

**WE HAVE NO ENEMIES AT CHRISTMAS**  
**Christmas Eve –December 24, 2011 – Matthew 2: 1-12 and Ephesians 2:13**  
**The Church of the Covenant**

What if for one brief, shining moment the world were a different place? What if for just an instant there was a place where love and only God's love was born? What if the light shone differently there? What if there is a place reserved on earth for only peace and love and joy? What if there is a moment in time where all is forgiveness, and where there is no hatred, no enemy, only love? Don't we believe that one, brief shining moment is Christmas? Don't we believe that the place is Bethlehem? Don't we believe the time is this evening, right now, right here?

Perhaps you remember that news article from last year about the woman who complained in Canonsburg, a woman who professed she was an atheist and was offended by the manger scene the Knights of Columbus always put up on public property there on the main street of Canonsburg? She wrote a letter. There was the typical tugging and pulling, threats and potential lawsuits, but in the end the manger scene remained. In today's world there are not only shepherds and wise men and angels at the manger; there are also lawyers. They need Jesus, too! What a stink that woman's objections raised. You could almost hear the clamor all the way here to Little Washington. The dust settled; Christmas seemingly came, manger scene or no manger scene. Christmas is funny that way. Christ remains in Christmas whether or not the ACLU allows it because Christ isn't born in courtrooms, the little baby Jesus boy is born in the mangers of people's hearts. No law can stop that. So we threw away all the old wrapping paper; put away our manger scenes. We went back to the shopping malls for the after Christmas sales. And then we forgot about the woman who claimed she was an atheist and had complained about the manger scene. But God didn't forget about her...

But one other young woman, this young woman a strong Christian, she did not forget either. And rather than uniformly condemn this woman she prayed for this other young woman. And as it turns out they knew one another from high school; weren't close friends but knew one another. And you know how when you pray for someone how God sometimes put the darndest things on your heart? You get answers you don't want and difficult tasks assigned by the Almighty and projects you'd rather not take on. So this nice young Christian woman prayed for the atheist who hated manger scenes and then God nudged her heart to call the atheist young woman on the phone and speak to her. Prayer is funny that way. If you actually wait until God speaks He just may tell you to do something that is His will to do. And that may not be in your comfort zone, your own small finite will, to do. So she calls her on the phone and they get together to talk. And the atheist young woman shares with the Christian young woman a really awful story of what happened to her the previous Christmas. People banging on her door at all hours of the night, yelling epithets at her that no Christian should think, let alone say, people going out of their way to be mean to her. I mean certainly that's why Jesus was born into the world, so people could be mean to other people in the name of Jesus, right? (This is sarcasm). The part I remember best is that the young atheist woman was sent "hate Christmas cards" by her Christian neighbors there in Canonsburg, with things like "Why don't you just die" written on them along with "Merry Christmas" of course. And the Christian young woman shared how she had been praying for the atheist young woman and this touched the woman's heart and made her cry just a bit. "Why would you be praying for me when everyone else who is a Christian seemingly hates me?" And then the young Christian woman, really not knowing exactly why God had sent to her to speak with this other young woman, offered a heartfelt apology to the other woman, she was genuinely sorry that some other folks had been so mean, had written those hate Christmas cards and all. And then the young atheist woman broke down and wept. Because it seems she had prayed to God when all this was happening that **IF God**

**existed He would send some Christian to her in order to apologize to her. And that IF God did this then she would believe in God.** And that is exactly what, of course, God did. Sometimes people just look like atheists or enemies of Christianity on the outside, but on the inside, in that quiet place we go, I think everyone prays to God. We were all created by God to do exactly that.

Now I'd love to say the story has a perfect, happy Hollywood ending. I'd love to say, and now that atheist young woman comes to church every Sunday and feels called to go into gospel ministry and testifies as to how God is at work in her life. But that's not how the story ends. But, may I say, I think that if God would send a woman to apologize to that other woman, and if God really does hear our prayers that much and really does answer them that amazingly, then I think it's a pretty small stretch to believe that God could also enter the world in the form of a little, bitty baby. And I think some folks who are here this evening, maybe being a little skeptical themselves, you know, might just consider for a moment that all this Christmas stuff isn't just about carols and pretty music and hand held candles while singing "Silent Night". I think you might just consider that all this God stuff is really real. And that if it is real and true and believable that you might just want to follow the baby Jesus not only on Christmas Eve, but you might just also want to follow the Lord Jesus with your heart tonight, right here, right now. And follow Him tomorrow and every tomorrow and for all eternity. And then you might look at what happened just a couple of weeks ago there in Canonsburg where 100 people gathered around the manger scene and prayed and sang Christmas carols, with church members dressed up as the holy family and a real live baby Jesus and even live animals. You try to stop Christmas and it just gets bigger. You try to "get" Christmas and Christmas "gets" you!

See, there's something special and unstoppable about the Baby Jesus being born into the world. The world didn't cause Him to be born the first time and the world can't stop Him, as hard as it may try, this year either. Jesus will be born into the mangers of people's hearts so long as people open their hearts to Him. You can't stop Christmas; there are no enemies gathered 'round the manger. Even the jaded and tired old world wants to believe that there is something decent and good and kind and loving that lives and cannot be silenced and can never die at Christmas. You can't hear the story of God coming to His creation in infant form and not be moved by it. The human heart was made by its Creator to be touched by the Word of God made flesh. We can set aside our troubles, our anger, our fears and our worries; we can tip toe up to the Christ Child in Bethlehem and see for ourselves this wonderful thing that God has done for us. *"But now in Christ Jesus, you who have been far off have been brought near..." (Ephesians 2:13)* God coming in infant form by its very design by the very design of our Creator was conceived to draw men and women, skeptics and hard-nosed business types, doubters and intellectuals, atheists and agnostics, God's plan in the very nature of the story of Christmas is to draw us to Bethlehem and to draw us to a little tiny baby and to draw us to the love He has sent into the world through His only begotten Son. No, there are no enemies gathered around the manger tonight. There are no strangers. There are no people, even though they may think they are far from God, there are no people who are actually far from God this night. You have been "brought near" by what God has done for you.

Take a good look around you tonight. I don't see any enemies here, do you? For one brief, shining moment, here under the shining star of Bethlehem, in the presence of the One born a babe and yet a king, for one, brief, shining moment it is Christmas...we have no enemies at Christmas...and in this holy, calm and silent night we know exactly how the world was created by God and is meant to be. Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA  
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*