

# THE ABSURDITY OF CHRISTMAS

**Isaiah 1: 2-4, Luke 2: 8-20**

**ABSURDITY** – Surely a strange word to use about Christmas. But, Christmas is absurd if you take it seriously. So long as Christmas is a season for apple-cheeked Santa Claus and red nosed reindeer and sentiments that last only for a day or two, or perhaps a week, and Christmas Carols whose 4ver new melodies tug our hearts back to childhood when snow was a commodity to be enjoyed and not as it is in adult life when snow is mostly a nuisance to be endured or to be avoided; so long as Christmas is such a pretty, pretty tale, then nobody really takes Christmas seriously.

But when the miracle of Christmas first took place, it was a deadly serious business. The shepherds were in the fields, watching over their flock that night. They were not out carol singing. They were practical men. No doubt, they were talking business. For example, they might have been discussing market prices, or the heavy and unbearable taxes imposed upon them by the Roman overlords. They might have been concerned about the bitter winter that had taken away too many of their little lambs. They might have been concerned about unemployment, creating no demand for their goods and the low prices at which they had to sell.

And, then, a miracle took place. The night became filled with light. I imagine that the flock scampered away in dazzled panic. The shepherds themselves groveling in abject fear, fell to the ground. And then a voice; the voice of an angel which said, **Do not be afraid; for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David, a saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger**

And suddenly, there was with the angel a heavenly choir, praising God, saying; **Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace among those whom he favours.**

Suppose a voice came through your radio or your Television set announcing that the problems of the world have been solved. The voice proclaims, that there will be an end to the war in the Middle East. Israel and the Palestinians will now live at peace with each other, The wars will be over in Afghanistan and Iraq are over, the soldiers will return home, and there will be peace in the whole world. Suppose the voice further announce that a new day will come to the worker, and equity to all employer; no more unemployment; no more racism; all dreaded diseases including, cancer, diabetes and aids have been cured; that a new age has come to the earth, bringing love in place of hate, and everyone living harmoniously with each other. What would be your reaction to such a news bulletin? May be, you would phone Ottawa right away to find out what is going on. Men, who were wiser than we are, thought precisely the same way. They journeyed to the place where they expected to find the messenger of peace, the palace of the king. But those shepherds were led up the steep slopes and the rocky mountain side to a little place called Bethlehem, pressing their way through the crowded streets, thence to a cave on the

hillside where they fettered their beasts of burden. When they arrived, it was to behold a sleeping child of a peasant woman, and they were asked to believe that this was the miracle of the ages. Sounds absurd, isn't it? Centuries ago a man named, Tertullian said, **CREDO QUIA ABSURDUM**; meaning, I believe it, because it is absurd.

At this Christmas time, take it with like, deadly seriousness. For this child is the Miracle of the Ages. And, this is the message of peace to all humankind in this topsy-turvy world. If we were to journey again with those shepherds, we would see the child. We would also observe that this child brought three basic facts to earth, that the world of that day needed and that the world of today most surely needs. They are: (1) New life to an aging world which includes, new beginnings to old ways, new start in life's journey, and a new order to take place of the old. This is what every baby brings into every home.

(2) Change and even revolution. Since the birth of Christ, the world has never been the same again. (Relate the story of Rip Van Winkle). He was a lazy farmer who lived in the Catskill Mountains. He was a hen-pecked husband, who after being scolded daily by his irate wife, left her and went into the hills. After drinking some magic wine, he fell asleep for twenty years. The significant part of the story is that when he left his wife, George the Third ruled America. When he woke up, the country was a republic. He had slept through the American Revolution and did not know it. I am afraid that many of us, today's Christians are in the same boat as Rip Van Winkle.

(3) Hope. Every child brings hope. Let your imagination go to the face of a new-born baby, the soft light of the room on its face. Why is it we get a feeling of personal unworthiness, and a new resolve to be worthy of this little one? It is because in the face of the child is hope. Children are the tomorrow. To them we can look for confidence to enter the new era. Yes! We say. Life is worth living! If not for ourselves who have had our day and our say, and played our part, it is worth living for the children.

At this Christmastide, let us look again towards Bethlehem, and walk the journey of the shepherds to that place where once a baby lay in a manger. Let us do this in spite of the war clouds or the conflicts, inner or otherwise that are hanging over us; in spite of life's injustices; in spite of troubles, tribulations and cares. Let us march onward and upward in a reverent pilgrimage of hope. George Fredrick Watts paints hope as the figure of a woman who is blindfolded and sitting on the top of the world. She is playing an instrument all of whose strings are broken save one. But hope for the Christian is a child, the Ancient of Days, the Eternal God who has come down to earth, bringing victory to his people.

Sisters and brothers, this is the absurdity of Christmas. That we would believe. Lord help our unbelief.