Christian Monthly Staff*