

12. The Night of Nights

“And there were shepherds in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night” (Luke 2:8).

A dramatic event took place in 1914, on the first Christmas of World War 1. In Flanders, the German army confronted the combined forces of Great Britain and Canada. Then came Christmas Eve, the night on which the promised Messiah was born. Both sides were watching for an attack of the enemy, but none came that night. Instead, as Allied soldiers were singing Christmas carols, they were startled to hear the German troops joining them in the singing of moral and “Silent Night.”

On Christmas morning several soldiers, without weapons, stood unprotected in no man's land. Soon, men by the hundreds were scrambling out of the trenches and running forward in friendship. These men, who yesterday were seeking to kill one another were now, in broken English and German wishing one another– Merry Christmas. Christmas day passed with the singing of Carol's and exchanging of gifts. Then the men in *grey* and the men in *khaki* went back to their dismal trenches and once more took up the instruments of death.

One incident in the awful conflict. But it was one which creates hope and helps us believe that in spite of the clouds of war and hatred that now infest our planet, love is stronger than hate and light is stronger than darkness. With the birth of Christ there came into the world a power, which one day will conquer the clouds of darkness and bring in the day of everlasting light and peace.

Now, let us go with the shepherds to Bethlehem and be inspired and challenged with the real story of Christmas. In a stable, beside a Judean Inn, on this night of nights, God entered the place where mortals live. He became our “Immanuel – God with us!” The supreme miracle of Christianity lies in the Christmas message of the Incarnation – the staggering claim that in Jesus of Nazareth, God became man! Let us not object that this concept staggers the mind. It ought to! As Calvin Miller affirms, “If we try to take away Christianity's miraculous heart, we destroy it.”

And Christ wrote his greatest message of love, not with words, but drops of blood shed in agony and death. An empty tomb proves his immeasurable victory over sin and the grave. God lived with us, no doubt about it! Oh, I know this event does not make sense. Why should He show such love and grace to a thankless, heartless humanity? But that only proves that this salvation is not man-made. Only God could demonstrate a love like that? We can only marvel at our reluctance to believe and accept God's free gift

“This is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (1st John 4:10).