

CHARACTER



Peace

December 2003

PEACE: is “freedom from quarrels and disagreement; harmonious relations.”
“If you want to make peace, you don’t talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies.”

Moshe Dayan

As with most people, Christmas is my favorite time of year. I love the beautiful lights and decorations, the idea of giving to others and especially the music that accompanies the season. One song in particular has always been my favorite. It is “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. This famous poet penned the words of this poem on Christmas Day in 1864. There was much strife going on in the world and in Longfellow’s own life at the time that he wrote the phrase, “Peace on earth, good will to men.” The author Lindsay Terry writes that on July 9, 1861, Longfellow’s wife, Fanny, was near an open window sealing locks of her daughter’s hair in a packet, using hot sealing wax. It was never known whether a spark from a match or the sealing wax was the cause, but suddenly her dress caught fire and engulfed her with flames. Her husband, sleeping in the next room, was awakened by her screams. He desperately tried to put out the fire and save his wife. He was severely burned on his own face and hands. Fanny, who was tragically burned, slipped into a coma the next day and died. His grievous burns would not even allow him to attend her funeral. He seemed to lock the anguish within his soul. Because he continued to work at his craft, only his family knew of his personal suffering. His white beard, so identified with him, was one of the results of the tragedy—the burn scars on his face made shaving almost impossible.

Although a legend in his own time, he still needed the peace that God gives to His children. On Christmas Day, three years following the horrible accident, he sat down to try to capture, if possible, the joys of the season. He began:

*“I heard the bells on Christmas day.
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men.”*

As he came to the third stanza he was stopped by the thought of the condition of his beloved country. The Civil War was in full swing. The Battle of Gettysburg was not long past. Days looked dark, and he probably asked himself the question, “How can I write about ‘peace on earth, good will to men’ in this war-torn country, where brother fights against brother and father against son?” But he kept writing the following:

*“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, good will to men*

It seems as if he could have been writing these words for us today! Henry Wadsworth Longfellow then turned his thoughts to God, the only One who can give true and perfect peace, and continued writing:

*“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.”*

And so we have the marvelous Christmas carol, “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.” A musician, J. Baptiste Calkin, wrote the musical setting that has helped make the carol a favorite.

These touching words of a beloved poet resonate especially today. With all that is happening in the world around us, it is possible to have “peace on earth” by serving our neighbors and especially our own families. The best example of goodness and service is Jesus Christ, the “Prince of Peace.” As we follow His example, peace will become more common and strife will disappear.

Have a wonderful holiday season!

*Lisa A. Chudleigh
Lindon Resident*

“If we have not peace within ourselves, it is in vain to seek it from outward sources.”
Roche foucauld

“For it isn’t enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn’t enough to believe in it. One must work at it.”
Eleanor Roosevelt

“Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal.”
Martin Luther King Jr.

Book List

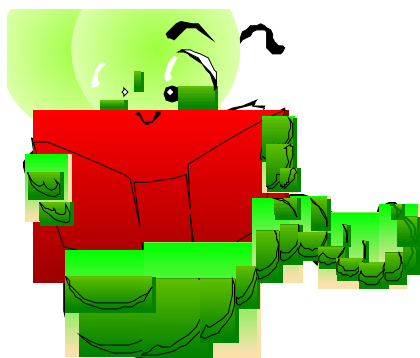
The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey
by Susan Wojciechowski

The Other Wise Man
by Henry van Dyke

Great Granny Rose and the Family Christmas Tree
by Ann Edwards Cannon

Silver Packages
by Cynthia Ryland

The Littlest Angel
by Charles Tazewell



Family Activities

–**Make a paper Christmas tree of peace.** As family members exhibit actions that bring peace, add ornaments. On Christmas day rejoice together in the beauty that peace brings?

–**Work together on a family service project.** Perhaps you could write to those away from their families, sub for Santa, or visit the homebound.

–**Walt Disney was born on December 5, 1901.** His gift of peace to the world was animations. Watch a Disney Christmas animation. *What gift can you give to make the world more peaceful?*

By Laura Clement

Kid's Corner

Often when I go out to play with my friends, my brother who is six years old, will try to have fun with my friends and me. Sometimes he is extremely irritating so we don't want him to play with us. That usually makes him angry which results in him going home. Occasionally though, I'll have a good attitude and let him play with us. When this happens, we both end up having a really good time. When I don't let him play with me, he usually gets mad. Not only that, I end up with a bad feeling deep inside of me and I know it was a bad choice. But whenever I let him play with me, I have a peaceful warm feeling inside of me.

Spencer Baker
Lindon Elementary School

We, at Character Connection would like to focus on helping parents access character materials this year by using the web site located at www.thecharacterconnection.com. If you are interested in receiving a monthly reminder of the character traits and access to resource materials, please e-mail your address to arlainea@isquaredinc.com

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