

Christmas 2007 (Night & Day)

Christ Brings the Joy of True Peace

The angels announced to the shepherds that a **Savior** was born for them.

They called this "**news of great joy**", since this Savior was going to bring "**peace to those on whom his favor rests**".

The **peace** that Christ brings is the **source** of that **joy**.

The two always go together.

- ? Joy is the emotion we feel when we come into the **possession of good things**.
- ? But unless we have **peace**, we cannot really have possession of **anything**.
- ? Without peace there is **conflict**, and conflict means that someone is trying **to take away** the good things we possess. That **aggression** causes turbulence, instability - the opposite of peace.



Without peace, there is no joy. Christ was born to give us **true, lasting joy**, because he came to establish **true, lasting peace**. Christ is a **King**, all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good. When someone becomes his **subject**, they no longer need to **fear** anything, because **God** is now their protector.



But Christ's Kingdom is not a **material** Kingdom. It is a **spiritual** Kingdom. He was born in a **stable**, not a **palace**.

- ? The peace Christ brings is the **interior, spiritual** peace that comes from a **conscience cleansed by his forgiveness** and a **heart** which **knows** that our heavenly Father **loves** us.
- ? No one can **take away** a **clean conscience** or **the knowledge** that we are loved by God.
- ? That's why Christ's peace is **lasting** - it is **unable to be taken away from us**.

Earthly kingdoms and conflicts, earthly pleasures and joys will all pass away. But **Christ's Kingdom**, the **community of his followers**, the **Church**, will last **forever**.

And so the angels don't hesitate to announce their "**good news of great joy**", because they know that Jesus Christ **truly does** bring **lasting peace** to **everyone** who **lets him be their King**.

Learning from Scrooge

Nothing on earth can give us the **interior peace and joy** that Christ can give us.

We all know the haunting story of **Scrooge**.

- ? He was the **richest man in the city**.
- ? He had enough money to buy **anything** that the world had to offer.
- ? But was he happy? Was he at **peace**?
- ? Not at all. He lived in **fear** of losing his money.
- ? He had put his trust in **money**, so he **hoarded** it.
- ? He was a **miser**, and as a result, he was **miserable**.
- ? He couldn't **enjoy** what he possessed, because he was **afraid of losing it**.
- ? He wouldn't **spend** it, because he was afraid he couldn't **get it back**.



All material, this-worldly treasures are like that. Whether its money, position, beauty, reputation - all these treasures can be **lost**. They can be **emptied out**. They can be **stolen or broken**.

They are **inherently unstable**, and so when we **cling to them**, when we put our **trust in them**, we become like Scrooge - tense and angry and over-sensitive.

Underneath the **surface** of prosperity, we become **miserable**.

But Christ is a **spiritual treasure**, and his Kingdom is a **spiritual, everlasting Kingdom**.



- ? Christ became a man so he could become our **friend**, a **living person** in our lives, a **living, spiritual presence** that will **never let us down**.
- ? When we **cling to him**, **counting** on him, **following** him - when we **let him be the King of our lives**, then this world's **worries and troubles** cannot **take away** our interior peace.

Scrooge found interior peace and joy when he **followed Christ's example**, giving his wealth away to **help those in need**, just as Christ gave **himself** to us on Christmas day, to be our **Savior**.

Following Mary's Example

We all **believe** in Jesus – or none of us would be here.

So why don't we experience his joy and peace as **deeply and constantly** as we would **like** to?

- ? The saints give **constant testimony** through the centuries that a **real friendship** with Christ makes it possible to experience **deep fulfillment and joy** even in the midst of life's **worst sufferings**.
- ? Why don't we experience the **same thing**?

It's because we don't **trust God enough**.

We are **afraid** to let Christ **rule** our lives **completely** - we are afraid to let him be the **King** that he was **born** to be, that he truly **is**.

We are like the **inn-keeper**.

- ? Our lives are **crowded** - filled with personal **pleasures** and **hopes**, maybe even with unhealthy **relationships** and **habits**.
- ? And Jesus comes **knocking** on the door of our hearts and wants us to **let him in**.
- ? But we are afraid that if we **do**, there won't be **room enough** for our **little idols**.
- ? So we let him stay in the **stable**, out back, where we can **keep an eye on him**, where we can be sure he doesn't **clean out** our **closets** and **junk drawers**.



But unless **we** give **Jesus** free rein, **he** cannot give **us** his true peace and joy.

Instead of being like the inn-keeper, **we need to be like Mary**.

- ? When Jesus knocked on the door of her life, she put all her **plans** aside.
- ? She risked her **reputation** and her **engagement**; she opened **every closet and every junk drawer** to Christ.
- ? God offered her a great gift – the **GREATEST** gift – and she accepted it.



Unless we recognize, accept and open the gift God offers us – no matter how scary it may seem – unless we open our hearts to God's grace – unless we open our lives to Christ and let Him reign, we will never know peace in our lives. All the pleasures and joys of this world will **NEVER** satisfy us – only the greatest gift of God – the gift of His Son, will help us find **TRUE** happiness.

Today, of all days, let's **let** Jesus into our hearts to bring us His **joy and peace**. With Mary's help, let's open our lives to the gifts God offers us – and discover the joy she felt, even in a lowly stable, of having God's Son in her life.