

## Christmas Is For Telling

☆ active goodness (v.7)  
☆ compassionate Savior (vv.8,9)

In the name of Jesus, God's greatest, most mighty Wonder, dear Christmas witnesses:

Some things are really easy to talk about. Children with their favorite toys. A beautiful engagement ring. Even the strong silent type will open up about sports, tools and big boy toys.

Why not Christmas? Is it fear of looking strange – like shepherds coming into town from the fields? Is it taking Christmas for granted – like powerful rulers and preoccupied religious leaders? Is it the foolish assumption that Christmas might just be for church and not for real life – like sophisticated celebrities today? So often we're deterred and distracted from the fact that **Christmas Is For Telling**. Once again we come to God for forgiveness and grace to share with others God's ...

☆ active goodness (v.7)

*"I will tell about the LORD's mercies, about the praises of the LORD...."* (EHV<sup>1</sup>) "Whenever Scripture talks about praising God publicly, it's...extremely dangerous. This is because announcing his praise is nothing other than opposing the devil, the world, our own corrupt nature, and everything evil. For how can you praise God without first declaring that the world is guilty and condemned? Anyone who condemns the world is asking to be hated and puts himself in a very dangerous situation."<sup>2</sup>

It certainly was dangerous for Jesus right from the start. Because of Him the family had to flee to Egypt to escape the swords of Herod's soldiers – or Jesus would have died with all the baby boys of Bethlehem. And yet, even as a baby Jesus was living the holy life of perfect obedience in order to credit His righteousness to us by faith. Jesus' whole life was **active goodness** in our place and for our sake. That's why Isaiah shouts with joy: *"I will tell about the LORD's mercies, about the praises of the LORD, about all that the LORD has done for us, about his great goodness to the house of Israel, which he performed for them according to his abundant compassion and according to his great mercy."*

Just a few chapters earlier Isaiah confessed his own need for God's mercy: *"Our rebellious deeds are many before you, and our sins testify against us. Our...guilty deeds, we are aware of them."* He admits God is right when He says, *"It is your guilt that has separated you from your God, and your sins have hidden God's face from you, so that he does not hear."* Our angry words, dark thoughts, selfish attitudes all give God every reason to condemn us to never ending torment. Instead *"God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life."* (John 3:16) But is all this forgiving grace and mercy meant for real life?

Kindhearted Monica knew **Christmas Is For Telling**. Her friends asked why her pagan husband treated her so well. Remember how honestly she answered? She paraphrased 1 Peter 3:1-6 about how a God-fearing, *"submissive"* wife could win her unbelieving husband to Christ without words, but with the beauty of her *"gentle and quiet spirit."* [When my husband] scolds, I pray; is he angry, I avoid him, or return kind words; in this way I have not only put down his anger, but I have also brought him so far, that he is converted and has become a Christian." *"Mercy triumphs over judgment."* (James 2:13)

<sup>1</sup> EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2019. NPH: 800-662-6022; also Amazon-Kindle.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Martin Luther, *By Faith Alone*. "Dangerous Praise," Psalm 51:15, for 11/15/19. PocketBible – [www.laridian.com](http://www.laridian.com).

Wonderful for her husband, but the power of Christmas has healed many broken hearts and families too. Boys and girls by faith are adopted into God's family with the full rights of sons. Jesus was **"born under the law, in order to redeem those under the law"** of God. Every day Jesus lived in perfect obedience in order to give us credit before God. Jesus suffered God's wrath in our place to bring us into God's family as equal heirs of His eternal inheritance. **Christmas Is For Telling** Christ's **active goodness** that shows in our own lives of mercy in hopes of sharing this greatest gift with others. *"When the unbelievers judge and condemn you, treat you unmercifully and rob you, you will be merciful to them, and not avenge yourselves, but give and forgive, and besides help, love and bless them, and speak the best things of them before God and the world; that they may also observe by your good conduct that you are pious and blameless people, who do not only suffer evil, but also return good for evil. By this you will obtain a good name among the heathen..."*<sup>3</sup> and honor God our Father too for our...

### ☆ **compassionate Savior** (vv.8,9)

Don't confuse compassion with weakness. Our **compassionate Savior** was so determined to save us from sin, death and hell that His zeal (Isaiah 9:7; 59:17) carried Him all the way to the cross. His determined compassion powers our own in ways that will not give up. While there's life, there's hope.

Monica had so much more praying to do for the other man in her life. Her son was disobedient, wild, lazy in spite of severe discipline. He loved sports, pranks and teenage sins. His own father was embarrassed by him around town. Brilliant, he moved to a college town – more fun, a son, and a cult.

Monica kept praying for years, moving closer to her son, begging him not to go to the capital where wickedness was even more open. He tricked her by leaving while she was in church. Monica took a later boat and intercepted him. They traveled to Milan where she persuaded him to listen to a famous preacher. Ambrose's razor-sharp sermons began to penetrate his stubborn pride. The pastor told her not to worry: "It isn't possible for the son of such prayers to be lost."

Finally in a friend's garden he heard a child singing, "Take up and read!" He opened the Bible near him and read from Romans 13: *Don't go to wild parties or get drunk or be vulgar or indecent.... Let the Lord Jesus Christ be as near to you as the clothes you wear.* "No further would I read, nor did I need; for instantly, as the sentence ended – by a light, as it were, of serenity which infused my heart – all the gloom of doubt vanished away." Easter, April 24, 387, Augustine and his son Adeodatus were baptized by Ambrose as Monica watched. Her lifetime of prayer was answered; a church father was born.<sup>4</sup>

Our Champion Redeemer is **"familiar with suffering"** (Isaiah 53:3) too. Jesus is **"the Angel of his Presence,"** who saved God's people and redeemed them. **"He took them up and carried them all the days of old."** He makes **Christmas...For Telling** in whatever way you can. To shy? Then write like the son of a Slovak Lutheran pastor. Pastor Jaroslav Vajda wrote his first hymn at age 49, 200 more for 65+ hymnals by his death at 89.<sup>5</sup> We just sang **Christmas...telling** "Where Shepherds Lately Knelt" (CW 54)

The son and brother of famous pastors, Charles Wesley, needed to hear how God's Son came to redeem us. He "went to America to convert the Indians, but, oh," he cried, "who will convert me?" Teaching English to Moravian Peter Böhler, Charles heard Martin Luther's introduction to Galatians – the pristine Gospel for the first time. "I felt my heart strangely warmed," he later wrote. "I now found myself at peace with God, and rejoice in hope of loving Christ."<sup>6</sup> Charles Wesley overflowed with **Christmas, Telling** the love of Christ in nearly 9,000 hymns ("Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," Love Divine, All Loves Excelling) – including today's final hymn, "Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing." **"O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise."** (Psalm 51:15 NIV84) Amen.

<sup>3</sup> *Luther's Postil*. John Nicholas Lenker, ed. Baker Book House, re-printed 1988, Vol. IV, pp.114f.

<sup>4</sup> Morgan, Robert J. *On This Day* – April 24, "Monica's Prayers." © 1997, Morgan. (Thomas Nelson). [www.laridian.com](http://www.laridian.com)

<sup>5</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaroslav\\_Vajda](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaroslav_Vajda)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/poets/charles-wesley.html>