

# Christmas love offers humanity a peace treaty with God

The theater of war is not where one expects to find love expressed. Regardless, late on Christmas Eve 1914, one of the most incredible acts of love was forged. While there have been many apocryphal stories about the Christmas Truce of 1914, what is essential is that we remember that some soldiers did, indeed, form such a truce.



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and even took photographs together. While fighting and casualties were reported that Christmas, off in a narrow, muddy, dangerous stretch known as "No Man's Land," a tiny cease-fire occurred. When Christmas was over, both sides returned to combat; however, the seeds of love were sown.

Despite military officials on both sides attempting to prevent such a truce from ever happening again, the Christmas Truce of 1914 led to what would be known as the "Live and Let Live" system. At certain times, not merely Christmas, along quiet sectors of the front line, brief pauses were quietly arranged to

allow the Germans and English time to gather and grieve their dead, make repairs, and reorganize.

Romans 5:10 states that while we were God's enemy, Christ came to bring love so we could enjoy an enduring truce between God and humanity. The love of Christmas is this: For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.

Christmas love was born in a humble manger. Christmas love brought hope to the hopeless, healing to the hurting, and

forgiveness to the offender. Christmas love brought a truce and offered humanity a peace treaty with God.

The greatest gift you can ever receive is Jesus' Christmas love — Jesus doing for us what we could never do for ourselves. Our best effort of righteousness and our most vital hope of extending an olive branch to God was futile in His sight.

Christina Rossetti documented this best: "Love came down at Christmas, Love all lovely, Love Divine, Love was born at Christmas, Star and Angels gave the sign. Worship we the Godhead, Love Incarnate, Love Divine, Worship we our Jesus, But where-with for sacred sign? Love shall be our token, Love be yours, and love be mine, Love to God and all

men, Love for plea and gift and sign."

We were God's enemies, yet He loved us so that He made the way — through Christ Jesus — for us to find our way home to Him. God made the way for our sin debt to be paid in full. God made a way for us to know His peace and be at peace with Him. It was in the person of the Savior born so long ago.

This Christmas, receive His truce. Receive Christmas Love. Christmas love is the best because it lasts eternally. Merry Christmas.

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## GRACE & TRUTH

# Jesus came down from heaven to seek and save the lost

The Christmas story centers on the most significant gift ever given. Jesus Christ, the son of God, was born so that we may have eternal life in heaven. Jesus summed up the entire mission in Luke 19 when He told Zacchaeus, "The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost."



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his disciples that the only way to enter the kingdom was to seek it as a child would.

The wee, little man from Jericho also was discouraged by the crowd. He was too short to see Jesus, but Zacchaeus was not used to being told "no," so he improvised. Luke tells us he ran toward Jesus and climbed a tree to see Him — just like a child would.

The man in the tree was seeking Jesus, but Jesus informed him that He must go to his house. When we think we seek Jesus, He's already looking for us. Jesus comes from heaven, from

the Father's right hand, from 'peaceful perfection to find you, even at your worst, and save you. All you must do is turn His way.

Zacchaeus had a complete change of heart. For years, money had clouded his view of peace and righteousness, but when he met Jesus, he was utterly unfulfilled by money and vowed to give much of what he had away. Jesus was amazed by this rich man's change of heart. Indeed, salvation had come to the man's entire house.

When Jesus describes Himself in the last verse of this story, He mentions four meaningful words. First, He says He "came." Jesus declares His divinity by stating that He came from another realm. He came from heaven and the Father.

The second word was "seek." Jesus came looking

for us. He desires to hold you, love you and keep you. He's not in another world, uncaring. Instead, He sees you and chases you down. He comes looking for you like He did with Adam in the garden. Jesus' mission was to look for His people among all people.

The third word is "save." He not only cares about you and chases you down; He also is ready to redeem, heal and transform you. You may feel you have no future, but Jesus can change everything today! Know this: there is

nothing that Jesus can't fix.

The last word is how he refers to us. The "lost" doesn't just mean "wandering." It means someone headed for total destruction. It's the same word John uses in John 3:16 to describe those who don't believe in Jesus: "That none should perish, but have eternal life."

From God's perspective, every one of us is headed for destruction, so Jesus came from heaven to search us out and transform our destructive lives.

So, how do you respond to this kind of Savior? I think, like Zacchaeus, we seek the Lord. Like Zechariah, before Jesus was born, the shepherds the night He was born, and the wise men weeks after the baby was born, let's seek Jesus, because He can change our lives forever.

Too many miss Him because they won't simply seek Him.

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# Why he's the Prince of Peace

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." — Isaiah 9:6



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eternal. Father God is the first person in the Trinity. The Prince of Peace is supreme; he's a ruler, a

governor, keeper, ruler of rulers. He's independent, autonomous, royal, greatest in authority and power. He's harmonious, someone who defines prosperity, contentment, tranquility, serenity and peace.

How can we not be humbled and awed by such a description?

He preserves the peace, commands peace, and is the peace within our hearts. He is the author and giver of all good. Bless His name. Only when we open our hearts and allow Him full access will we know. He went to the cross for this peace.

In all the turmoil today, especially with the raging abuse and cruelty to all the species of God's kingdom, if we trust the Prince of Peace, we will be assured He is in control. It is in Jesus that we find our refuge and well-being.

John Flavel, an English Presbyterian minister who lived from 1627-91, wrote, "He is bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, a garment to the naked, healing to the wounded; and whatever a soul can desire is found in Him."

Everything we have, own, and enjoy is God-given, yet we take so much for granted. Every heartbeat and every breath we take is because God allows it. We reach God through His Son, Jesus Christ. Be grateful and praise His name because He is the Prince of Peace.

Why was Jesus given that title as prophesied by the prophet Isaiah?

Read John 14:6, where Jesus, while speaking with his disciples, tells us He is the way to the Father. "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." In John 14:27, Jesus further tells us, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid."

Physical safety and political harmony don't necessarily reflect the peace Jesus is discussing. The foundational meaning of peace is "the spiritual harmony brought about by an individual's restoration with God."

Initially, we are at odds with God. As Romans 5:10 states, "For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!"

Because of Christ's sacrifice, we can enjoy eternal peace through a relationship with the Holy Spirit. This spirit will manifest in us by having us live in ways we could not possibly live on our own, filling us with love, joy and peace. And, in turn, we can't help but spill this love, joy, and peace into our relationships with people.

Naturally, "peaceful" does not mean easy — Jesus never promised that. He told us to expect trials and tribulations. But if we called on Him, He would give us the "peace of God, surpassing all understanding."

Regardless of our hardships, we can ask for peace that comes from the powerful love of God.

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*I've always been a Christmas enthusiast—I'm captivated by the lights, sounds, smells, and, of course, the flavors of the season. Imagine this scene: basking in the gentle glow of your Christmas tree, indulging in festive cookies, and enjoying a holiday special. There's an undeniable sense of peace and comfort in that scene.*

*Critics might say I've become "too commercialized" or missed the "true meaning of Christmas," but I disagree. Yes, we can get overly focused on commercial aspects, but I prioritize presence over presents. I strive to be more present and seek the presence of God—finding His goodness in the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of Christmas.*

*In the Gospel of Luke, when angels announce the birth of Christ to shepherds, they declare, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to those upon whom his favor rests" (Luke 2:14). This proclamation of peace extends not only to the shepherds and the Holy Family but to us today. God desires us to live in peace—an inner sense of eternal security even amid life's storms.*

*As Christians, we're called to share this peace, not hoard it. Are you troubled by the world's problems? Take advice from the hymn, "Let There Be Peace on Earth." The peace you desire for can start with you—cultivate peace in your heart and in the spheres where you have influence. But let's go beyond that! Embrace the advice from the Sesame Street Christmas special: "Keep Christmas with you all through the year."*

*Christmas isn't just a season; it's a time to remember the birth of the Prince of Peace. Allow His peace to reign in your hearts year-round!*

Rev. Tom Hallberg  
 Hertford United Methodist Church

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