

A Service of Nine Lessons & Carols
December 28, 2025
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"Christmas Peace: Not Sentimental, But Real"

So did you have a peaceful Christmas?

When we ask that question,
we often mean quiet or comfortable.
We're asking whether things went smoothly—
whether there was enough rest, enough harmony, enough cheer.

Despite our hopes for peace and harmony
Christmas doesn't always silence what haunts us.
More often, it reveals it.

In Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol,
Ebenezer Scrooge does not find peace by escaping Christmas,
but by being confronted by it.

Christmas comes to him as a series of visitations—
ghosts that refuse to let him remain untouched.

In a very different way, a Service of Nine Lessons & Carols
does something similar.

We move through Scripture
not to sentimentalize Christmas,
but to face reality under the light of Christ.

The lessons guide us—like those ghostly visitations—
through past, present, and future,
naming what disturbs our peace
and where true peace is found.

First there's the ghost of Christmas past.
At Christmas we are often reminded

of formative wounds or unresolved losses.
Like shrapnel slowly working its way to the surface,
buried pain can emerge during seasons meant to be joyful.
Memory is stirred—not only of what was good,
but of what was broken.

Our first lesson takes us back to the garden,
where we discover that conflict is not accidental, but foundational.
Fracture appears within the first family,
within creation itself,
and in humanity's relationship with God.
Peace, Scripture reveals, cannot be shallow—
because the rupture runs so deep.

Then comes the ghost of Christmas present.
Christmas often gathers us more closely
with family, friends, and community.
This closeness can be beautiful—and painfully difficult.
Places meant to be safe
can become scenes of tension, disappointment, or conflict.

In today's middle lessons we hear
promises of a coming kingdom of peace.
But this peace requires more
than warm homes, good food, and familiar songs.
It calls for a deep reordering of life itself—
rooted in justice and righteousness, not convenience or control.
God calls his people to embrace this life of justice and righteousness
even as we await greater deliverance.

Finally, there is the ghost of Christmas yet to come.
Christmas reminds us that time is passing.
For some, this awakens anxiety
about adulthood, responsibility, or uncertainty.
For others, it brings awareness of vulnerability—
of physical decline, cognitive changes,
or the narrowing of options
and fewer freedom.

In our final Scripture lessons,
The Prince of Peace promised in the prophets is finally revealed
in all the anxieties and ambiguities of human history.
Jesus enters a world shaped by empire, scarcity, and fear.
His arrival brings joy to those on the margins—
but disturbance to those invested in power.
Peace does not arrive once danger has passed;
it arrives into danger, exposed and vulnerable.

Our final lesson widens the lens even further.
The peace of Christmas is cosmic.
God comes among us, not above us.
Light breaks into darkness,
and those who receive the light are given new identity.
Yet darkness remains, and rejection persists.

We discover that Christmas is only peaceful
to the extent that the Prince of Peace is embraced.
Christmas is peaceful among God's people
only as that peace is welcomed and embodied.

This kind of peace does not deny the past,
but remembers it without being enslaved by it.
It does not flee the present,
but engages it honestly.
It does not fear the future,
but entrusts it to God.

It does not silence our ghosts—
but heals our wounds
in the transforming light of Christ.

Jesus does not bring a sentimental peace...
a Hallmark Christmas.
Jesus offers us a sturdy, costly, real peace—
and it is at work among us this season.

If you want to experience more of it
Please join me in prayer...

Lord God
We want to know the Prince of Peace
In our hearts, in our families,
And in our church.

Meet us amidst our disappointments
And brokenness this season.
Heal our old wounds,
Prevent us from nurturing new ones.

Show us that because you are among us
The future is not dark and grey
And that your kingdom is emerging.
Help us to live in this knowledge and this light.

For we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.