

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS



from
The Country Church
of
Hollywood



1934



Goose Creek,
Christmas, 1934

My dear Neighbors

As Brother Lige Euston, the shoe-maker says, "If you air a goin' to make a wish, make a big 'un - it dont cost no more," - so will Sarah and I do.

And here's our wish for each one of you: may you have a genuine Goose Creek Christmas with a heart full of love for God and man - without over eatin' - (Sarah put on that last part.) May God bless you all, and may you luck well, and live long and prosper. God bless you all agin'.

Yours sincerely,
Josiah Hopkins

P.S. O, yes, and may you all have hog jowl and turnip greens for Christmas dinner
J.H.

Christmas Greetings from Goose Creek

TEXT: "*And, lo, the star, which they saw in the East, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.*" —MATTHEW 2:9.



ARAH and I were talkin' last night about why there were only three men who came out of the East to the cradle of the Christ. Sarah asked me why I thought there were so few. So, I said to her that my idea is that millions over the world saw the star, but only three followed it. Yes, neighbors, there's a sight of difference between seein' a thing and followin' it. Right here is the secret of the whole thing. Those who get the best that God has, not only see His stars but follow them to their goals.

This is just as true today as it was that night that the wise men laid their gifts at the cradle in Bethlehem. People know what they ought to do, but the trouble is they won't do it. Nearly everybody knows what road they've got to travel to get to a certain place in life; they see the road, and it is plainly marked, but they go the other way. When you come to think of it, it is surprisin' how people read in the history book what happened to people in days long past and then read in the papers what's happenin' to people every day, and yet they go right on doin' the same thing, knowin' all the time that virtue is its own reward and

that wrong doin' always brings its own punishment. People go to church Sunday after Sunday, hear good preachers, then go right back and live the same old life. All of us know that the only investment in life that pays a permanent dividend is what we do for somebody else. Yet, we go right on livin' selfishly, and we see all our plans fall like withered rose leaves when we come to the end of the road.

I KNOW that these three wise men had all kinds of temptations to turn to the right or to the left, for accordin' to what the Book says, they came from the far East, so they had a long ways to travel. But, they kept a-followin' that star. They stopped only when it stopped, and they moved when it moved. The result was, they wound up at the feet of the Lord in the manger. Everyone who reads this little Christmas greetin' will just as surely come to where God is if he will commence right where he is today to follow the light that God has given him. You know, neighbors, you don't have to have light for a whole journey. You just need light for one or two steps at a time. I remember startin' across the hill once to go to the Perdue house, and all I had to walk by was a little old lantern. Sarah and I were walkin' along talkin' and she said to me, "Josiah, you notice that this little lantern gives us all the light that we need; as we travel, it travels."

It's just that way with God's leadin' light. It always shines on the pathway in front of us and illuminates the spot where we are. This Christmas, regardless of whatever condition you are in, there is light enough for you to live just as God wants you to live where you are today and light enough to show you how to take the next step into tomorrow. What more could you ask?

Somebody was tellin' me about a little child who had suffered a terrible accident and lost her eye-sight without knowin' it. They had the little child's eyes bandaged, until one night they took her out on the porch of the hospital for a little fresh air. The little girl lay in her mother's arms, and then she turned her eyes up toward the sky and was surprised to notice the stars were not shinin'.

THE little tot said, "Mother, have the stars gone out?"

I would like to have been there to say this to that little girl, the thing that I want to say to every one of you at this Christmas, the darkest night that this old world has ever had has never put out God's stars. If you will just look up from wherever you are, you'll find that they are shinin' on your pathway.

An old well digger here in the neighborhood told me once that you can go down in a well, especially if it is a deep well, at noon day and see the stars in the sky. I have often thought of that. The deeper you are in discouragement and sorrow, the easier it is to look up and see the stars, if you will just turn your head to where the stars are.

I am sure that there are stars in the sky this Christmas for everybody, the rich and the poor, the sick and the well, the successful and those who have failed. Just remember, neighbors, the stars are there. God lit them to brighten the pathway for the human hearts who travel down the road of life. This Christmas, the bright star of hope is in the sky. A lot of people make out like everything has gone to pieces and there's no hope for anybody, but I want to say to you that as long as God is on His throne, there's a star of hope for every human soul.

Have you ever noticed the faces of patients in the hopeless ward of a hospital or an institution? There is a despair on their faces that you will see nowhere else in the world. Now, I know what I am talkin' about, neighbors, for I've been in the hopeless ward! For a long time there wasn't a ray of physical, mental, or spiritual hope. But, sittin' by my bed in a hospital, Sarah kept pointin' upwards toward God's blue sky, until one day I saw the star. I have followed it the best I could since that day, and it has led me to many happy experiences, to days of joy and heart's content.

I WOULD love to send this message out from Goose Creek today, that the Star of Hope is in God's blue Heaven. Some may read these lines who feel like the life you have lived has put the stars out. Don't you let anybody make you believe that! I know of a man in the Bible for whom every star had been put out. It was the thief on the cross, but I thank God that the Lord was near enough to him to say, "This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." My, what a burst of light fell on that poor thief's soul when those words were spoken upon Calvary!

They tell me that they used to have what were called "antiphonal" singin' in the great temple at Jerusalem. On one side of the temple, a choir would sing a part of a piece, then on the other side, the other one would sing another line, and back and forth the blessed songs would go, one answerin' to the other. I have often wondered just why they had that kind of singin' in the temple. I believe I know now. It was God's way of teachin' His people that when we cry here on this earth, Heaven answers back. It's just like the echo in Sullivan's Hollow. You can say a word

on one hillside, and it comes back to you from every nook and cranny on the other side. Today, I just want to send you this little word of encouragement from Goose Creek. God's stars are in the sky, and Heaven will answer. Turn your face up, look for the stars. You may not see the actual, physical light that the wise men saw, but you'll see something that will do you just the same good, and by followin' it, it will bring you to the cradle of the Christ. May you not only see the star that God has put in the skies for you, but may you follow it till it brings you to the happy land of Heart's Desire.

May you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Yours sincerely,

JOSIAH HOPKINS.

