

Bermudian Church of the Brethren

WEDNESDAY'S WORD – a midweek thought from Pastor Larry M. Dentler
to share a word of inspiration ... encouragement ... challenge ... a smile ... in the middle of your week
November 28 in the year of our Lord 2018 - #766

This Advent/Christmas Season we at Bermudian will be celebrating **“A Carol Christmas – a heartfelt look at the words we know by heart.”** We all know & love Christmas Carols but have we ever stopped to look at the wonderful Bible truth that these beloved Christmas songs hold? Each Sunday we'll be looking at some of the great truths within favorite Carols. In **WEDNESDAY'S WORD** during the season I'll be reflecting on some other Christmas songs, telling their stories, celebrating their truth. Here's a devotional I first wrote for **WEDNESDAY'S WORD** on 12/14/16. It's about a song that isn't really a Christmas song at all, but has become a Christmas favorite. And the dear author who I had a chance to talk with in person.

CHRISTMAS PEACE

Ever since the angels filled the night sky over a lonely Bethlehem field and sang to startled shepherds: **“Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”** Luke 2:14 NLT

Ever since then ... “peace” has been part of the message of Christmas. An important part of what the coming of Christ as the Babe of Bethlehem, born to be Savior, is all about. We sing of it in our beloved Christmas Carols:

*“and praises sing to God our King, and **peace** to men on earth”* “O Little Town of Bethlehem” v.3

*“**peace** on the earth good will to men, from heaven's all gracious King” “when **peace** shall over all the world its ancient splendors fling”* “It Came Upon The Midnight Clear” vv.1, 4

*“sleep in heavenly **peace**”* “Silent Night” v.1

*“and to the earth be **peace**”* “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks” v.5

*“**Peace! Peace!**”* “Good Christian Men Rejoice” v.3

*“**peace** on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled”* “Hark The Herald Angels Sing” v.1

So ... peace is an important part of the Christmas message ... yet, can we be honest? For many people Christmas does not bring peace but loneliness or pain. Some are living through the first Christmas since the death of a loved one ... or still living with the pain of a loss from many years ago. Some have experienced a broken relationship and this Christmas finds them alone. Some are dealing with serious illness. Some are separated by long miles from loved ones. Some are dealing with hard financial issues. Some are broken with family. Peace? Ha! The sparkling lights and sentimental songs only serve to deepen their pain!

Jill Jackson was such a person. She lost her mother when she was three and when her father remarried, he and his new wife decided they didn't want the burden of a child and turned her over to the state. She longed to be adopted ... to have a forever family ... to share Christmas joy with a family. Yet time and again she was passed over. As a young adult Jill finally married

and then gave birth to a beautiful daughter. Finally happiness! Finally joy! Finally peace! But it was all short lived. Her husband left her for another woman and in the waning days of World War II Jill found herself a penniless single mother.

In the depths of depression Jill tried to take her own life. She was revived but left paralyzed. Unwanted. Now crippled. Jill once again began to consider suicide.

Then a miracle happened. In her desperation she had turned to the Bible and in the words of Jesus, Jill found love, acceptance, hope and the peace she longed for!

With her new faith in Jesus, Jill began the long road to healing spiritually & physically. She met and married a musician named Sy, and soon found that she had a buried talent for writing. And out of her life journey of loneliness, depression and feeling unwanted & unneeded she developed a heart for reaching out to those who were hurting. She penned the words to a poem that her husband set to music. While not originally thought of as a Christmas song, the song has found its way thru the years on to many Christmas recordings. And Jill went on to become very well known for her song ... sharing the message of Christ's peace around the world.

In the mid-1980s while serving the North Liberty Church of the Brethren in Indiana, I had the privilege to enjoy a long wonderful phone conversation with Jill who lived in Hawaii at that time, just a few years before her death in 1995. I was calling to ask for copyright permission to use her song in worship. What ensued was a wonderful, touching conversation with Jill about her life and her struggles, and her faith, and her song. She said that she didn't want any money for us at North Liberty to use her song; she simply wanted me to make this promise, "*Pastor, teach your people to have open eyes, hearts and hands to see the hurting people around them and to touch them with love and peace!*"

This Advent/Christmas Season will you look around your neighborhood, your workplace, your circle of friends & family? And will you be the touch of Christmas Peace to those who need it most this wonderful Season of Christmas?

Oh ... and Jill's song? You know it well!

"Let there be peace on earth, And let it begin with me. Let there be peace on earth, The peace that was meant to be. With God as our Father, Brothers all are we. Let me walk with my brother In perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me, Let this be the moment now. With every step I take, Let this be my solemn vow. To take each moment, And live each moment, With peace eternally. Let there be peace on earth, And let it begin with me."

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May Christ's Christmas Peace be with you! Pastor Larry <><