

## A CHRISTMAS ALL THE YEAR.

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"CHRISTMAS comes but once a year." This is an old adage, and in one sense it is true. There is only one day in the round year when we light our Christmas candles, trim our Christmas trees, and sing our Christmas carols. We do this in joyful recognition of the glorious fact that Jesus Christ has come into this world to save us poor sinners. But did he not come to stay? Has he not promised to his followers, "Lo! I am with you always?"

Every Christian that desires to be strong, to be happy, to be useful, and to grow in grace, ought to make every day a Christmas; i. e., he should feel that his Master is close beside him all the while. If young Christians will only make Christ real in this way, it will help them wonderfully. When our Lord was on earth, people constantly came to him for relief. Weeping Jairus, from the bedside of his dying daughter; the nobleman, whose son was sick; Nicodemus, who wanted light; the poor sinning woman that sought forgiveness; and many others flocked to him; and he never turned one of them away.

Now, why should we not all do what they did, and bring our guilt and our griefs, our difficulties and our discouragements, to that same compassionate Saviour? If not near us in person, he is near us in spirit. Let us realize this, and treat him as he invites us to treat him. He says to you, in the most loving way, "Come unto me." Then go to him. Your friends, your pastor, your teacher, are often too busy to devote much time or thought to you, even if it were possible for them to afford you effectual relief. Other people, even your best friends, cannot exactly understand your case. Christ knows it perfectly. He knows your weak points and the sore spots; he knows just where the tempter tripped you, or where the arrow pierced you, or where some blow fell heaviest on your suffering heart. He notes every tear that stains your cheek.

If, during this past year, you have been bereaved, he followed your weary steps when you went out to that new-made grave to weep there. How many there are that rush to human friends for counsel or comfort or sympathy, and yet most strangely neglect to call for the loving Master, the Friend that "sticketh closer than a brother!" That poor woman in the coasts of Canaan knew what she was about. She threw her load of trouble upon the only person in the world that could relieve her. When the two sisters at Bethany were stricken with a crushing sorrow they sent straightway for their Lord, and Martha hastened down the road to meet him. These cases are told us in our Bible to teach you and me the only road to sure relief. Our first duty in every time of trouble is to do what they did,—go and tell Jesus.

Let me say to every young Endeavorer that, if you keep the telephone of prayer in good working order, Jesus is always within call. Not only within call; he is always within reach. Peter, sinking in the waves, cried out, "Lord, save me!" and immediately the omnipotent arm grasps his arm. While all the passengers and crew on board the tempest-tossed ship were smitten with panic, Paul has One by his side that says to him, "Fear not, Paul; thou must

be brought before Cæsar." Soon afterward, when the weather-beaten old hero faces the savage Roman tyrant with unblanched cheek, it was because his Master stood by him and strengthened him. One of the chief purposes of sharp trials, and of difficult duties, is to make us send for our Saviour. If the famine had not reached to the land of Canaan, the sons of Jacob never would have found their brother Joseph. If there is no famine in our souls, we do not hunger for Christ; blessed be the hard experience or the hard work that impels us to throw out a hand to grasp our Elder Brother!

It is Jesus Christ that makes Christmas the most joyous day in the calendar. Without Him there would be no Christmas carol, and no Christmas gifts.

But why limit to one day what ought to be our experience on every day of the three hundred and sixty-five? Some Christians are happy only on special occasions; when the sun shines or their "ships comes in." The rest of the time they sulk, or groan, or grumble. Sunny-souled old Paul, even when he was chained in Nero's guard house, rings out the jubilant words, "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice!"

Ought every Christian to be happy? Yes; and every one of us may be happy all the time, if we only look in the right quarter for our joys. Paul was too wise to bid us rejoice in money, for the "hard times" have run some purses pretty low this year; or to rejoice in health, for some of Christ's children will probably read this article in a sick room; or to rejoice only in the hours of worldly success. Our joy, to be solid, must rest on something immovable, and not on a shifting sand-bank. There is one, and only one, solid, permanent possession; and that is the loving Christmas Christ, dwelling all the while in our hearts, a Saviour faithfully served every day in the year.

A healthy joy is not an occasional rapture. We could not stand it. I have noticed that some people who are shouting to-day are sulking or scolding to-morrow. They live on their moods and their frames, even in their religion. That is not Christian health. Just as soon as we hang our happiness—even our religious satisfaction—on moods of mind, or on surrounding circumstances, we go up and down with the tide. The thermometer of our joy is at the mercy of outside atmospheres. But if a strengthening, gladdening Saviour is always in the core of our hearts, then we can "rejoice ever more."

Our happiness arises from what we are, and not from where we are. Jesus tells us to abide in his love, that his joy may remain in us, and that our joy may be full. If we take the Christmas Christ at his word when he says, "I am with you always," then we can be perpetually happy. This joy is not only our privilege; it is our duty. For a sincere Christian Endeavorer to be gloomy and wilfully wretched is a sin. Spiritual joy is a sign of health of the heart. When a baby cries and moans, its mother says, "Something is wrong with this child; it is not well." A sour, or sulking, or scolding, or morose Christian is a disgrace to his or her religion. We all hope to be happy when we get to heaven. Why not now? Why parse the word "heaven" in the future tense? The possession of Christ is the beginning of heaven; and the more we have of him here, the more peace and power and joy will he give us. Every day we can sing our carols, and every night the soul can light its bright candles, and we can have a happy Christmas all the year.—*Golden Rule.*