

***“Come Ye Faithful”  
Christmas Eve  
December 24, 2007***

One of the most famous lines of Scripture is the angelic hymn –

***Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace among men with  
whom He is pleased.***

This is found only in Luke’s Gospel, and this verse, based on a preexisting Hebrew and Coptic literary source, is most properly rendered as

***Peace on earth be to men  
who follow God’s good will.***

The divine will is not a restriction imposed on us, a destiny from which we cannot escape: it is a loving reality far more benevolent, and far more effective on our behalf, than our own will could ever effect.

(The Hidden Jesus, A New Life, Donald Spoto, p 9)

It is a calling to all Ye Faithful to come and see and then follow in the ways of the Christ Child.

As we listen to the Lessons and sing the Carols of Christmas Eve, I am reminded of a Christmas Party I read not long ago.

It was in the most beautiful of homes, decorated with perfection, food catered by the most popular cater, a bar stocked with the best wines, and filled with folks of all ages.

About mid way in this festive evening, the host rang a bell, and asked for everyone’s attention. He stood in front of the fireplace and explained that what he was about to do was one of the greatest honors a person could have.

He paused and a tear rolled down his cheek and then he began to read Luke’s version of the birth of Jesus.

***“In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world  
should be enrolled.”***

(Larry Chottiner, Getting to Bethlehem-Again Outlook, p17)

He read it simply and quietly. The room was still. Even the children listened intently, because even they knew that to get to Bethlehem one has to hear the story.

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As the people who had come for a party listen to this story of a family without a home, of a baby without a bed, they, even those of little faith, became the faithful ones.

Being faithful is not the same as being loyal or being obedient.

Being faithful is more like being fruitful.

- A fruitfulness that looks for stars and listens for angel, even if only for one night a year.
- A fruitfulness that trusts in the promise of peace on earth, even if only for one day a year.
- A fruitfulness that prays for earthly joys, and eternal blessings.

Like the Shepherds and the Wise Men, we are called to be faithful in the places we find ourselves and with the people who surround us each day - in the fields and on the roads of life, with family and with friends.

Come Ye Faithful; with shepherd boys and wise men, with strangers and so-journers, with songs and lessons of Scripture, with party goers and party givers, and kneel at the manger.

Come Ye Faithful, and know that because of this night your life will be more fruitful.

*Edgell Franklin Pyles, Ph.D.*