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 CrossRoad Church UMC
 December 26, 2010

I. Metaphors of Christmas

II. Darkness

- A. (*Gen 1:1-4 NRSV*) *In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, {2} the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. {3} Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. {4} And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.*
- B. (*John 1:1-5 NRSV*) *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. {2} He was in the beginning with God. {3} All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being {4} in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. {5} The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*
- C. (*Isa 9:2 NRSV*) *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness-- on them light has shined.*
- D. (*Mat 4:16 NRSV*) *the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."*

III. Winter

- A. No one is certain of the birth date, month or exact season for the birth of Jesus.
- B. Even though we fondly equate Christmas with New England winters and pictures by *Currier and Ives*, the association of Jesus' birth with December 25th is driven by a more symbolic part of Christmas. The Winter Solstice. The shortest day of the year and the longest night.
- C. In many pre-Christian cultures, December is thought of as the dreary and dreaded month of the year.
- D. Believers began to use this metaphor to encourage people that the longest night is over, and that the sun will be shining again. Probably some of the same inspiration for the musical *Annie*.
- E. English poet *Christina Rossetti (1830- 1894)* wrote the classic poem, *In The Bleak Midwinter*:
 In the bleak midwinter, frost wind made moan,
 earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
 snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
 in the bleak midwinter, long ago.
- F. It inspired C.S. Lewis to describe Narnia, under the spell of the White Witch, not under the Lordship of Aslan, as *Always Winter and Never Christmas*

IV. Bells

- A. Were used to push back evil spirits.
- B. Later they were a means for announcing or celebrating an event.
- C. Our houses have door bells.
- D. Churches
- E. I heard the Bells on Christmas Day. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)
1. He wrote the poem to inspire hope at a time our country was in Civil War.

V. Christmas Bells

- VI. I HEARD the bells on Christmas Day
 Their old, familiar carols play,

And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

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, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men."

VII. Evergreen Trees

A. *(Gen 2:17 NRSV) but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."*

B. Sin came into the world when Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

C. *(1 Cor 15:45-47 NRSV) Thus it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. {46} But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. {47} The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.*

D. Jesus is the Tree of Life *(Rev 2:7 NRSV) Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God.*

E. Everlasting Life

F. *(John 3:16 KJV) For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

G. *(John 6:40 KJV) And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

VIII. Lights

A. *(John 8:12 NRSV) Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."*

B. Hark the Herald Angels Sing, Charles Wesley 1739

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!

Hail the Son of Righteousness!

Light and life to all He brings

Ris'n with healing in His wings

Mild He lays His glory by

Born that man no more may die

Born to raise the sons of earth

Born to give them second birth

Hark! The herald angels sing

"Glory to the newborn King!"

IX. Gifts

A. We probably don't think of them as metaphors, but it goes to *(John 3:16 NRSV) "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*

B. *(Mat 2:1-2 NRSV) In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, {2} asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." (Mat 2:11 NRSV) On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*

C. It is from that example that gift-giving became associated with Christmas.

X. Ben Fleming on Gift Giving

XI. March to the Manger.