

Jim Martin
P.O. Box 291962
Dayton OH 45429

December 2016

GOD'S CHRISTMAS PEACE

Greetings in Jesus!

In 1994, two Americans answered an invitation from the Russian Department of Education to teach morals and ethics, (based on biblical principles), in the public schools. They were also invited to teach at prisons, businesses, fire and police departments, and a large orphanage. About 100 boys and girls who had been abandoned, abused and left in the care of a government-run program were in the orphanage. The two Americans related the following story.

“It was nearing the holiday season and time for our orphans to hear, for the first time, the traditional story of Christmas. We told them about Mary and Joseph arriving in Bethlehem. Finding no room in the inn, the couple went to a stable where the baby Jesus was born and placed in a manger. Throughout the story, the children and the orphanage staff sat in amazement as they listened. Some sat on the edge of their stools, trying to grasp every word.

“Completing the story, we gave the children three small pieces of cardboard to make a crude manger. Each child was given a small paper square cut from yellow napkins I had brought with me. No colored paper was available in the city. Following instructions, the children tore the paper and carefully laid strips in the manger for straw. Small squares of flannel, cut from a worn-out nightgown an American lady was throwing away as she left Russia, were used for the baby’s blanket. A doll-like baby was cut from the tan felt we had brought from the United States.

“The orphans were busy assembling their manger as I walked among them to see if they needed help. All went well until I got to one table where little Misha sat. He looked to be about six years old and had finished his project. As I looked at the little boy’s manger, I was startled to see not one, but two babies in the manger. Quickly, I called for the translator to ask the lad why there were two babies in the manger.

“Crossing his arms in front of him and looking at his completed manger scene, the child began to repeat the story very seriously. For such a young boy who had only heard the Christmas story once, he related the happenings accurately...until he came to the part where Mary laid the baby Jesus in the manger. Then Misha started to ad-lib. He made up his own ending to the story as he said,

‘And when Maria laid the baby in the manger, Jesus looked at me and asked me if I had a place to stay. I told him I have no mamma and I have no papa, so I don’t have any place to stay. Then Jesus told me I could stay with Him. But I told Him I couldn’t because I didn’t have a gift to give Him like everybody else did. But I wanted to stay with Jesus so much, so I thought about what I had that maybe I could use for a gift. I thought, maybe if I kept Him warm, that would be a good

gift. So I asked Jesus, 'If I keep you warm, will that be a good enough gift?' And Jesus told me, 'If you keep me warm, that will be the best gift anybody ever gave me.' So I got into the manger, and the baby Jesus looked at me and He told me I could stay with Him for always.'

“As little Misha finished his story, his eyes brimmed full of tears that coursed down his little cheeks. Putting his hand over his face, his head dropped to the table and his shoulders shook as he sobbed and sobbed. The little orphan had found someone who would never abandon or abuse him; someone who would stay with him...FOR ALWAYS. I've learned that it's not what you have in your life, but who you have in your life that counts.”

I chose not to count the lumps that filled my throat or the tears that filled my eyes while typing this true story. It is beyond my comprehension to try and imagine growing up in a culture where the story of Jesus' birth is never told. I couldn't help thinking of how spoiled I am being surrounded by so many blessings. My heart goes out to all the “Mishas” in the world.

However, I also realize that there are “Mishas” right here in our own country, even in our own churches. I'm talking about those who face this time of year with aching hearts void of the joy the Christmas season brings. God never intended for the celebration of His Son's birth to be surrounded with feelings of despairing emptiness or hurt. Yet, the very people who sat in the seats next to you this past Sunday might have been struggling with those emotions. The smiles and the laughter they displayed during the church service may have later succumbed to the weeping of sorrow as the façade of happiness was replaced by the reality of their anguish.

Why would someone who has the praises of God on their lips and the life of God in their hearts feel such despondent emptiness? There are numerous possibilities: the mother and her children who have lost the husband and father with whom they shared Christmases past; the elderly person whose spouse of 60 years is no longer there to help decorate the tree; the father who has lost his job of 30 years and is fearful of no longer being able to provide for his family. There are so many challenging circumstances that can try to steal the joy of celebrating our Savior's birth.

I used to work at a hospital and we knew that Christmas Eve in the emergency room was going to be very busy. It wasn't because of auto accidents, sickness, or some other type of injury. Rather, it was due to the number of elderly people who couldn't face that night and Christmas Day alone. They would call an ambulance or drive themselves to the hospital. Their symptoms were vague and tests rarely revealed any genuine physical problem. They were suffering from loneliness and just wanted to be with someone.

Maybe you or somebody you know is facing Christmas with a heart that seems empty. If so, God has a number of gifts He wants to give you.

Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? (John 8:48) And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself. (Mark 3:21) For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)

Jesus watched and listened as people mocked and rejected Him. He had friends and family who dismissed and questioned what He did. He knows the emotions of rejection, criticism, and false accusations. He even knows what it is like to hear that a close friend and family member has been murdered (Matthew 14:1-13). There is nothing you have experienced, or ever will experience, that goes beyond the scope of His understanding. Not only does He understand these feelings, He offers a solution to help you through the times of hurt, despair and loneliness.

...there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. (Prov 18:24) I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. (John 14:18) ...for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. (Hebrews 13:5) ...lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:20)

Are you feeling rejected? Has someone “dumped” on you? Jesus offers to give you intimate companionship that far surpasses that of even the closest of families.

...thou art the helper of the fatherless. (Psalm 10:14) A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation. (Psalm 68:5) The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow... (Psalm 146:9) Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. (Psalm 103:13) ...how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (Matthew 23:37) Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. (Psalm 57:1)

You may have lost a parent to death, divorce or abandonment. Maybe your spouse is no longer with you. Possibly a child has been tragically taken from you. Words can only attempt to describe the fathomless depths of compassion and mercy that our heavenly Father extends. Let Him fill your life with His lovingkindness. There is no loneliness in His presence.

He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. (Psalm 147:3) Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27) These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. (John 15:11)

Does your home seem to be a place of desolate emptiness? Are you one of the many who would actually prefer to stay at work rather than face an evening of despondency? You have a Savior who knows how to fill the gap in your life. He can flood your life with His glorious presence to such a measure that going home each day is no longer a distressing prospect that seemingly holds nothing but promises of more sorrow and tears. His joy will strengthen even the most desolate of hearts!

Not only that, but He is the only one who can completely heal your broken heart and the wounds left by others as a result of their thoughtless words and actions. He is the Balm in Gilead (Jeremiah 8:22) who will not only ease the pain, but will deliver you from the cause of the pain. Jesus will extend His healing hands and touch you with His heart of endless compassion.

God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains (Psalm 68:6) Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (Hebrews 10:25)

In the bondage of depression, many people tend to isolate themselves. In the most convoluted of logic, they have come to believe that being alone will somehow ease the deep pain of their depression and loneliness. The very thing they do not need to do, they do, all the while hoping for relief. This is nothing more than a despicable lie of the devil!

It is possible that your natural family has rejected you or maybe you live too far away to see them on a regular basis. Jesus wants you to know the love and fellowship of the family of God. I realize it is possible that you've been hurt in church; but please believe me when I tell you that God knows exactly what church is best for you, one that is filled with people who will love and accept you.

If you separate yourself from other Christians, they will not have the opportunity to fulfill God's instruction above to exhort and minister His love to you. Depression tells you to avoid people; God desires to touch you through the lives of other Believers.

All of what I have shared, and more, is waiting for you as God's gift. There is only one thing that can prevent you from entering into His glorious presence of peace and comfort: you. If someone presents to you a beautifully wrapped gift and you accept it, that gift is now yours. But if you never open the gift you will never benefit from what it has to offer.

God presented you with a wonderful gift of a Savior. The moment you accepted His gift, you became a recipient of not only eternal life, but of every promise He made to mankind. But if you never "unwrap" your gift and allow Him to minister His blessings to you, you will never benefit from all He has to offer.

Go to Jesus. Go to your Heavenly Father. Tell Him how badly you hurt inside. Speak openly to Him of your loneliness, frustration and despair. And don't be afraid to cry: His shoulders are broad and His arms strong; He will hold you so closely you may think you can hear His heart beating in love for you. Let Him pour out the sweetness of His presence. Let the rivers of His compassion wash over you with joy. Go to Him now.

If you're reading this and you have never received Jesus as your Lord and Savior, He's waiting for you. You are so precious to God and He has such wonderful things set aside especially for you. Accept Him into your life now and have the most wonderful Christmas ever. Pray this prayer from the depths of your heart:

"Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I have sinned and I can't change my life by myself. Please wash away all my sin with your precious blood. I receive you into my life as Lord and Savior. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and empower me to become everything you desire. I pray this in your name, Jesus. Amen."

If you prayed that prayer to receive Jesus as your Savior, please write to me at the address on the first page of this letter. I want to rejoice with you over the new life Jesus has given you!

May this Christmas be the most wonderful, beautiful and blessed you have ever known!

Jim

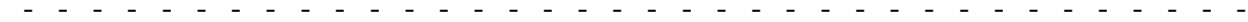
P.S. - This month I am offering a special Christmas sermon titled, "Christmas Gifts From Our Father." A CD of this sermon is available at no charge. To receive your copy, send in the form below.



GRACE MINISTRIES BIBLE COLLEGE

Several years ago God instructed me to open a Bible college that would be unlike other Christian universities or colleges. In 2001, this school became a reality when I opened Grace Ministries Bible College. GMBC is a four-year college and one thing that makes it unique is its financial structure: there is no charge for enrollment, no tuition, no charge for course materials and no graduation fees. The only financial expectation of all students is that they seek God and give what He instructs in support of the school.

The curriculum is very structured and ordered of the Lord. I can assure you that if you apply what you learn the first year, you will definitely discover your ministry calling and be equipped for its fulfillment. Some students have asked if they will be ordained after they graduate. GMBC has never ordained anyone for ministry after graduation. In fact, I do not know of any Christian college or seminary that ordains graduates. Some colleges may be a part of a denomination that ordains graduates, but the schools are not typically the ordaining body. You can read more about GMBC and the courses offered by going to www.jmmgrace.com and clicking on "Grace Ministries Bible College" on the opening page.



Please send me a CD of the sermon, "Christmas Gifts From Our Father."

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Country _____

Email _____

My love gift for this month is: \$_____ Make all gifts payable in US funds, with checks or money orders payable to "Jim Martin Ministries."