

Luke 2:8-20

Christmas

December 25, 2009

Back in the sixties Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel sang Silent Night on an album. As they sing the evening news broadcast is playing in the background, so faintly at first that it is not noticeable but growing in volume all through the carol so that by the end the news almost drowns out the song. The trial of Richard Speck, accused of murdering nine nurses, Martin Luther King Jr. marching for civil rights, former vice president Nixon condemning Vietnam war protestors – this was the news back then that shattered the silence of the holy night.

And these days? People without jobs, 11 women murdered in the house on Imperial Avenue, corruption in Cleveland politics, Afghanistan, Iraq, bank failures, Iran testing missiles, a growing federal deficit, a healthcare bill that most everyone wishes was different.

But today is Christmas.

I am sure most of you know the story of the Christmas Truce: In 1914 British and German troops were dug in opposite each other in a war that we know as World War I. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in a number of places gunfire ceased, in some sectors soldiers crept out into no man's land to retrieve bodies of fallen comrades, in other places Christmas carols were sung, soldiers came out of the trenches and exchanged gifts of tobacco, beer, chocolate, with the enemy. A soccer ball was kicked back and forth by Germans and British. In some places the cease fire lasted into the new year. But everywhere the killing and dying returned – the truce a momentary blip.

So we turn off the news for one day, stores and businesses are closed, and we remember the night when angels sang of peace on earth, goodwill toward men – to you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior who is the Messiah, the Lord.

For us Christmas is a little vacation from the world – a moment of silence – an instant of peace – a season of sharing. Then the truce is over and the news drowns out the angel's song.

We say to ourselves, “If only the economy would be strong once more. If we could find a cure for cancer, and new forms of energy, then the Christmas truce could last. If only, if only, if only.....then we could sleep in heavenly peace.

What might the shepherds have imagined that night as the angels sang? That the enemies of God’s chosen people would be chained and God’s favored ones set free? Did they imagine that the wolf would soon be lying down with the lamb, the lion eating hay like the ox, the little child playing with the deadly serpent? Did they imagine a world where every child would have enough to eat and no child would be without a home and soldiers would put down their weapons and sing the praise of God?

The evening news keeps on blaring and the Son of God is born into a world that can make no place for him except a manger and a cross. And you and I will never have any peace if our peace depends on the world changing.

But there is a peace for us that this child of Mary brings – peace with God. Every sin forgiven, every shame overcome, every debt paid in the living and dying of Mary’s child. A truce has been declared, not just a Christmas truce but a truce that is eternal. God will be your God and walk with you through every moment of your living and of your dying.

Believe it is so.

Every day you face the choice of letting the evening news tell you who you are and what is possible in the world. Every day you can let the evening news tell you what to fear and what to hope for. Every day the evening news can take away your peace.

Or you can receive the faith God sent God’s Son to bring.

This morning Isabella will be baptized. You bring her here in the hope that she will believe. God chooses her this day, makes her a daughter of God, a sister of Jesus. Will she believe it is so? Will she believe that nothing in all creation shall be able to separate her from the love of God in Christ Jesus her Lord? Will she live every day knowing

that she is safe in God's care no matter what happens in her life? Then she will have a peace that shall be hers forever.