

Christian Life Notes

OREGON DISTRICT LWML VOLUME 15– DECEMBER 2017

JOY TO THE WORLD, THE LORD HAS COME

The Christmas season is upon us. This is the time of year for family gatherings, parties with friends, and special church services. There are bright and beautiful decorations, cheerful music, and jingling bells. It's the season for PEACE, LOVE, and JOY. It's also the time for deep loneliness and depression.

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

*Why are you so far from saving me, from
the words of my groaning?" Ps. 22: 1*

There are many people who spend years fighting depression and the loneliness it causes. And with most, that fight is hidden from view. It's hidden behind cheerful greetings, busy-ness and sparkling decorations. But it's a fight that can't be won. Tears shed when no one is around. A body that always feels heavy, weak, and tired. A mind always pleading for God's help and always looking for happiness. This depression isn't seasonal, it's identity. It's always being lonely, always hurting, and always hoping. There may be events and seasons that lessen the depression, maybe even some of the loneliness. But it is still there. It still defines the person.

Many medications and supplements are designed to relieve depression. Studies have shown that sunlight and special artificial lighting helps. A change in diet and regular exercise are other helps as well. But none of these are a total cure and none can relieve that sense of loneliness.

Through the Bible, Jesus says we should cast all our burdens on Him. Frankly, it's hard to do when *you* are your burden. So is there a cure? I honestly don't know. But, I do know there is relief – a true, long-lasting relief. That relief comes from casting (I prefer the term "giving up") your burden, yourself, to Jesus. There's one more step: Leave yourself there. In other words, don't say "OK, Lord, now what do I do?" Now you just wait. He will give you the relief you need. God will work through His Word and various people to answer your prayers for help. He will also work through His Spirit. So, if depression and loneliness identify you, know that God desires your faith, your trust, and will strengthen your hope and give you true peace.

But, if you can't relate to any of this, know that God might be calling you to be part of His team to give someone relief.

*"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his
steadfast love endures forever." Ps. 136: 1*

May God's PEACE, JOY, and LOVE be with you always!

If you are interested in hearing my story, you may email me at plwetzal@yahoo.com

In 1861, two years before writing this poem, Longfellow's personal peace was shaken when his second wife of 18 years, to whom he was very devoted, was tragically burned in a fire. Then in 1863, during the American Civil War, Longfellow's oldest son, Charles Appleton Longfellow, joined the Union cause as a soldier without his father's blessing. Longfellow was informed by a letter dated March 14, 1863, after Charles had left. "I have tried hard to resist the temptation of going without your leave but I cannot any longer", he wrote. "I feel it to be my first duty to do what I can for my country and I would willingly lay down my life for it if it would be of any good". Charles soon got an appointment as a lieutenant but, in November, he was severely wounded in the Battle of New Hope Church (in Virginia), during the Mine Run Campaign. Charles eventually recovered, but his time as a soldier was finished.

Longfellow first wrote the poem on Christmas Day in 1863. "Christmas Bells" was first published in February 1865, in Our Young Folks, a juvenile magazine published by Ticknor and Fields. References to the Civil War are prevalent in some of the verses that are not commonly sung. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar Carols play
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of Peace on earth goodwill to men.

I thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along th'unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth" I said,
"For hate is strong and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, goodwill to men"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep;
"God is not dead, nor doth he sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men.

Still, ringing, singing, on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

*Text: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow,
1807–1882*

*Music: John Baptiste Calkin,
1827– 1905*

We wait, Father, and hope, we wait, Jesus, for peace

We wait, Spirit, for the world to know your love. A Blessed Advent and Merry Christmas – the Christian Life Committee