



Peace. Many speak of peace at Christmas. Many dream of idyllic times and a serene existence. Love and compassion, hope and joy fill our mouths and flow from over our lips during this time of gift giving and family visiting. Conflict and hatred seem out of place during Christmas. Singing together fits the occasion. Yet the season wanes and the reality of a less-than-ideal life waxes. We make resolutions in the new year to conform our lives in some small way to the hope and love of Christmas.

We look forward to Christmas and then mourn its passing because this season provides a needed rest from our daily stress. Even the dream of a better life gives us strength to face our perpetual battle with imperfection and the fear of death.

Micah, who wrote the verse quoted above, wrote about 700 years before Jesus was born. At the time, God's people were facing invasion by a foreign army. And God reminded His people that they had sinned and turned away from His will and His love, that they had neglected to worship Him alone and love their neighbor. The strife they faced was not only the result of foreign invasion, but also the result of their own sin.

Today, we face struggles from the evil and hatred around us. We also face the reality of our own sin (when we act against God's will) and its consequences, including death. We ruin

relationships; we fail to love others as we ought; and we often leave people hurt from their interactions with us. These tragedies result from our own imperfect lives and remind us that we are broken. Our world presses in on us and causes us anxiety and fear.

Micah's ancient promise is the same for you today. Peace is found in the one sent by God to be the Savior. His name is Jesus, and He is God's own Son in human flesh. His death and resurrection paid for all sin and earned eternal life for all who believe in Him. Jesus forgives the sins of all who believe in Him. Jesus' love gives peace to all who trust in Him. Christmas is the time of peace and joy, of singing and laughing all because of Jesus. This is the Good News of the Gospel and the true meaning of Christmas.

We invite you to find a local congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod this Advent and Christmas to hear the truth about God and His Son Jesus Christ. You will also hear the truth about humanity and this world in which we live. You will hear the truth of God's Word, and when you hear and believe in Jesus, you will have peace.

In Jesus' name,

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Rev. Barrie Henke, President, Oklahoma District The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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