

THE GOD OF CHRISTMAS

Christ Church

December 21, 1941

We associate Christmas with the beautiful
stories of the N.T. --
the song of the angels -- "Peace on earth
Goodwill toward men...."

a message of love - and kindness - hope

and just now it is very difficult to
see how all that fits into the KIND OF WORLD
IN WHICH WE FIND OURSELVES.

We have come into this beautiful church
this morning
inspiring
with the music

and the uplifting ritual

a message of faith - hope - love --
it seems like a world of its own
doesn't it

While outside there is another world --

of conflict -- and greed - and hatred
and suffering...

And the question must come to every
thoughtful person -- CAN WE EVER GET THESE

(a) INTRODUCTION

Within the past few weeks several people have asked -- almost the identical question: a thoughtful question ---

"Aren't you going to find it very difficult to preach a Christmas sermon this year-----."

It is true that

We associate Christmas with the beautiful stories of the N.T. --

the song of the angels -- *the song* -- "Peace on earth, goodwill toward men....."

a message of love - and kindness - hope

----- and just now it is very difficult to see how all that fits into the KIND OF WORLD ^{some} IN WHICH WE FIND OURSELVES.

There seems to be an air of immediacy about this

(b) We have come into this beautiful church this morning -----

inspiring
with the music ----

and the uplifting ritual ----

a message of faith - hope - love---
----- it seems like ^{seems like} a world of its own -----
doesn't it ----

While outside there is another world ----

of conflict -- and greed - and hatred
and suffering...

And the question must come to every thoughtful person -- CAN WE EVER GET THESE

As Christians we believe that it is ----

And Christmas is a time when we
joyfully celebrate that faith ----

(C) And so this is really a wonderful
year for Christmas ----

In the lifetime of everyone of us
there has never been a better
time to observe Christmas ----

----for now it is that we affirm our
faith ----

that the world of religion ----
with its optimism and hope ---- *note of truth*

is not off by itself-- BUT
TOUCHES and TRANSFORMS the world
workaday world ----in which there are so
many disheartening things.

begin
---- LET US THINK OF CHRISTMAS AS A TIME
WHEN WE ---- AS CHRISTIANS

reaffirm our faith in the
reality and the vitality of the

essential teachings of the Christian religion

slant

In thinking of our service this morning
my mind went back to a little paragraph
which appeared in the Readers Digest
several years ago.

It told of an astronomer --- whose life was
saddened and darkened by the loss of his wife.

On the marker in the cemetery, he had
these beautiful words inscribed:

"We have loved the stars too much
to be afraid of the night....."

(a) It seems to me that similar words
might be used by the Xian;

(b) In the Xian's sky are certain
stars --- associated with his religion;

(c) --- And we as Xians, believe in those
stars too much -- to be afraid of
the night.

Christmas is a time when we affirm our
faith in those stars.

D.

During the French Revolution one of the revolutionary leaders said to a peasant

"I will have all of your church steeples pulled down - that you may no longer have anything to remind you of your religion ---"

Yes, you may pull down
To which the peasant replied ---- "But you cannot help leaving us the stars....."

Just now we are living in a time when bombs are falling ---

the work of ruthless destruction going on

✓ But in the Christian's sky there are certain stars

stars of religious conviction

which nothing can destroy ---

~~That is why we~~
--- We celebrate that fact --- these stars
at Christmastime.

(Pana)

This morning I am going to suggest three stars in the Christian's sky

The darker the night --- the more brightly they shine -----

And Christmas is a time when we reaffirm our faith in them.

I. IDEALISM

A. The first is the star of idealism. *an undefeated*

As Christians we believe in ideals *(not abstract)* and their transforming power in our world. *(not apart)*

We reaffirm that faith - at Christmastime.

It's a sad world for those people who are not idealists ----

For they believe that life can never be changed in any significant way ----

either individually ---- or in our group life.

That leaves little hope for individuals *or would - collectively*

B. On the other hand The idealist is a person who believes in possibilities *stand still*

possibilities for growth - achievement
for something better.

C. An intelligent idealist is quite aware of the tragedies and shortcomings of individuals and groups

but he says: "It need not always be so ----
AS GOD LIVES --- THIS IS A WORLD OF
POSSIBILITIES ----"

now

There always have been, and always will
be those persons
who scoff at idealism ----

And sometimes these persons are the ones
credited as realists;

There always have been, and always will
be persons ----

who disbelieve in real possibilities.

They, too, are sometimes regarded
as the realists --- they stick to
hard facts.

When news of the invention of telephone
given to a learned professor of the
University of Edinburgh, he said:

"It is all humbug, for such a
discovery is physically impossible....."

To many, he ~~was~~ ^{seemed} a realist.

IDEALISTS who are the realists.

Again, when Edison's phonograph was
first shown to Paris Academy of Sciences
--- a number of the scientists said it
was impossible to reproduce the
human voice in that fashion ---
and accused the exhibitor
of having a ventriloquist
hidden somewhere..

TO many They were realists.

And so in other areas --- there are those
who simply can't believe in REAL
POSSIBILITIES ---

Life runs on a dead level for them....

Yet, as we take the long-range
view of history ---

we learn that THE GREAT CREATIVE
WORK OF THE WORLD IS DONE BY PEOPLE
WHO DO believe in possibilities;

who not only see what is -- BUT
HAVE IDEALS OF WHAT MIGHT BE.

~~at times we affirm the faith that~~
Ideals actually do things in this world---

and in the long run --- IT IS THE
IDEALISTS who are the realists.

~~at times we affirm the faith that~~

Public education ^{was once} just an ideal

Freedom of scientific research
was once just an ideal;

Religious liberty -- was once just
an ideal.....

Equality before the law --
was once just an ideal.

➤ And to some they were rather
preposterous ideals --

no possibility of achieve,t

➤ But there were those who stayed with
them -- and now we have them.

➤ who had a long-term faith

(Pause....)

In December 1941 the song:

Peace on earth -- goodwill toward
men.....

sounds like an impossible ideals

But I suspect that hundreds of years
from now -----

people will look back on this era

and pay tribute -- NOT TO THOSE
WHO DISBELIEVE IN POSSIBILITIES ^{The cynics}

but to those ^{realistic idealists} men and women --
who in the midst of these troublous day
KEPT THEIR FAITH in the possibilities
of certain high ^{an ideal}

Faith in a
more intelligent
order of
life

Ideals actually accomplish things
in this world ---
sometimes slowly --- but they do their
work...

And as Christian people --- we shall
render a great service ---
to our own day ---
and days ahead ---

BY MAINTAINING AN INTELLIGENT
IDEALISM .

*This is no time to close our
ears to the Song - (Peace)
Land*

→ We have not only the present to
think about ---

WE HAVE A POST-WAR WORLD to
think about.....

And in the building of that
post-war world --- we are going to
need all the Christian IDEALISM WE
CAN FIND.

→ And in these days --- the Christian
Church must be the custodian of that
Christian idealism.

that the vision of

the worth of the individual

the fatherhood of God

Brotherhood of man

sl. 100. that is the path for the earth

I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat,
Of peace on earth, goodwill to men!

But in despair, I bowed my head —

There is no peace on earth, I said —

For hate is strong, and mocks the ~~strong~~ ^S —

Of peace on earth, good will to men.

Then, pealed the bells more loud and deep

God is not dead, nor doth he sleep;

The wrong shall fail — the right
prevail..

With peace on earth — goodwill
to men.

As Christians ——— too much
we believe in the star of idealism

to be utterly dismayed — by the
night.

~~We follow that faith of Christ's time.~~

Long Pause

II.

There is a second star in the Xian's sky
we celebrate at Christmastime --

the star or THE LIFE OF JESUS.

which shines like a light.

Pano

(a)

One of the amazing things about life --
is the way we are influenced by
other people.....

the play of personality upon personality
the touch.
of life upon life ----

(b)

It is true that we are all influenced
by ideas and ideals:

➔

But ~~isn't~~ it also true, that we are
even more influenced

by living people who embody those
ideas and ideals.

(c)

Some of the strongest influences in
your life and mine --

have been people who have
exemplified and embodied high ideals.

That's what someone had in
mind when he said that GOD'S GREATEST
GIFT TO THE WORLD IS THE GIFT OF A
GOOD PERSON.

When you and I have the privilege of meeting some strong and triumphant personality ---

it does something for us nothing else can do.

We look at some great mountain-peak ---
it's strength and grandeur
inspires us;

But when we look upon some PERSON
who stands straight and strong
in the midst of adversity ---
we are inspired even more.

Quite a number of yrs. ago - a college student facing what to him was a serious problem ---

Decided to go and talk it over with Philipps Brooks --- phrased it carefully

Spent glorious hour with this great personality ---

On way home occurred to him he had completely forgotten to ask the question

Yrs. later a teacher in that college looking back said: "I see now that it really didn't make any difference if I asked the question or not -

WHAT I NEEDED WAS THE CONTAGION OF A TRIUMPHANT PERSONALITY.

--- And who is there of us -- who doesn't need the CONTAGION OF A TRIUMPHANT PERSONALITY?

the impact of some personality upon our life -- which brings a note of (faith - and hope - trust)

Such a life stands out like a star
in our sky -----

And there are a good many of us here
this morning -----
who are profoundly grateful
for certain Persons, we have met
along the way -----

like stars in our lives

who have touched us with
the contagion of a triumphant
personality.

Pause

Now there is one life which stands
out above all other lives -----
in its breadth of reach -----

in the impact it has made

AND THAT IS THE LIFE OF
JESUS OF NAZARETH ----- whose birth we
celebrate these days.....

Jesus apparently made a tremendous
impression upon those most closely
associated with him -----

And now across the centuries -- his life
has been impressing itself upon people
who need the contagion of a
triumphant personality.

In the calm confidence ~~with~~ with which
he lived -----

there is a note of victory -
which inspires us.

Triumphant (Pause.....) *Trust*

Now, just as we are inspired by
a triumphant personality -----

so we come at last -- TO PLACE
OUR TRUST - in such personalities.

Recently two businessmen were
talking about a third ----- one said:
"I believe in that man....."

A wonderful tribute -----
to be believed in.....

-----The world goes forward by
virtue of those people IN WHOM WE
CAN TRUST.

Now, when we move into the area of
the philosophy by which we live.....
the religion we profess.....

this is so important.....

to find someone who we believe

for now we are dealing in
ultimate questions ---- WHICH
WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND IN FULL ----

but toward which we
must take some attitude.

And here again, the life of Jesus
stands out like a star.....

For in his personal experience
HE TOOK CERTAIN ATTITUDES TOWARD LIFE ----

friendliness --

helpfulness -----

unyielding trust in God..

----- and as we feel the impact of his
life upon ours -----

→ we place our trust in him --
and in those attitudes for which he stood.

believe in him

In this time, there are many things
we are confused about -----

In that situation ----- HOW WONDERFUL IT
IS TO HAVE A LIFE -----

which inspires confidence in us;

~~###~~ which shines out like a star
on a dark night -----

SPEAKING TO US OF
FAITH -- and HOPE -- and GOODWILL.

(Pause...)

There is an old legend that Christ once
and travelling thro' land -stopped at

A number of yrs ago -toursi

Do you believe that when Christ, etc.

There is something about the life of
Jesus -----

which speaks to people

in all times - in all places

in a language they can under

It speaks of integrity in our personal li
goodwill in dealings with
trust in God...

✓ In this Christmas season ---

we take time to express gratitude
FOR THE STAR OF THE LIFE OF JESUS.

✓ --As Xians, we believe in this
star too much --- to be utterly
dismayed by the night...

III.

Still a 3d star -- in Christian's sky

By far the most important --

STAR OF GOD'S PRESENCE IN OUR WORLD.

Healing

A. Writer Tolstoy once described a period of bewilderment and disillusionment he passed

"And then I remebered that I had lived
only when I believed in God."

More than one person has made that discover
WE LIVE only as we believe in God.

that the ultimate reality of our universe
not man --or any combination of men
BUT GOD.

B. Scientist Huxley letter to friend:

"The longer I live the more obvious
it is to me that the most sacred act of
a man's life is to say: 'I believe...'"

We might go further and say:

... The most sacred act of a man's life
is to say -- I BELIEVE IN GOD.

We need to say that
more often these days

But at Christmas-time --

we not only affirm faith in a God

We celebrate a particular conception
of God --

insights into character

and that brings us to the heart
of Christmas.

I once had a teacher in theological seminar
~~who made a comment one day~~ who made a comment one day
in class I've never forgotten

"When you go into the pulpit, remember
that underneath all of their other
interests and questions they are asking
DO YOU HAVE ANY NEWS ABOUT GOD? "

We are all looking for news about God
the character of God --

AND THE WHOLE POINT OF THE XIAN
RELIGION -- is to bring good news ---
joyous news concerning the
character of God.

At Christmas -- we celebrate that
good news.

It is good news that
GOD IS A GOD OF ALL MEN EVERYWHERE.

Such is the good of Xmas

God the Japanese - god of Chinese

" " Russians - god of the Germans

God of the British -
the French --- the Americans

We are all children of God -----

----- And not until we begin to
think of God in such universal terms --
will we get the real point of Christmas.

Again, it is good news that God is a
God of righteousness;

He plays no favorites;

Laws which apply to one - apply to all;

The wages of sin is death ---

But the influence of right
living --- lives forever.

The god of Xmas is a God of integrity.

Again, it is good news that GOD IS A
GOD of Purpose and Work -----

Life is not a meaningless thing -- but
--- Running through this vast scheme of
things' -----

is a creative hand -----
which works not only in the material
realm ----- but in the human heart.

It is good news that GOD IS AVAILABLE
TO ALL WHO SEEK HIM -----

a refuge - a strength - a help.

Pause slow
All this we celebrate at Christmas -----

BUT THERE IS STILL SOMETHING ELSE -----

> there is a tenderness in the
character of God -----

which binds up the wounds of life

and makes ^{us} ~~the~~ ~~wounded~~ whole again.

One of the wonderful
things about the
Christian religion

One of the great things about the Xian religion is that it has appealed to the life of Christ --- as in some way revealing the character of God.

The author of the Epsistle to the Hebrews ---

written about 95 A.D. ---

begins his treatise by saying:

God, who in ancient days spoke to our fore-fathers by various methods.... has at the end of these days spoken to us through a Son...."

The record of the life of Jesus is fragmentary - often inconsistent and uncertain;

But there can be no doubt as to what elements in the record have evoked a response from all that is best in human nature:

The Mother - the child - the Manger

The lowly man - homeless - self-forgotten

His message of peace - love - sympathy

the suffering --- the tender words as life ebbed --- the final despair.

----- and yet ----- THE WHOLE WITH THE AUTHORITY OF SUPREME VICTORY.

Can there be any doubt --- but that
the POWER OF CHRISTIANITY

lies in its conviction ---

that the Divine Life --- shines out
of such a life?

a life dedicated to the healing of

***** soul

yes) God is the god of all

God is a righteous god;

God is a working God;

God is a God available to all;

But God is also --- a healing God ---

whose will it is THAT WOUNDED
HUMAN SPIRITS --- and WOUNDED NATIONS

should ^{in Time} be made whole again.

Such - is the god of Christmas.

The earth has grown

care

The earth has grown old with its burden of
But at Christmas it always is young...

The heart of the jewel burns lustrous and fair
And its soul full of music breaks forth
on the air....
When the song of the angels is sung.

It is coming old earth, it is coming tonight!
On the snowflakes that cover the sod;
The feet of the Christ-child fall gentle and white---
And the voice of the Christ-child tells out with delight-
That mankind are children of God.

On the sad and the lonely, the wretched and poor
That voice of the Christ-child shall fall;
And to every blind wanderer opens the door
Of a hope that he dared not to dream of before
With a sunshine of welcome for all.

field---
The feet of the humblest may walk in the
Where the feet of the holiest have trod;

This, this is the marvel to mortals revealed
pealed....
When the silvery trumpet of Xmas have

THAT MANKIND ARE CHILDREN OF GOD.

CLOSE

It is true that in many ways -
the night is dark;

But in the Christian's sky there are
at least three stars:

the star of an undefeated idealism;
" " " the radiant life of Christ
" " " God's healing presence in
our world;

And as Christians,
we believe in those stars, too much

TO BE AFRAID OF THE NIGHT.