

Monday, December 24, 2007

Merry Christmas!

Christmas is my favorite time of year for many reasons: time with close family, a time of excitement and joy for my children, a time to reflect upon the year coming to a close and to think of the year yet to come.

But chief among the reasons I enjoy Christmas so much is that it is a time of relative peace, when even people who are otherwise bloodthirsty bastards at least make a showing of remembering "the Prince of Peace" and what He actually stood for - Peace on earth, and goodwill to men.



The Prince of Peace.

Don't get me wrong, I consider myself a warrior who is always ready to defend family, hearth, home, country, and liberty against the predations of evil men, be they foreign or domestic, but that does not mean I have to enjoy the prospect of having to take up arms against my fellow man, who I wish would simply leave me and mine alone, in peace. But alas, "some men you just can't reach" with reason. Some men only respect and fear force. But that does not mean we need to become unreasoning brutes ourselves. And our willingness to stand and fight does not mean we cannot pray for peace and have good will toward all men, hoping they will see the light so we do not have to fight. Let us pray for peace, even if we must prepare for war.

One of my all-time favorite Christmas carols is It Came Upon A Midnight Clear, which was written way back in 1849 by Edmund Sears, a pastor in the Unitarian Church in Weston, Massachusetts. This is truly a beautiful song that captures well the message of peace and hope for mankind, as well as the long, weary road of fear, strife, struggle and war that mankind has walked for so long, and still walks to this day. Sears wrote it in 1849, before the advent of modern weaponry that has made mankind's self-slaughter so much more "efficient." Below are the lyrics, and here is an especially beautiful rendition by Hall and Oats. If the embedded links won't play, then go [here](#):

It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, goodwill to men,
From heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come,
With peaceful wings unfurled,

And still their heavenly music floats

O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains,
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its Babel sounds
The blessèd angels sing.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they bring;
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing.


And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing!

For lo!, the days are hastening on,
By prophet seen of old,
When with the ever-encircling years
Shall come the time foretold
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world send back the song
Which now the angels sing.

When you listen to all of the lovely Christmas music, the theme is peace, love, forgiveness, compassion, and charity. To me, that is the heart and soul of Christ's message, and something that far too many people, who should know better, seem to forget the rest of the year.

So, here's to finding some way to keep the spirit of Christmas in our hearts even after the Christmas tree comes down - here's to Christmas 365 days of the year.

Stewart Rhodes and family.

Posted by Stewart Rhodes at 11:56 PM 

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