

My Christmas Wish For You

Phillip Brooks classic, O little town of Bethlehem, proclaims our deepest hopes and dreams, "O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie, Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, The silent stars go by, Yet in thy dark streets shineth, The everlasting Light, The hopes and fears of all the years, Are met in thee tonight"

Our deepest longings are that peace, harmony, health and healing would break out all over the world! It sounds impossible doesn't it? Try to imagine what it would be like if war was just a faint memory, hunger and poverty were a thing of the past and every human being experiences love and caring community. Sounds like heaven doesn't it? And when you look at the state of human affairs these days, it sounds impossible... and it is . . . For mortals.

Nevertheless, this is a time of year for dreaming. Many children are writing lists of all the things that would fulfill their dreams. The child within us reaches out for the wonder and mystery of this "season of good cheer." There is a promise which is deep at the center of our faith that points to a spiritual truth that lies at the center of this season and call us to be ready for God to intervene in the world, "but for God all things are possible." Only God can bring Peace on Earth and we must focus on what we can do and then be committed to doing it!

John the Baptist proclaimed in the wilderness of Judea, that we are to "Make room for God!"; "Get rid of everything in your life that is a barrier to God!" & that "Every person will see the promises of God come to pass!" This Advent as we draw closer to Christmas on December 25th we need to hear John's proclamation!

First, We need to make room for God. "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." Have you made room for God in the center of your life for this Advent season? Is God's way into the center of your heart a straight and easy path or is the way cluttered and winding? A proper response to John's message is to intentionally address a question to every aspect of our celebration of Christmas this year. "How does God relate to this?" and "How Is What I am doing Celebrate the Birth of Jesus?" Apply the question to your shopping and spending, our relationships and family life and our inner life. We should constantly ask ourselves, "How can I make a straighter path and more room for God in my life?"

Secondly, we need to get rid of everything in our life that is a barrier to God. To celebrate the Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ is to line our lives up with God's purposes and join the followers of Jesus Christ in bringing "good news" to the corner of the world we inhabit. When we turn our attention to following Christ in our giving and reaching out, we automatically begin to work on removing the barriers to God's presence in our lives and in our world!

Finally, When we have done all we can do to make room for God and removed the barriers that keep us from the presence of God, it is time to trust God for the outcome of all things. Advent and Christmas is all about a world that finally comes under the sovereign rule of God. This is the good news that cannot be rescinded or denied. In the deepest sense, Advent and Christmas is the celebration of victory in a war against everything that is wrong. Yet, the battles have yet to be completed and the time of fulfillment lies ahead.

As we welcome Christ in our hearts and receive the gift of salvation that he died to make available to us and rose to give us victory, we find peace. That's what Advent and Christmas is all about. Let us give ourselves once again to the wonderful victory of God's divine purposes in our world.

Phillip Brooks proclaimed in the remaining verses of his classic carol, "How silently, how silently The wondrous gift is given! So God imparts to human hearts, the blessings of His heaven. No ear may hear His coming, But in this world of sin, Where meek souls will receive him still, The dear Christ enters in. O holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us, we pray, Cast out our sin and enter in Be born to us today, We hear the Christmas angels, The great glad tidings tell, O come to us, abide with us Our Lord Emmanuel." This Christmas I pray that you are open to Christ, that He is welcome in your heart and that you experience the deepest meaning of the greatest gift ever given. The gift that brings everlasting life and eternal peace on earth and goodwill to people who will receive Him!