

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

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

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

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Peace for the Broken

Years ago when my uncle was in the coast guard we got to tour a lot of ships. One in particular was an icebreaker. The cross section of the hull was two inches thick. It was able to break ice up to 21 feet thick by ramming, and could plow continuously through ice 6 feet thick. I can't imagine cold like. But hulls weren't always so thick and traveling through ice wasn't always so easy. Sometimes ships got stuck. Sometimes they got stuck on purpose. In the 1870's there was a ship named Jeanette, equipped to journey through the arctic. It was unexplored territory, remote, inhospitable, hostile to life - I'm not quite sure why anyone would want to go there.

The US Navy issued order to sail the uncharted territory hoping to find the Northwest passage. The plan was to get frozen into the pack and drive with the sea ice. They hoped the currents would carry the ice and Jeanette north all the way to the North Pole and if they drifted far enough then maybe the ice would release them again and they'd sail for home. They figured two or three years frozen in the ice on a deadly cruise before making it home. That's what they did. They sailed further north than anyone ever had. Right into the ice where they were trapped and the wait began.

But after 16 months of drifting with the ice the cry rang out, "Man the pumps!" The pressure of ice on the hull was crushing the ship. Their only hope for shelter, their only hope for return, survival began to sink. They pumped, working in the bitter cold trying to save their ship, but it was broken and beyond repair. They unloaded provisions and equipment onto the ice and the ship sank the next morning; broken.

Have you ever felt broken? From decisions you've made or decisions others have made for you and now you have to live with the consequences. Or maybe you see no problems on the horizon, the world around you is merrily going along but eventually a cry rings out, "Man the pumps!" Suddenly you have problems that need immediate attention. What do you do? You do whatever you can, pick up the pieces and move on but sometimes that just moves the problems from one location to another. Sometimes problems are so big that you can't do anything about them. How can you find peace in a broken world? Do you find peace by bailing water? Trying

to hold everything together just a little longer? Like sailors trying to pump water as their ship sank? You can't find peace by trying to hold it all together. Patience is exhausted, energy is wasted, you can't go on like this forever.

It took the crew four months to realize that *Jeanette* was beyond repair. They would have to find another solution. They could only stand at a distance and watch their hope of return sink beneath the icy waters. They had sailed into unexplored territory, remote, inhospitable and hostile to live. They were isolated. No one could sail to them. They were 1,000 miles from the nearest land and the nearest land was Siberia (also land not known for being hospitable and hopeful and yet their only hope). So they abandoned ship walking, dragging boats behind them. Crossing open water and ice for a land that provided little hope.

That solution sounds appealing and may bring peace for a time. We like the idea that with enough grit and gumption, enough determination we can do anything. All I need to do is try harder, "I need to get my life together." What I need is more commitment, more attention, more time. Just keep putting one foot in front of the other but often that only delays the inevitable icy grave. That doesn't provide peace. Even if the crew made it to Siberia they still would have no food, no clothing, and no shelter. Even if we try really really hard to get away from our problems they still follow us. Hearts stop, cancer returns, sickness and disease still come for us and so far death and taxes are guaranteed in life.

So how do you find peace for past problems, peace that provides future hope, even when your only hope, your ship is sinking, 1,000 miles out? There is another vessel that follows wherever we go. Churches are often shaped like an overturned ship. We often refer to the sanctuary as the nave from the Latin *navis*. But is that a solution? One has to wonder who would design a church like a shipwreck in the first place? There are problems all around us, failing health, family problems, monetary issues. If church is supposed to make you a good person it certainly doesn't seem to be working. It's obvious there are broken people here. The saying is true, "The church is a hospital for sinners not a museum of saints."

Those who have been here for some time recognize that we are broken people. We struggle with sin. We struggle with doubt. So how can we find peace if even the church is full of flawed people? God didn't come for those who had it all together. "*It's not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick.*" Jesus didn't come into this world for perfect people, for those who have their lives together, for those who aren't broken. The truth is that God came for the broken (the only type of people in this world).

God loves the broken. He refused to leave us to an icy grave.

The crew made an unbelievable journey. For months they walked across the arctic - crossing open water, they made landfall in Siberia. But it was hopeless, they were exhausted, malnourished, and there was still another 1,000 miles until civilization, food, and shelter. They couldn't do this on their own. Until one day, after 809 days of seeing no men. Someone found them. Someone brought them food, clothing, hope, and helped them on their way. They were the walking dead when native settlement found them, brought them home and back to life.

That's not much different from what God has done for us. You and I are broken. But God didn't wait for us to come to him. Christianity isn't based on your performance, behavior, obedience. It's not our journey to him. He came to us. God is the one who made the long and impossible journey for you. It's not the arctic he crossed but heaven and earth. He's the one who went after those headed on a fool's errand, those who had rejected his sound advice.

When we could do nothing he planned our rescue. When we wonder, "Where is God in these broken moments, when our last hopes are sinking," realize God entered into it. That's his gift. He took on flesh and blood, the pain and problems of this world, in order to bring peace to a broken world. That's what Christmas is about, not our gifts we bring to God but the gifts he brings to us. (Forgiveness of sins, life, salvation). The gift he gave was his son. This was so important that he sent an army of angels to announce, "*Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord.*" God laid out his plan to fix this world. The Lord himself, would come, take up our broken state and die our death. This child in a manger is God with us.

He didn't come as a coach - to guide us on to better living, or show us how it could be done. He came as our Savior. He came to save us and lead the way out, providing a path for us to follow. He brought food, clothing, shelter as he guides us home. If you are stuck in sin he comes to set free and the way out he provides is forgiveness freely given. You don't have to traverse the arctic to find it. It isn't located in an inhospitable wasteland. He finds you where you are at and brings peace.

You have peace knowing your sins are forgiven, forgotten forever. Nothing can change his love for you, That's what the angels sang about *Glory to God in the highest and peace*. Peace doesn't come when you try to hold together the pieces. Peace doesn't come when you do everything in your power to be better. Peace comes from God who loves the broken, who journeyed to rescue us, and promises to make us unbreakable.

Get to know that peace on who his favor rests. It's glorious because you don't have to bail water, struggle to keep the ship above water because you already have Christ. You're

already floating and free. In fact your not even in a hellish location like the arctic circle. The most ice I'll likely see is in the freezer. Live thankfully like the crew that was lost but found. Live in peace that it's over. It's likely that they didn't try that again either. But if they did, I hope they took a much stronger and sturdier vessel like a modern ice-breaker, something like this child, this gift, this peace.