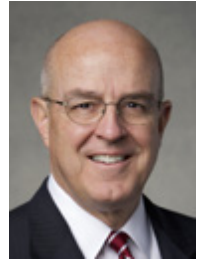




By Elder  
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# THE SAVIOR'S GIFT OF PEACE

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Even in a world where peace seems far off, the Savior's gift of peace can live in our hearts regardless of our circumstances.

Is there anything better than beautiful Christmas music and carols, Christmas gatherings of family and friends, smiling faces, and the joyful exuberance of children? Christmas has a divine ability to bring us together as families, friends, and communities. We look forward to exchanging gifts and enjoying a festive holiday meal.

In *A Christmas Carol*, written by English author Charles Dickens, Ebenezer Scrooge's nephew captures the magic of this sacred time of year. He reflects, "I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round . . . as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their . . . hearts freely, and to think of [other] people. . . . And therefore . . . , though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!"<sup>1</sup>

As a parent, and now as a grandparent, I have been reminded of the magic of Christmas as I have watched my children, and now their children, celebrate the Savior's birth and

enjoy one another's company as our family gathers together. I am sure you have watched, as I have, the joy and innocence with which children look forward to and relish this special holiday. Seeing their joy reminds each of us of happy Christmases past. It was Dickens again who observed, "It is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child himself."<sup>2</sup>

I was raised near Los Angeles, California, USA, where our home was surrounded by orange groves. One evening each Christmas, my parents invited family, friends, and neighbors to our home to sing Christmas carols and enjoy refreshments. It was a wonderful tradition for all of us, and the singing seemed to go on for hours. We children would sing as long as we felt we must, and then we would steal away to the orange groves to play.

My wife, Kathy, and I also raised our family in Southern California, relatively close to the coast. Christmas there is characterized by palm trees swaying in the breeze. Every year, our children looked forward to going down to the harbor to watch the annual Christmas boat parade. Hundreds of beautiful



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yachts, twinkling with lights of all colors, circled the harbor as we watched in wonder.

Now that we live in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, Kathy and I have made a tradition of taking our children and grandchildren to a local production of the play *A Christmas Carol*. Every year as we watch Scrooge undertake his miraculous transformation from a heartless hermit to a happy neighbor filled with Christmas joy, we feel the tug to let go of the Scrooge within us. We feel prompted to do a little better to follow the Savior's example of charity to all.

### **The Redeeming Power of Jesus Christ**

The transformative spirit of the Christmas season is rooted in the redeeming power of Jesus Christ to change our lives for the better. The beloved account of the birth of the Son of God more than 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem is recorded in the book of Luke:

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. . . .

“And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; . . .

“To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

“And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

“And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

“And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:1, 3–14).

### **Fear Not**

The angel perceived the shepherds' fear when he appeared to them, telling them to “fear



not.” The astonishing glory of God, which radiated from the unexpected heavenly messenger, had indeed struck fear in their hearts. But the news the angel had come to share was nothing to be afraid of. He had come to announce a miracle, to bring the ultimate good news, to tell them that the redemption of mankind literally had commenced. No other messenger before or since has brought happier greetings.

The Only Begotten of the Father was beginning His mortal sojourn: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” These were indeed good tidings of great joy.

We each face moments in our lives when the great joy that the angel promised can seem elusive and distant. All of us are subject to the frailties and hardships of life—illness, failure, problems, disappointment, and, in the end, death. While many people are blessed to live in physical safety, others today do not. Many face great difficulty meeting the demands of life and the physical and emotional toll those demands can bring.

And yet, despite life’s hardships, the message of the Lord to each of us is the same today as it was to the shepherds keeping watch 2,000 years ago: “Fear not.” Perhaps the angel’s injunction to fear not has more transcendent relevance to us today than it did in calming the shepherds’ fear that first Christmas night. Could he also have meant for us to understand that because of the Savior, fear will never triumph? Could he have meant to reinforce the fact that ultimate fear is never justified, that no earthly problem need be lasting, and that none of us is beyond redeeming?

The sweetest gift given at Christmas will always be the one our Savior Himself gave us: His perfect peace. He said: “Peace I

leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

Even in a world where peace seems far off, the Savior’s gift of peace can live in our hearts regardless of our circumstances. If we accept the Savior’s invitation to follow Him, lasting fear is forever banished. Our future has been secured. These are the “good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.”

“Fear thou not,” the prophet Isaiah reminded us, “for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isaiah 41:10).

### Hope in the Savior

Because of the Savior, born 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem, there is hope—and so much more. There is redemption, release, victory, and triumph. “The wrong shall fail, the right prevail.”<sup>3</sup>

No wonder a choir of angels suddenly appeared as a heavenly exclamation point to the angel’s announcement of the Savior’s birth, singing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” No message could ever be more reassuring. No message was ever filled with more good will toward men.

May this season be one of peace and joy for all of us, “for unto [us was] born [that] day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” ■

*From a First Presidency Christmas Devotional address, “Fear Not,” given on December 6, 2015, in the Conference Center.*

#### NOTES

1. Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (1858), 5–6.
2. *A Christmas Carol*, 67.
3. “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day,” *Hymns*, no. 214.