

The Olivet Observer



"The little church with a big heart"



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The 132nd Letter of Lee to the Olivet Church

And we're here! Advent and the Christmas season have arrived! 2023 is quickly wrapping up. No doubt it seems to many of us that the year flew by. As always there will be so many celebrations and gatherings taking place this month. Emmanuel has come to us, changing us and the world. So we celebrate! It is indeed by the grace of God that we are able to enjoy the blessings of Christmas...the feasts, the gift exchanges, the feelings of goodwill are allowed to happen for us because of God's mercy. As we celebrate this amazing gift that is our Savior I am convicted again in my soul of how incredible a thing it is that we are able to gather as we do with friends and loved ones. Many people in this world who hope and trust in Jesus Christ will celebrate His birth this month, but they cannot imagine being able to do it in a place where peace exists, where food abounds, and where most people are relatively healthy or have access to medical care.

We know the unfortunate reality that wars are raging in too many places around the globe. Recalling some of the words from the beloved song *I heard the Bells on Christmas day* we can often more easily identify with the third verse "And in despair I bowed my head, there is no peace on earth, I said, for hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on earth goodwill to men." As we get ready to celebrate Christmas, our prayers must include the people in places like Ukraine and Russia, Israel and Palestine. And a recent article in *World* magazine caught my attention as it shared the horrors and effects of another war with a complicated history. In Sudan, since April over nine thousand people have lost their lives and over six million people have lost their homes in bloody battles. So many people there have experienced unbelievable heartache and loss. Still, God speaks into the hearts of His hurting people and moves them to continue sharing the gospel.

Can you imagine if you had to celebrate Christmas in a war refugee camp, because it is your new place of residence? That is happening for so many people this year. Still, for many of them, though they are cast down, their faith is far from destroyed. Reports of their zeal for the Lord have been shared. One missionary has said that the brothers in Christ in the midst of the battles have boldly proclaimed "The war is not going to stop us from preaching the gospel." And so they go into the camps and share Bibles, prayers, and the hope that all of us have in our Savior.

So be grateful, my brothers and sisters, for blessings of this holiday season. Sometimes we are guilty of complaining about all the that comes with the Christmas rush for us but be sure there are so many people who dream of such things. Enjoy your holidays and live in gratitude. Share His good news with everyone you can in all the ways that would honor Him. Jesus is Born! Hallelujah!

Grace and Peace,