

"I want to tell you—that that mother isn't a bit to blame. Don't lay it to my mother— all my bad ways, I mean."  
 Tom did not think at all of what a brave thing he was doing; he thought of nothing but the wish to defend his mother. But the teacher took his hand, and said:  
 "Your mother must be a brave lady, Tom, for her boy has shown himself brave to night, and I shall expect good things from him in the future."  
 Tom thought: "I wonder if the other boys know that all they do, good or bad, is laid to their mothers?"

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**Pleasant Hours:**

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Rev. W. H. Withrow, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, DECEMBER 21, 1895.

**CHRISTMAS BELLS.**

BY REV. SAMUEL GREGORY.

"If God so loved us we ought also to love one another."—1 JOHN IV. 11.

SOMEONE selected these words as the motto of a Christmas card. I do not think there could be a better motto for such Christmas messages.

**BETHLEHEM.**

Think of this picture. It is a night scene. Stars are shining over silent fields, where shepherds are watching their flocks. But a light floods the sky, and makes all stars seem dim. It is "the glory of the Lord," and a band of shining angels singing their great carol: "Peace on earth, and glory in the highest." The shepherds listen with wonder, and learn that there is a baby not far away sleeping in a strange cradle. He is lying in a manger, where some travellers are spending the night at an inn. The "inn" (or caravanserai as it is more properly called) is so full of people that no other bed can be found for the little saviour than a manger. That baby has been sent from heaven to grow up and be the Saviour of the world. This is the glad tidings of great joy which the angels have come to tell those shepherds in the fields.

Such is the picture, and beneath it are these words: "God so loved us."

**CALVARY.**

A second picture is that of a place outside the walls of a town—a place where criminals are executed. A great crowd of people is assembled. Three crosses stand up above the people's heads, and three men are fixed on them to die. Soldiers stand armed near the crosses. On the middle cross hangs a man whom they are putting to death, not for any wrong he has done, but because people have mistaken him and hated him. But he who hangs on the cross has no hatred in his heart. He does not think of his own suffering, but has his face turned to the robber crucified by his side, and is praying to lead him away to God's paradise of joy. The face

that looks with such pity on the dying robber is the same face that looked up out of that manger-cradle. It is the Saviour sent from God, and he is dying to save the world.

The same words are under this picture, the words,— "God so loved us."

Christmas is kept in order that Christ's love may be brought to our minds. We celebrate Christ's birthday at Christmas, and we try to think of what his birth means. It means "God so loved us."

**ST. JOHN, THE APOSTLE OF LOVE.**

"If God so loved us we ought also to love one another." We all believe that. We know who it was that said these words; it was the Apostle St. John. When he said or wrote the words of my text he was a very old man—about a hundred years old. During his boyhood, John lived by the sea, for his father was a fisherman, and as soon as he was old enough John went out in his father's boat to fish. God stirred this young fisher-boy's heart, and made him wish to be a good man. While still in his teens John went to hear a preacher in the open air, on the banks of the river Jordan, and there for the first time he saw Jesus. John went home with Jesus, and stayed with him all that day. He felt so much what Jesus had said to him, and loved Jesus so deeply, that he became his disciple. Whenever he could do so John spent his time with Jesus. He went almost everywhere with Jesus, and stood near the cross on that day when Jesus was crucified. Afterwards, when Jesus had gone to heaven, John gave his life to working for Jesus, and telling people of the love of God, and of how people ought to love one another.

**ST. JOHN AND THE ROBBER.**

As life went on John fell in with a young man who led a very wicked life, and prevailed upon him to be a Christian. But the young man's wicked companions tempted him into sin again, and led him from bad to worse. He became so bad and desperate that he joined a band of robbers—outlawed men who lived in lonely places among the hills, and plundered travellers who fell into their hands. St. John for some time lost sight of this young scapegrace, but one day he discovered what sort of life he was living, and went to try and find him. It was like the good shepherd who went to save the lost sheep. The robbers met with St. John, and were going to take him prisoner, and demand ransom for his life. But the young man was with them, and as soon as he saw who their prisoner was he trembled and wept, and begged St. John to lead him out of that way of life, back again to Jesus the Saviour. In this way the good old man carried out his own saying into practice, "we ought to love one another."

**ST. JOHN'S LITTLE SERMON.**

At a time later than this, St. John was so feeble with age that he could not walk far or stand long or preach as he did in earlier days. But he used to go on Sunday mornings to where the Christians met together, and being very weak and old, he just stood up and said: "Little children, love one another." Sometimes that was all he said, and he said it often. At last the Christians said to him: "You are always telling us that!" "Yes," he replied, "that is the best thing to tell you. If you love one another your own hearts will teach you the rest. Love will lead you to do all that you ought to do."

It was because of things like these in St. John's life that they called him the Apostle of love. God's love as he had seen it in Jesus Christ so filled his heart that he was always thinking of how much men ought to love one another.

**WAYS OF LOVING.**

We can be unselfish, and let other people enjoy themselves. We can be thoughtful, and do kind things to those who are younger than we are. We can be gentle with old people, and talk to them, and read to them, and serve them in many ways. We can give things to people who are not so well off as we are. We can be patient, and keep our temper, and say cheerful and kind words. We can forgive those who have done us wrong. We can pray for people, and ask God to bless them and make them good. We can be sweet

and helpful to those about us, as Jesus was and as John was. This is how we ought to love one another. Christmas is a time of kind wishes and pleasant words—a time of giving and forgiving, and generosity has come to be associated with Christmas, because Christmas is the festival of God's love—the time when we celebrate God's gift for our salvation, and God's willingness to forgive us. My text explains Christmas generosity: "If God so loved us we ought also to love one another."

**THE JOY OF LOVING.**

St. John says we "ought." We do some things because we "ought," though the things are not pleasant to us. We don't do them for joy's sake, but for right's sake. But love gives us joy. It is more blessed to give than to receive. Good, kind hearts have more pleasure in doing kind things than in receiving kindness. It is, because, somehow, when our hearts open to do what is kind, God comes into our hearts and makes a heaven there. God dwells in every one who loves and helps his fellows; for God is love.

**CHRISTMAS BELLS.**

"We ought to love one another!" We do love one another. And we shall love one another more than ever, if we love the Son of God, who came into this world one Christmas morning long ago. Sometimes we do not think much about what Christmas bells and Christmas carols mean. They have a pleasant sound, and tell us of a pleasant time. But their meaning goes back to the song of those angels in the fields of Bethlehem. The music of Christmas is the music of thankfulness that God so loved us, and if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

**WHAT WILL YOU GIVE?**

CHRISTMAS is coming again. What is it bringing the boys and girls, and what is its message to all little hearts? Such toys it brings, such holly-wreaths, such picture-books, such pretty cards and tempting cakes! The shops are bright and beautiful, full of yellow oranges, rosy apples, "sugar and spice, and all things nice." And at home there is so much to do. We must make or buy a present for our loved ones, and the pudding and the mince-meat must be made—"Christmas is coming!" the children cry. "Oh, welcome, Christmas, happy, joyous Christmas! you bring us holidays, and, oh, so many lovely things."

Little children, what will you bring to Jesus at this joyful time? Give him your young hearts brimful of love. Be gentle and kind at home, and try to bring some joy to boys and girls who may be ill, or poor, or sad. Then your Christmas will be happy indeed.

**ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL.**

The Christmas festival seems to have been devoted first to the children in Germany and the north of Europe. Here Saint Nicholas, a real personage, lived, a bishop in the time of Constantine, who died December 8th, 343. For a time Christmas was here celebrated on the sixth of December, but later it was transferred to December 25th, to correspond with the practice in other countries. The patron saint of the children known as Saint Nicholas in Germany, is called Santa Claus in Holland, and Samiklaus in Switzerland. In Austria he is known as Niklo, or Niglo, and is followed by a masked servant called Krampus; while in the Tyrol he goes by the name of Holy Man, and is accompanied by Saint Lucy, who is the girls' saint, and also sometimes by a little girl representing the Christ-child. At times Saint Nicholas is accompanied by a masked bugbear who carries rods for the naughty children, instead of presents.

The Christmas-tree in its present relation to this festival originated with the Germans, but a similar ceremony was much earlier connected with pagan rites of a different kind. In the Protestant district of Germany, Christmas is celebrated with the Christmas-trees very much as with us, by the giving of presents between parents and children, and brothers and sisters, and a

more sober scene often follows the Christmas tree, when the mother takes occasion to tell the daughters, while the father tells the sons, what has been the most praiseworthy in their conduct, and also those things of the opposite nature.

**A Christmas Carol.**

The night was calm and still  
 Beneath the starry sky,  
 Where on the grassy hill  
 The watchful shepherds lie;  
 When suddenly a-noon  
 Angelic hosts appear,  
 And voices sweet resound;  
 O'er all the region round:  
 "Glory to God on high,  
 On earth good-will to men."

In wonder and amazement  
 Before the vision bright,  
 The shepherds, a-stare, gaze  
 Upon the glorious sight,  
 As hovering a-noon  
 The angel hosts appear,  
 And voices sweet resound  
 O'er all the region round:  
 "Glory to God on high,  
 On earth good-will to men."

And still what time the year  
 The holy season brings,  
 The same glad notes we hear  
 The same sweet message rings  
 As when o'er Bethlehem  
 The angels came to them,  
 And still the words resound  
 The whole wide world around.  
 "Glory to God on high,  
 On earth good-will to men."



Epworth League.

**JUNIOR LEAGUE**

PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

December 29, 1895.

COMING AND GOING.—Matthew 28, 34, 41, 46.

The first verse in this lesson refers to Peter and is a prediction as to how he would act in the near future. Poor Peter! with all his boldness, he was very unstable at this time and did not seem to be conscious of his own weakness. The next verse is an important admonition which is applicable to every period of life. The Saviour knew what was soon to occur and he cautioned them as to the proper course of action to pursue, and though he was in circumstances of the greatest possible perplexity, behold how kindly he speaks to them, "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Just like the blessed Saviour, he never "breaks the bruised reed nor does he quench the smoking flax." No matter how small may be the portion of good he will not despise it. He knoweth our frame, he remembers that we are dust.

The caution which this passage contains are equally applicable to Christians in all ages. Too many are like Peter, lacking stability. Let it, however, for his honour be stated, that he repented and returned to Christ, and never denied him again. If like Peter we have denied the Master, have we like him been ashamed of our conduct, and repented of the error of our ways?

In the world we will have tribulation, there will be seasons which will try us, just as metals are tried in the fire, hence we have need to watch and pray. Watch against the least approach to evil, and pray for grace to sustain us in the day of adversity. The faithful sentinel never ceases to watch. So Christians must ever watch against evil thoughts, evil suggestions and the approaches to evil. Daily must they keep on the watch-tower, lest they fall into temptation and a snare. They must live daily in the habit of prayer. Thus they will gain strength until they arrive at their Father's house in heaven.

**Christmas Gifts.**

Long, long ago, in manger low,  
 Was cradled from above  
 A little child in whom God smiled,  
 A Christmas gift of love.  
 When hearts were bitter and unjust,  
 And cruel hands were strong,  
 The noise he hushed with hope and trust,  
 And peace began her song.