

Daily Devotional, December 7, 2020 Tidings of Great Joy Overcomes Great Fear

“Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.” Luke 2:10 (NKJV)

For more than 50 years now, Charles Schultz’s *A Charlie Brown Christmas* has aired on television (Although I understand that beginning next year it will only be available as a paid streaming option. Is nothing sacred?) For many people it has become as much a part of the Christmas tradition as Santa Clause, Christmas trees, and Christmas music. It is a television program that I have seen countless times. In this great animated show, the Peanuts gang is up to their usual antics, both in and out of school. The climax of the show occurs when Charlie Brown cries out for the umpteenth time in great desperation, “Isn’t there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?”

It is Linus, the wise beyond his years, thumb-sucking, blanket-carrying, member of the Peanuts clan who tells Charlie Brown that he knows the meaning of Christmas. He then turns and begins to recite Luke 2:8-14. He tells of the angelic announcement of the birth of Jesus. It is a beautiful and special moment as the Christmas story is told by Linus.

One thing that is easily missed in this scene I have noticed, is that during the reciting of the Christmas story, Linus actually drops his blanket. This *never* happens in any other Peanuts stories. Linus and his blanket are inseparable. It is after all, his security! But in this one moment, when he utters those beautiful words from Luke 2:10, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people,” (KJV) Linus finds the strength to be separated from his blanket. What a beautiful image from Charles Schultz. The arrival of Jesus Christ into the world brings to each of us the gift of peace, even in the midst of a world that so often causes distress and great fear, much more magnified this year by the Corona Virus pandemic. The world around Linus had not changed much in that moment. All that caused him to clutch his blanket with such anxiety was still present, but when he focused on the presence of Jesus in the world, he found his fears far less troubling. I believe he found true peace in that moment.

This is the gift of Christmas, the gift of Christ born in the manger. Although the world is still filled with so much to cause us concern, we have been given an even greater gift. Because Jesus has arrived, we know that God is with us; we are not alone. This is truly good news that brings, “Great joy.”

Prayer: God of grace, help us to focus on the greatest gift of all this season, and beyond. Thank you for sending your Son into our world, that we might be saved through Him. We praise you for your faithfulness and mercy. Forgive us for letting other things get in the way of remembering what’s most important this Christmas. We ask for your joy and strength to fill us once again, and may we shine the light of your presence wherever we go. In the powerful name of Jesus we pray. Amen.