

a community called ...

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HEAVEN'S CHRISTMAS TREE

Rev. Chas. A. Tindley

*A Message to read,
to enjoy, to profit by,
and to praise God for.*

Heaven's Christmas Tree

A setting forth under the figure
of a Christmas tree the rich blessings of salvation

By

REV. CHARLES A. TINDLEY, D.D.
of Philadelphia, Pa.



Introduction by

Rev. George W. Ridout, D.D.
of Asbury College



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INTRODUCTION.

It has been said of eloquence that like a flame "it requires fuel to feed it, motion to excite it, and it brightens as it burns."

Dr. W. L. Watkinson, that great English orator, has said: "That the brain of a true preacher is always in a state of fermentation and a hundred potential discourses await their hour."

Martin Luther said that he often treated the books of Scripture like a man shaking a fruit tree, he believed in shaking well the books of the Bible and he gathered much precious fruit thereby.

Dr. Charles A. Tindley, the author of this wonderful "Christmas Tree" sermon, is one of the greatest living preachers of his race. He is known far and near for his wonderful oratory as he preaches free and full salvation.

He is a combination of Beecher, Talmage and Bishop Joyce. He preaches to the greatest Methodist congregation of Philadelphia, Pa. His Sunday congregations are so

great that he has to request his morning crowd to stay away at night and vice versa. He was once janitor of the church he is now the renowned pastor of—East Calvary M. E. Church, Philadelphia, Pa.

Dr. Tindley is a great word painter and employs his wonderful imagination to the glory of God. He is one of the humblest of men. He believes in the gospel of full Redemption; he carries on his great church as a gospel center. He believes in tithing as against worldly shows and amusements to get money. In Philadelphia he is always in demand in the holiness conventions, and when the Friday Holiness Meeting was in progress at 1018 Arch Street he frequently preached there. This sermon was preached at the Friday Holiness Meeting and was reported by Mr. O. R. Heinze of the "Christian Literature Fund", Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa., and sent to the writer.

This sermon should have a great circulation because it puts Truth in a most unique and eloquent form. Dr. Tindley is rich in the

application he gives to Imagination in his messages, then he is always unctious and spiritual. Dr. Tindley furthermore has a rich poetic gift. Many of his songs are being sung all over the country.

GEORGE W. RIDOUT.
Asbury College.

HEAVEN'S CHRISTMAS TREE.

REV. CHARLES A. TINDLEY, D.D.

Some years ago I had occasion to visit Philadelphia on Christmas day. For some reason I came early in the morning. While passing along a certain street, I saw a large church with front doors open and many people, young and old, moving in and out. Out of curiosity, I crossed over so as to find out what the occasion was. When I reached the point where I could see, behold, a large tree, beautifully trimmed and laden with many packages. A young man was standing upon a step-ladder and by means of a rod was lifting the packages from the limbs of the tree and calling out the names that were written on them. As he would call a name some hand would go up, indicating the person it belonged to. These happy recipients were passing in groups from the church, smiling and congratulat-

ing each other upon the favors received. I stood there until the tree was stripped of packages and all the people, except a very few, had passed out into the street. I noticed a little boy, who sauntered from the building almost, if not quite the last, with scanty clothing and pinched features. He wore a sickly mechanical smile, as though it was an unavoidable reflection from the numerous faces that surrounded him. His eyes were filled with tears, his lips moved as though his little soul was forcing audible expressions of its sad disappointment. He moved off down the street, kicking the bits of paper here and there to satisfy his empty feelings. I followed him until he turned into a little court and stood on the doorstep of one of the little dwellings.

After glancing this way and that for a minute, as though he dreaded to leave the street empty-handed and cheerless, he turned the door knob and entered what I imagined was a poor, cheerless home. Until then, I was uncon-

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scious of a tear that was rolling down my face and dropping on my bosom. With a sigh I turned away with the question: "Will there ever be a time when the spirit of the Christ shall so fill and control the lives of people that everybody, young and old, rich and poor, will receive some token of love on Christmas day?" My query was directed more heavenward than earthward.

I seemed to be asking the Christ of the Christmas rather than anyone else. It was a happy thought and I felt like saying *thank God* right out loud. Then my mind began to reflect and search for some good reasons for this happy thought. "Is Christ really a tree?" "Is he a Christmas tree?" And, if so, are there any packages on this tree? And for whom? Ah, yes! He is the Tree of Life. He was brought to this world and set up in Bethlehem's manger more than 1900 years ago. He bears a package of rare blessings for every human being in all this world. That Christ is called a tree

in the Bible is proven by such sayings as these: "If they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? "I will give to eat of the Tree of Life." "The leaves of the Tree were for the healing of the nations."

These passages of Scripture furnish good reasons for calling Christ Jesus a tree. When I read that this Tree of Life yields its fruit every month, and that its leaves were good for the healing of the nations, I have a right to think that there are packages on it for human beings. I call it a Christmas tree because it came to earth on Christmas Eve night. You are to imagine now that I am speaking of Christ Jesus in the light of a great Christmas tree set up in this world, bearing a package for every single creature that he has made. This means the poorest of you who have not loving friends to make your heart glad with presents, can turn to Jesus and find in him a present just for you. Yes, a package with your name on it is hanging on the limb

of Heaven's great Christmas Tree. You recall when your mother and father lived; when you and your brothers and sisters raced downstairs in the early dawn of Christmas morning to find out what was in your stocking or on the table. It wasn't much, but the toy horse and drum brought more joy than you have ever experienced since. In many of your lives those sweet moments have gone never to return. Those dear parents have crept behind the curtains of time and have entered the solemn realms of perpetual silence. Some of you had homes of your own just a little while ago, which memory brings fresh to your minds. You that are widows can hear the footfalls of loving husbands climbing the steps of your home, bringing from the markets the joy of Yuletide. The fire burned brightly; the table fairly groaned with viands of the season. The home wore a real smile; pictures tossed compliments to pictures; bric-a-brac to bric-a-brac; furniture seemed to speak to furniture in

tones of hallelujah and strains of glory. Since that sweet and rare oasis in your life's desert, crepe has been on your door. The strong man has been captured by the monster death, and you have followed him to the house of cold clay in some cemetery. Need I say that no Christmas has seemed so happy since? There are fathers here who are at a loss to know what to do with their motherless children. The home is broken up, the children are at one place and they are at another. The bells of Christmas simply bring fresh to their minds the joys that they once had, and which they have not now. There are those whose sad misfortunes have made their Christmas a gloomy one. It may be that sickness has blighted and eclipsed the joy that they expected; it may be that the father is out of work and can't explain to the children why they are to have no nice presents this year. O, there are many blighted hopes, broken prospects and saddened hearts because of circumstances so unfavorable and

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so crushing; but amidst it all and despite all, I am going to have you see by faith Heaven's Christmas Tree, whose top reaches the ceilings and whose limbs touch all the walls of the buildings. It is sagging with packages fixed by fingers of light. On one of them is your name. I am going to call them off and the Holy Spirit is going to take them to everyone, for there is one for each of you.

FIRST

HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS.

This package hangs on a limb that almost touches the ground. It is the lowest limb on the Tree of Life and is the easiest reached package on Heaven's Christmas Tree. It shines with the light and glitters of all the promises of God to sinners and to those who are discouraged and hopeless amid life's conflicts. It is for the struggling youth who is striving for an education with little or no help; who has had to leave school because of the want of funds to pay

the bills, or because of those who are depending upon his or her care. It may be that I am speaking tonight to some one who is on the point of despair as touching the accomplishment of their aim in life. You have experienced the loss of courage and ambition to further try to become anything like you hoped to be. I say to you tonight that here is a package on Heaven's Christmas Tree that holds a fit remedy for your case. It is set to the music of a beautiful song, a verse of which reads:

“Courage, brother, do not stumble,
Though your path be dark as
night,
There's a star that guides the
humble;
Trust in God and do the right.”

I may be speaking to some parents who have come here hopeless of ever making anything worth while out of their son or daughter, or ever having their children what they had hoped and prayed that they might be. I have a song for you:

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“Though the cloud may hide your
sun,

Ere your battle has been won,
If you still will watch and pray,
Soon will come a brighter day.”

I may be speaking to someone
who has tried to live a good life,
but has failed. The devil has told
you that you are one of those who
are doomed to misery here and hell
hereafter. You may have almost
decided to quit and give up trying.
I am going to beg of you a favor
tonight, and that is, reach up with
all the strength you have left
and take from Heaven's Christ-
mas Tree this low-limbed package,
Hope. It is so low that you can
reach it from the gutter; from the
gambling-den; from the barroom
and from the lowest places on
earth.

SECOND.

FORGIVENESS FOR THE GUILTY.

This package shines with the
brightness of the Redeemer's face
and stained with the blood of Cal-
vary. It is set in a frame carved
out of the love of God and is daz-

zling with a chandelier of a thousand promises, whose jets glow with the breath of the Man of sorrows and of many stripes. It is the most costly package on this tree. Those finger-marks you see on it were left there by the nail-pierced hand of the Man of Galilee. He tied it there in the darkness and earthquakes of that Friday afternoon when the dead woke up before the morning of the resurrection and the rocks broke their silence. There are many of you who need this package. Nobody can say that he has never sinned against God; nobody has had his sins canceled by his own deeds or deserving. Everybody, therefore, who is not now guilty of sin has been forgiven through the merits of Jesus Christ. It was the gift of God, for the sake of Jesus. When God forgives you he remembers your sins against you no more forever. I like that word "forever" when it is on the side of Heaven and happiness; I am afraid of it when on the side of misery and hell. But I want you

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to know that "forever" means just as long a time in hell as it does in Heaven, and just as long a time in Heaven as it does hell.

THIRD.

HELP FOR THE WEAK.

I have always thanked God for the numerous promises of help in the Bible. I don't know what Adam's strength was before the fall, but I do know that since that time human nature has not been equal in strength to the force of evil in this world. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life are mighty armies under management of the devil for the downfall of everything that is good in the human being. I have never known but one man on this whole earth who, from his birth to the death, could stand against the forces of this world. I need not tell you that man is Jesus Christ. He not only conquered the world, the flesh and the devil for himself, but for every believer throughout all time. It is this man, Jesus

Christ, who promises help to everyone who wants to live for God. My belief is that there are hundreds who are in sin and on the way to hell who don't want to be there. They wish that in some way they could change their lives, but are too weak to do so. I want you to see the mighty arm that reaches down to every helpless soul who wants to leave the devil. It is that mighty strong arm which upholds the world, weighs the hills and measures the waters. It is that great arm that destroyed Egypt, leveled the walls of Jericho, flung Babylon's glory in the dust, and plucked the Caesars from their thrones.

FOURTH.

FRIENDSHIP FOR THE FRIENDLESS.

Do you know the value of friendship? If not, it is because you have never been friendless in this world. No matter how strong you are physically, mentally, or financially, you need a friend. Perhaps the most unhappy people are not those who are poor in the things of

this world, but who are friendless. Someone has said that lamps may burn, stars may shine, and sun may blaze, yet dark indeed is the life that has no friendship. The cold friendship of the world is so uncertain, so ephemeral and so fleeting that no one can quite know whether tomorrow holds for them the same blessings that they enjoy today. The slender pedestals on which earth's friendship rests are so easily knocked over that one is afraid to move. If you have got money, fine clothes, beautiful home, popular relations or great ability, you may have friends and admirers; but when these are gone your brightest day may fade into a dark and dismal night.

I am reminded of an old gentleman who owned a little farm in Maryland. He had nice horses and other livestock about him and was in at least, easy circumstances. His two boys were sent away to school, one to study medicine and the other agriculture and business. About the time they graduated, their mother died, which left their

father a widower. He proposed to the farmer son that he should take the farm, and all he asked of him was that he be cared for in his own home until he died. When his will was made and the property all turned over to the two boys, the wife of the son who had charge of the farm began to complain of the old gentleman. He said his language was not learned and therefore she didn't want him in the parlor when her learned associates were about. She complained of his style of dress and of his habits of life in general; his hands were palsied and he would shake the coffee from his cup on the clean tablecloth; his teeth were gone and he couldn't eat the hard bread which she gave him. She wanted him to sleep in the attic and he couldn't climb the stairs well because of rheumatism. Oh, many things she complained of, until the son suggested that the old man be taken to the poorhouse. The old saint agreed to go rather than remain in the way and add to the discomfort of his son and

daughter-in-law. He begged for the old chair in which his lifelong friend, the mother of his children, had sat many a winter night knitting socks for the boys, before the big, open fireplace; also for his old hickory cane and the family Bible, which was covered with a piece of his own mother's dress by the hand of his departed wife. The old Bible was marked from Genesis to Revelation to indicate the chapters and the verses of his choice. They were all placed in the ox cart and himself sat in the shuck-bottomed chair. When the cart had passed through the road-gate and turned in the direction of the poorhouse, the old man turned his dimmed eyes toward the fields which he had cleared before his children were born, the ditches he had dug, the fences he had made and the buildings he had erected. After swallowing lumps that came up in his throat and wiping with his old red handkerchief the tears that were falling on his gray beard, he said to his son: "The people of my class are dead; your mother, my bosom

friend, sleeps beneath yon cedar tree. Stripped and alone and without friends, I go as a load of dirt to the poorhouse, and were it not for one *Friend* whom I learned to know when I was eleven years old, I would be most miserable today. That friend is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is as tenderly near me today as when I first found him. He is going to the poorhouse with me and will remain with me until it pleases him to take my spirit to his beautiful home on high. I fear, son," said he, "that you and your wife will occupy a house more fit to be called a poorhouse than the one you are taking me to, for where parents are not honored there is poverty indeed." The young man stopped his oxen and with face covered with his hands for a moment said: "Father, I am going to take you back home to stay there until you die, or I will stay in the poorhouse with you." I cite this narrative to show who is the true friend and what the friendship is that knows no change.

FIFTH.

FOR THE TROUBLED SOUL.

When I mention this package I know I start the springs of joy and the earnest longings from souls within this building. Only God knows the number of troubled and unhappy souls in this world. Christianity was never intended to take all the briars out of the fields, and the thorns, from the thorn hedges of the world; nor was it intended to make it so that a briar or a thorn cannot pierce a believer's hand or foot as easily as it can the feet and hands of other folks. Jesus said: "*In this world ye shall have tribulations.*" There are many kindred terms, but this one word "tribulation" is a pouch big enough to hold all the kinds of troubles and trials that one can ever have in this world. It is foolishness, as well as precarious, to plan to go through this world without trouble. There is one rule and one law that governs all of the physical conditions of this world. All is based upon

the conditions of cause and effect. Anyone who would have good effects must put in operation good causes. Christianity includes all of these good causes and therefore all of the good effects. While I do not wish to take from the Christian life any of the mysterious and supernatural elements—and there are many of them—I do wish to say that it includes also a whole lot of good common sense and real plain philosophy. To say that mishaps and wrong doings about us do not disturb us in any way is to bespeak a situation that neither Jesus Christ nor any of his disciples occupied in this world. Jesus said at one time "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." The Apostles all suffered great afflictions and most of them martyrdom. Paul complained of the thorn in the flesh. Oh, no, my friends, I am not trying to make you believe that because you have religion that you are going to heaven on flowery beds of ease, but I am happy to tell you that there is promise of sweet peace to all the

children of God. What peace we have in this world is not *instead of things*, but *in spite of things*. Just the thought of an unbroken and undisturbed quiet in the City of God where none can disturb or molest, where no shifting winds ever come to change the temperature, no night hides the beauty of the flowers of the new Eden, no winter time to beat the leaves from the Tree of Life, no change of government to make uncertain the social conditions, and no death to break up families—such promises as these are calculated to make one bear with patience all the rough conditions of poverty, afflictions and even death in this life. Oh, ye tired mothers, you who have not had a night's rest for a long time because of your sick baby or because of wayward children who would not come home until the small hours of the morning; oh, you heart-broken wives whose brutal husbands have made your lives miserable; and you fathers who have struggled against great odds and who have carried aching

hearts almost from the day you stood before the minister holding the hand of that girl in solemn pledge to be her husband—I say to all of you who are troubled, there is coming a day of absolute and glorious peace; a peace that will take all the gray hairs from your head, all the wrinkles from your face, all the tears from your eyes and all the pangs of sorrow from your heart.

There is just one more package that I wish to mention; it hangs on the top limb of Heaven's Christmas Tree. So bright is the light which shines upon it one cannot see it with physical eyesight. It is too far away from this world and is lighted by a sunlight too bright for the endurance of the natural sight. You will have to be spiritually-endowed to see this package. You will have to see it with the eyes of faith, for it is spiritually discerned. I am going to get the Holy Spirit to read the name, for every time I look that way I hear someone saying, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it

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entered into the heart of man the things that God hath prepared for them that love him." But, thank God, the Spirit has revealed them. On this top-limbed package the words,

FOR THE HOMELESS.

I know you orphan children, you widowed women, and you widower fathers are scarcely able to remain quiet under the sound of such happy news as this. As I speak to you, you are thinking of your own sweet homes of just a little while ago; sweet music and prattle of happy children come to you tonight like an echo. The joy of those days seems like a dream whose glories fade with the waking and die at the opening of day. Death has carried your loved ones to the grave; your homes are broken up and yourselves are homeless wanderers. I want you to fix your eyes toward the top limb of this Heaven's Christmas Tree and reading the title of the package which is near enough to the homeland of the soul to catch the light

of that eternal sun, to sing with
me,—

“My heavenly home is bright and
fair;

Nor pain nor death shall enter
there;

Its glittering towers the sun out-
shine.

That heavenly mansion shall be
mine.”

I rejoice with you in the prospect
of that great home-coming in
the sweet by and by, where no
children will mourn the loss of
mothers, no funeral dirges are
sung, no farewell tears are shed
and nobody will ever say good-bye.
I bid you in Christ's name and in
the light of yon heavenly dome and
within hearing distance of the
songs of the Redeemed and the hal-
lujahs of the Ransomed, bear
your crosses and endure your
pains a little longer, for,—

“Beyond the smiling and the weep-
ing,

We shall be soon;

Beyond the waking and the sleep-
ing,

We shall be soon.”

