

## I.N.I.

Sunday after Christmas  
Dec. 30, 2018  
Colossians 3:15-17

In Christ Jesus, who has come to give us peace, wisdom and life, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

“Peace on earth, goodwill toward men.” That was the angel’s message we heard both on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. But we heard on the news that on the day after Christmas another police officer with a 5 month old baby was gunned down. A fiancé of a woman in Colorado was arrested for her murder. Her body is still missing. She had a 1 year old baby. A tsunami killed over 400 people in Indonesia. And I am sure we could find many more examples of bloodshed, death and destruction that occurred over the past week of Christmas celebrations.

But what peace and goodwill were the angels talking about? The same peace and goodwill that the Apostle Paul wrote about in his letter to the Colossian Christians. Paul’s letter was totally Christ-centered. Paul wrote of Christ’s supremacy in all things and of the freedom that we have in Christ over against human regulations and rituals. Paul wrote that believers in Christ have a new man, a new self, created within them; believers are renewed in the knowledge of the Lord. This “new self” gladly and willingly acknowledges the fact that “Christ is all, and is in all.” The believer’s Christ-centered life then strives to always glorify the Savior, not one’s self.

In the verse just prior to our text the Apostle tells us why we can be assured of this gift of peace. Paul tells us that we are the **elect of God, holy and beloved**. We surely were not that way by nature. We were captured by Satan to be his own children when he led Adam and Eve into sin. We were conceived in sin, born dead in sin, enemies of God, as far from holy as you could get. We deserved God’s wrath and damnation for all eternity. That’s the bad news!

Yet we were beloved even then when we were dead in our trespasses and sins. God so loved us that He sent His Son, gave us His greatest gift of love. The Christchild came to fulfill the law in our place, to suffer and die in our stead, to take God’s wrath and punishment and to give us forgiveness, life and salvation. That’s the Good News! That is the message of Christmas and of Christianity. And so this morning the Apostle Paul encourages us to

### **CHERISH THE CHRIST-CHILD’S GIFTS I: HIS PEACE TO RULE IN OUR HEARTS**

Paul writes in vs. 15: **AND LET THE PEACE OF GOD RULE IN YOUR HEARTS, TO WHICH ALSO YOU WERE CALLED IN ONE BODY; AND BE THANKFUL.** This peace of God in Christ is the rest and contentment that fills the hearts of those who know Jesus and His love. It is the serene feeling that comes from knowing that our sins are forgiven and that we are God’s children, that God is our friend and all is well with us and in our relationship with Him. It is the confidence that now and in the unknown future our Heavenly Father, who loves us, will work all things out for our good, for His forgiven children. This peace passes all understanding. It is bestowed upon all believers by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. And as it fills believer’s hearts, it enables them to be at peace, not just with God, but with themselves and with one another.

Paul says now let that peace **rule** in your hearts. The word **rule** comes from a verb which literally means “to serve as an umpire at games.” God’s peace in Christ settles things. It determines and announces the outcome. Strife, contention and competition are removed from Christian relationships because the Prince of peace has brought us a peace with God that the world cannot give. Christ suffered the punishment that brought us peace. This eternal peace treaty signed in Jesus’ blood strives to cultivate peaceful relationships within the body of Christ—within us as believers. When there are disagreements in marriage relationships, in families, or among friends, God’s peace in Christ will be the referee. In hearts ruled by this peace there will be no room for greed, discontentment, jealousy, selfishness, anger or strife. All of these things will seem petty, foolish and totally unnecessary when God’s peace rules in our hearts and lives. And that in turn will lead us to be thankful in every situation we are in. For

Peace rules!

## **CHERISH THE CHRISTCHILD'S GIFTS** **II: HIS WORD TO MAKE US WISE**

Paul writes in vs. 16: **LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM, TEACHING AND ADMONISHING ONE ANOTHER IN PSALMS AND HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS, SINGING WITH GRACE IN YOUR HEARTS TO THE LORD.** When the word of Christ dwells in us, Christ dwells in us, for He is the Word. To dwell in means “to make one’s home in, to be at home in.” When God’s Word makes its home in our hearts we are made wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Notice the Lord through Paul says the Word is to dwell—be at home—in our hearts. It is not to be a motel, or a campground, or a vacation place—places that we stay in only temporarily. It is to be our home, filling every corner of our lives with its spiritual wisdom. We need to fill up everyday with God’s Word.

I remember when I was in College driving back to ILC from Milwaukee with my sister and other classmates. My sister kept bugging me about getting low on gas. I was sure I had enough. I ran out about 1 mile short of the interchange by Osseo and had to walk to get gas. My sister let me have it. My daughter came home to Saginaw from ILC for Thanksgiving driving with a girlfriend classmate. It was very late and they didn’t even think to check the gas gauge. We received a call after midnight that their van had coasted to a stop about 7 miles south of town. They had run out of gas. In both cases, the car could not run because it was out of gas. In one case it was stubborn resistance. In the other case it was forgetfulness.

How come we think that our faith can keep running without refueling? Or that it can run on fumes from last month’s fill up and never run dry. Like our cars, our faith needs regular stops at the spiritual “gas pump” of God’s Word. Daily Bible study as a family, as individuals and couples will be a normal occurrence for the concerned believer. The Words of Christ will also be the focal point of congregational worship and all of its other activities. On the basis of the Word of Christ and the heavenly wisdom that it gives us, we will be able to teach and admonish one another in public and in private. When the Word dwells in us, we will grow in faith and knowledge of Christ and in Christian living, and we will be able to encourage each other. When we ignore the Scriptures, forget about them, use them infrequently or stubbornly resist hearing or reading from them, we deprive ourselves and our fellow believers of blessings which the Lord wants to gladly shower upon us and we damage our faith life and endanger our soul’s salvation.

When the Word of Christ dwells in us, inhabits our hearts, then our lips and tongues will sing God’s praise in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. That is one reason why our services are filled with hymns and our responses are often sung in praise to God. A heart filled with Christ’s Word of love and forgiveness cannot keep it all in. It comes forth in songs of praise. May we cherish Christ’s Word that makes us wise unto salvation!

## **CHERISH THE CHRISTCHILD'S GIFTS** **III: HIS NAME TO GIVE US LIFE**

Paul summarizes this priceless section with these words: **AND WHATEVER YOU DO IN WORD OR DEED, DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, GIVING THANKS TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH HIM.** Whatever you do, everything you do or say, do it all in the name of Jesus. What does that mean? The name of Jesus includes His whole revelation of Himself in His Word. To do something in the name of Jesus means to do it in a living relationship with Jesus, in harmony with His will, in dependence on His power. We as Christians will look for opportunities to express our Christian faith as a response to that saving message we have implanted in our hearts---with our spouse, with our children and parents, with our friends, fellow workers and strangers. All that we as believers say and do will want to express that faith in Jesus in thanksgiving to Him for giving us life and salvation.

Only through our Savior's redemptive work is it possible for anyone to be in a thankful relationship of faith to God, for without Jesus' saving work we would remain under God's Law and deserving only of His wrath and condemnation. But because Jesus put Himself under that Law in our place, we are able to live for God in thankful faith through Him.

Sometimes it is hard to cherish a Christmas gift---another fruitcake, an ugly tie, or a box of chocolates when you are on a diet. The gifts that the Christchild bestows on us are what we desperately need and they will fill our hearts with thankful love so that we will cherish them as long as we live.

**I: HIS PEACE THAT RULES OUR HEARTS.**

**II: HIS WORD THAT MAKES US WISE.**

**III: HIS NAME THAT GIVES US LIFE.**

Amen.