



*Gloria: The Peace That Passed Understanding*  
*3rd in the Advent sermon series "The Songs of Advent"*  
*Luke 2:1-20*

*Christmas Eve, Tuesday, December 24th, 2019*  
*First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois*  
*The Rev. Dr. Forrest Krummel, Jr.*

*Text: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among all with whom God is well pleased. (v. 14)*

There are "thin places" in this world; places that are not exactly spooky but disturbing; vaguely familiar yet strange. The Scottish island of Iona is said to be one such place. There are also "thin" moments in time. Christmas Eve is such a time. Charles Dickens [A Christmas Carol](#) touched on such a thin moment. So did the Broadway play "Brigadoon."

Such a time also occurred 1914 along the Western Front of World War I. The land was scarred with trenches as English and French forces from well dug trenches faced their German counterparts in their trenches. On Christmas Eve the Germans began to place candles on their trenches. Soon a Christmas tree lit with candles appeared as well. German Christmas carols began to fill the air.

#### A GERMAN CAROL FOLLOWED BY AN ENGLISH CAROL

The two sides shouted Christmas greetings to one another. Soon a German soldier asked about a truce. A brave Englishman stuck his head above the safety of his parapet. A German did likewise. Before long there were little excursions across No Man's Land. The dead and the wounded were carried back to their respective sides. Small gifts of sweets, tobacco, and alcohol were exchanged.

A 19 year old soldier wrote to his mother about that marvelous night.

"Dear Mother, I am writing from the trenches. It is 11 o'clock in (on Christmas) morning. ... The ground is sloppy in the actual trench, but frozen elsewhere. In my mouth is a pipe... In the pipe is tobacco. Of course, you say. But wait. In the pipe is German tobacco. Haha, you say, from a prisoner or found in a captured trench. Oh dear, no! From a German soldier. Yes a live German soldier from his own trench.

"Yesterday the British and Germans met and shook hands in the Ground between the trenches, and exchanged souvenirs, and shook hands. Yes, all day Christmas day, and as I write. Marvelous, isn't it?"

As news of the unofficial truce spread, commanders on both sides of the conflict took measures to put it to an end. British General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien issued an order strictly forbidding friendly communication with opposing German forces. Isn't that the way of the world? Isn't it?

Hark the herald angels sing  
Glory to the new born King;  
peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled.

In his second letter to the Corinthian church Paul wrote that

*“in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. (v. 19)*

It seems that from the beginning, from as early as the book of beginnings, Genesis, God has been searching for us. Like Adam and Eve after eating the forbidden fruit we have tried to hide from God because we are naked and ashamed. But God loves us. God loves us, each and every one of us. And God has given to us the ministry of reconciliation. The world wants us to choose sides. But choosing sides is the Devil’s mischief because ol’ Scratch knows that if we are fighting with each other, we are not living into our call of reconciliation.

The ministry of reconciliation is the Christian mission. Proclaiming God’s peace is the Christian’s calling. It is our sole work, no matter what our profession or calling.

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

To God be the glory. Amen.