

Vigil: “They shall call him Emmanuel” (God is with us)/
Nite: “& on earth, peace to those on whom his favor rests”/
Day: “...& the darkness has not overcome it.”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, a traveler was returning from a trip to the Holy Land, where he bought a nativity set. All of the figures were there, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, shepherds, angels, kings, & animals. When he arrived at the Tel Aviv airport to depart for the U.S., security was extremely tight. The customs officer checked and x-rayed each figurine in the set, even the baby Jesus.

Having ‘cleared’ the traveler, the customs officer apologized saying,

“We can’t take any chances. We have to be sure there is nothing explosive in this set.”

Afterwards, safely seated aboard his flight, the traveler thought to himself,

“If the officer only knew... that set contains the most explosive power in the world!”

The explosive power he was thinking about is infinitely greater than all of the combined, nuclear warheads in the world. It’s **not** the infinite power of God that created the world in the flicker of an eyelash and is capable of destroying it with the snap of a finger.

Then, what **is** this ‘great power’ I am talking about, you ask.

Well, I am glad you asked that question!

The ‘great power’ Jesus brought into the world is the power contained in the incredible message that Jesus brought with him. And it is two-fold.

1st, it is the **“good news”** that the great God of heaven and earth... **loves** us—each and every one of us. God’s love is without exception and without reservation.

The great God of heaven&earth **loves** us so much that he didn’t send a letter/email/text or tweet. He didn’t send an angel to tell us.

As Hallmark would say, “He cared enough ‘to send the very best.’ ”

He sent us... **his own son!**

2nd part of his two-fold message is the additional **“good news”** that... the great God of heaven and earth not only **loves** us, **BUT**...is our **Father**...&, therefore, we are all **brothers and sisters!**

It is this incredible message that made the **non-Christian**, historian & author, H.G.Wells rank Jesus **FIRST** among all the people, who ever lived on this planet! Explaining his choice, Wells says:

“I am speaking of him as a man.... The historian must treat him as a man, just as a painter must paint him as a man.”

Commenting on this incredible message of Jesus, Wells says:

“It is one of the most revolutionary changes of outlook that has ever stirred and changed human thought. No age has, even yet, understood fully the tremendous challenge it carries....But, (and there’s that proverbial **BUT in life) the world began to be a different world from the day that doctrine was preached.”**

The historian’s test of a person’s greatness, says Wells, is:

“What did that person leave behind to grow? Did he/she start people thinking along exciting, new lines that continued to grow after his/her death?”

By this test, Jesus towers above everyone else who has ever lived!

In summary:

The power contained in the Christmas scene is the power of a two-fold message Jesus brought into the world.

*It is the message that the great God of heaven and earth **is our loving Father**
And, therefore,
we are to be loving brothers and sisters.*

This incredible message ...is God's Christmas gift to each of us.

What we do with it ...is our gift to God!

And, finally, this brings me to, what I call, the challenge of Christmas, captured in this poem:

***“When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the king and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back in the field...***

The work of Christmas begins:

***“To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the political prisoner,
To build the nation,
To bring peace among brothers & sisters,
and***

To make music ...with the heart.”

*May almighty God, our Abba, bless you...
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

And may the peace of the Christ-child abide in your heart.