

The Great Light

“A myriad of men are born; they labor and struggle and sweat for bread; they squabble and scold and fight; they scramble for mean little advantages over each other. Age creeps upon them and infirmities follow; shame and humiliation bring down their pride and vanities.

“Those they love are taken from them, and the job of life is turned to aching grief. The burden of pain, care, misery, grows heavier year by year. At length ambition is dead; longing for relief is in its place.

“It comes at last . . . the only unpoisoned gift earth has for them . . . and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence, where they achieved nothing, where they were a mistake and a failure and a foolishness; where they left no sign that they had ever existed—a world that will lament them a day and forget them forever.”

Mark Twain, who penned these words in his autobiography, reveals a pessimistic heart about the value and meaning of human life. For Twain, people do not live; they merely exist. And to no good purpose. Life is drudgery, and increasingly so, as the years fly past.

But two thousand years ago a bright star arose over tiny Bethlehem to protest such a despairing view of life. As it sparkled in the desert night, some took notice, pondering its significance. By following it to an obscure manger, they found their own. They drew near to warm themselves at the radiant glory which enveloped the little newborn on the straw. This **Great Light** had come at last to dispel the darkness and meaninglessness of human life.

The special glow experienced at Christmas Season transcends all gift giving and family festivity. It is something more, a cosmic celebration which unites us in spirit and praise with

that first tiny band of worshippers who discovered on that ancient night that people have significance *only* if God gives it to them. The presence of the Christ Child is the tangible evidence—for them and for us—that God has actually **done so!** The “unreachable” God has reached us.

The shimmering, Bethlehem Star over that ancient stable dramatizes God’s act of penetrating the darkness of human existence. “He loved the world. . . . He gave his Son.” And if human life is without significance and value, as Mark Twain suggests, God would hardly have bothered. But He did. He “bothered” to the point of total identification with humanity as a real flesh and blood man.

The heart of the Christmas message is one of affirming human worth and the exquisite price God paid to prove it—the death of His dear Son. Every day, every Sunday, every Christmas, with bread and cup, millions of believers . . . remember and remember. “Lament them a day and forget them forever?” Impossible! His life and death give meaning to our own. We remember . . . and rejoice . . . and our lives are filled with meaning as we continue to warm ourselves at the hearth of His cheerful and abiding presence.

God bless you as we celebrate His birth this year!

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