

GLORY, PEACE, AND GOOD WILL

Rev. F. E. Gyllenhaal

Lessons: Luke 2:1-20,

Apocalypse Explained 6782 or 661, or Apocalypse Revealed 306

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2:14)

These words express our belief and our hopes: our belief in the Lord Jesus Christ as the one God; our hopes for peace and good will, for the universal enjoyment of the innumerable good things which the Lord has provided, and for the neighborly love and friendliness that give warmth and delight to all human associations in our everyday life.

Acknowledgment of the Lord comes first, because the Lord is the Creator, the Fountain, and Source of everything good and true of our life, our mind, our body, of the earth and all its products. This we must know and believe, and we must will it to be so, in order to fulfill our destiny, which is some eternal heavenly use serving and ministering to angels and people on earth. Therefore this acknowledgment is to be made by the thought of the heart in the secrecy of one's own room and together with many people in the humble yet joyous worship of the Lord, to signify the completeness of it and that it is open and free, understood and willed.

This outward acknowledgment of the Lord is to be made again and again throughout life, with increasing realization of its meaning. In this manner is the Sabbath remembered and hallowed. But the most complete and highest expression of this acknowledgment of the Lord is the celebration of His birth into the world. Therefore of His birth holiness, innocence, joy, glory, peace, good will, all the Divine and human attributes and virtues are proclaimed, and these affect men powerfully, more especially those men who acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the one God of heaven and earth. From this acknowledgment is the holiness, the solemnity, and the good will that make the spirit of Christmas unique.

Only as acknowledgment of the Lord is made, and increases, can there come peace on earth and good will toward men. This is true of every person individually and of all people collectively. Within nations and between nations there can be no true and lasting peace that does not spring from an abiding and increasing acknowledgment of God and His Providence. Only the Christian religion produces this acknowledgment and has the power of maintaining it on earth; for the truly Christian religion alone proclaims God-Man, God Incarnate, Emanuel, and thereby revives the hopes and beliefs of mankind.

And the truly Christian religion is a religion of war and peace; of war against evil and sin, of peace from the Lord by a life according to His Divine doctrine. God became Man by birth for the purpose of fighting and overcoming the hells, so that all people might be released from the bondage of hell. But this was for the higher and final purpose of giving His peace to mankind and of enabling every man to receive His peace. The whole of the Lord's life on earth was warfare against the hells, and His three years of public ministry among the people were entirely devoted to fighting the afflictions and outward evils of men, women and children, and this He did by preaching repentance and the good of life, by miracles of healing and by teaching His disciples how to continue the same warfare and works of mercy in His name. But the goal was the peace of a more abundant life in the kingdom of heaven and the enjoyment of all the good things of earth and heaven.

As we give "glory to God in the highest", with growing understanding and love, there will be peace on earth and good will toward men. "Good will toward men." The angels have it. They have always had good will toward men, ministering to them and serving them in countless ways, though unseen and unnoticed. This angelic virtue, the mutual love of heaven that acknowledges and believes everything good and true to be the Lord's and wills better things for another than for one's self, people are to pray for, strive for, and cultivate by the daily doing of it. It was the constant exhortation of His doctrine, and it is the burning message of His Word to mankind. "Good will toward men." The willing of better things for others than for one's self. We voice it in our salutations this day. We embody it in the gifts we make to others. But it comes from the heart only as we remove from the heart, thought, and word, all ill will, all hatred, all envy, all greed, all vanity, and all selfish desires.

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:34). If our treasure, like the gifts of the wise men, be worthy to offer to the Lord on this day, when we worship Him with praise and thanksgiving, for His crowning mercy in coming on earth for our salvation, then will our hearts be with Him, then will our love to Him reign this day, and from it will go forth our "good will toward men". Whatever we do, we shall do in His name and for the sake of His glory. Our internal acknowledgement of the truth concerning His advent will find expression in thanksgiving to Him for His gifts and mercies, and in the joyousness of "good will toward men", of loving and willing better for others than for ourselves.

May this be the living spirit of our celebrations of the Lord's birth into the world, and from our hearts let our voices join in chorus of the angels, who of old sang first to the shepherds in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.