

# Christ is Victor

NOV/DEC 2008

## “Sankey’s Song On Christmas Eve”

The stocky, mustached man nervously paced the deck of a Delaware River steamer, unbuttoning his frock coat, and regularly removing his derby to wipe his brow. He looked much older than his thirty-five years.

It was unseasonably warm for a Christmas Eve.

The man stared at the passing Pennsylvania shoreline, thinking of his family in Newcastle, some three hundred miles to the west, whom he might not see this Christmas, unless he made his train connection in Philadelphia. Christmas 1875.

*“Pardon me, sir.*

*“Aren’t you Ira Sankey, the gospel singer?”* He smiled at the lady and her husband... He thought he was gracious to acknowledge that he was, indeed, Ira D. Sankey.

*“We’ve seen your pictures in the newspapers.*

He had not wanted to be recognized: Not today, not tonight. He was tired and fretful and warm. Fact of the matter was, he was angry and provoked with Mr. Moody.

*“We thought you were still in England!”* said the lady. *“We returned last week, Madam,”* Mr. Sankey replied in his resonant baritone voice. And if Mr. Moody hadn’t insisted on more conferences and meetings, he thought, he would have been home by now for Christmas with his family.

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## “And the Child Grew, and Waxed Strong in Spirit.”

Luke 2:40

When a child or a boy is growing, who talks about his spirit waxing strong? When we talk of somebody

growing, we like to know how tall the person has grown, how muscular he is and so on. We say, *“He is a good runner, good tennis-player, hockey player and so on.”* But here the Bible speaks of waxing strong in the spirit.

I am observing very carefully how when people wax strong in their purses or wallets they become weak in spirit. The father of faith Abraham was not like that. God blessed him materially but it did not mean that there was any neglect, on his part, of his spiritual life. I see a very great danger here. When a man is converted he says, *“How I have wasted so much money on smoking and drinking. Now God has given me a new heart, so I will be careful with my money.”* He is careful not only with his money, but with his time too. He gives one-tenth of his income to God, and that brings more blessings. There will not be room enough to receive the blessings.

Handling the blessings of God needs another training. Seeing our indebtedness to God we ought to say, *“God has given me so much, I am all the more indebted to Him.”* In the case of Jesus, we are not told of any worldly blessings. From the earthly stand point he was a poor man. He was born in a manger and was wrapped with swaddling clothes. He was considered as the son of a carpenter.

During the Christmas season, we are tempted to buy this and that and go out on a spending spree. Every such accumulation of material things will only make our spirit weaker. I do not know how many people are going to tell the Lord that because of the T.V. they have lost their prayer time and

consequently became weak in the spirit. Everywhere people have become feeble because of these material acquisitions. Their houses are loaded with modern gadgets. But their spirit gets weakened. As far as I am concerned I am prepared to lose everything save my Bible. It will not bother me at all.

Sometimes our prayers do not appear to be answered. We wonder *“Where is my prayer going?”* God has promised, *“Call on Me and I will answer you and I will show you great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”* So, I will not walk by my feelings or even by fast answers to my prayers. I will walk by the promises of God. This calls for great spiritual strength. Otherwise we tend to get discouraged and depressed. But when we walk by the promise of God our spirit gets stronger.

Somehow when responsibilities increase our spiritual strength seems to decrease. On the other hand, when responsibilities increase our spiritual strength should also increase. With soul power and self-belief, we cannot do any spiritual work. When a church becomes large, some develop the strength of good habits and good discipline. Their souls become stronger. But they are not necessarily spirit-led people. They come to the meetings and enjoy good sermons. They are no good for intense spiritual battles. What is the use of being like that?

How many are strong in spirit? How do we talk with God? How closely do we walk with God? How strong is our spirit when we face temptations? How many words can we speak that bring encouragement and blessing to others? These are the things that indicate strength in the spirit.

May God help us in this Christmas occasion to wax strong in the spirit!

— Joshua Daniel

Instead he was a prisoner on a river steamer.  
"Mr. Sankey, would you sing for us?  
It is Christmas Eve, and we'd love to hear  
you."

Mr. Sankey said he would sing, and his presence was announced loudly across the deck. As the people gathered, he pondered what he might sing. He wished he had his portable pump organ which had become an integral counterpart to his singing. But no matter. He would sing a Christmas carol or two, unaccompanied. Perhaps he would get the passengers to sing along with him.

He tried to shed his melancholy. He was a famous person, whether he liked it or not, and he was not normally shy about his gifts. He was known on two continents as the gospel singer, the song leader and soloist working with Dwight L. Moody, who was surely the greatest evangelist of the day. Perhaps God had intended it this way for him to be in this place, on this boat, at this particular time.

"I thought I would sing a carol or two." Then he added, "But somehow I feel I should sing another song.

"Sing one of your own songs!" shouted someone unseen. "Sing 'The Ninety-And-Nine'!" commanded another.

"No, thank you very much, but I know what I must sing." He was smiling broadly now, feeling much better about himself and the situation, enjoying his congregation. "I shall sing a song by William Bradbury. And if you know it, as I'm sure many of you do, hum along with me."

Sankey began to sing,

"Savior, like a shepherd lead us,  
Much we need Thy tender care;

*In Thy pleasant pastures feed us,  
For our use Thy fold prepare:  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
Thou has bought us, Thine we are."*

He sang all three verses. There was uncommon silence, and Ira Sankey felt it would be inappropriate to sing anything else. So he simply wished everyone a Merry Christmas, and the people murmured a greeting in return. The silence returned, and he was alone.

"Your name is Ira Sankey?"

"Yes." He recognized neither the voice nor the man.

The man came out of the shadows. He was about his own age, with a beard beginning to turn gray, and comfortably but not fastidiously dressed. Perhaps he was in sales.

"Were you ever in the Army, Mr. Sankey?"

"Yes, I was. I joined up in 1860."

"I wonder if you can remember back to 1862. Did you ever do guard duty, at night, in Maryland?"

"Yes, I did!" Sankey felt a stab of memory and excitement. "It might have been at Sharpsburg."

"I was in the Army, too. The Confederate Army. And I saw you that night."

Sankey looked at him warily.

"You were parading in your blue uniform. Had you in my sights, you standing there in the light of the full moon, which was right foolish of you, you know." The man paused. "Then you began to sing."

Amazingly, Sankey remembered.

"You sang the same song you sang tonight, 'Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us.'"

"I remember."

"My mother sang that song a lot, but I never expected any soldier to be singing it at midnight on guard duty. Especially a Union soldier." The man sighed. "Obviously I didn't shoot you.

"And obviously I am grateful." Sankey smiled.

"I always wondered who you were. Who it was I didn't kill that night, on account of his singing an old Sunday school song.

Sankey just shook his head.

"Frankly, up until tonight, the name of Ira Sankey wouldn't have meant much to me. Guess I don't read the paper like I should. I didn't know you'd turn out to be so famous!" The man smiled for the first time. "but I reckon I would have recognized the voice and the song any place.

Sankey reflected on what might have been.

"Do you think we could talk a mite?" asked the man. "I think you owe it to me. Very little has gone right for me. Not before the war. Not during it. And not since."

Ira Sankey put an arm around his former enemy. They found a place in a quiet corner of the deck to sit and chat. Sankey's impatience and anger had passed. He no longer fretted that he might be delayed in seeing his family. Christmas would soon be here. It always came but sometimes in the strangest of ways.

The night was still warm but it seemed filled with brighter stars. Sankey even thought he heard the sound of angels' voices: singing of course, and singing the Good News.

— Selected

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## “Sun of Righteousness”

*“But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.” Malachi 4:2*

Christ is compared to the Sun of righteousness. The sun gives us light and heat. The sun kills the disease germs when its light is allowed to reach the earth in its intensity. Christ came with spiritual warmth for spiritual healing. He brought spiritual light. The sun is responsible for all the energy on the earth. The sun’s energy is stored up in oil, coal, and wood. So also whatever spiritual light, illumination, and warmth you find on earth is due to the Sun of righteousness- Christ. Christ was with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fire. Spiritual illumination in whatever form it has come, has come from the eternal Christ. Just as the sun rises in the east and drives away darkness and cold and bring warmth into the air, so when Jesus Christ came the terrible darkness in the world had to flee.

The impact of Christ’s teaching was felt all over the world. The reformation of Hinduism in India is also due to this impact. The Greeks were idolaters, but within 200 years after Christ the whole framework of their religion crumbled down. They reformed and re-reformed their religion to make it co-exist with Christianity, but ultimately could not succeed. The light of Christianity is penetrating Light. *“Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise.”* How true it is!

The long expected Messiah, who had already sent His rays by the prophets, has come. When Christ came the pure light came. The red glow, before the sun comes into view, is not the pure light. Even the sun appears red at the horizon because the light cornea beams through the dusty atmosphere of the surface of the earth. When

the prophets had spoken the earth received a part of the light. We get the pure light when the sun comes up higher. We cannot look at the sun when it comes overhead.

The corrupt priesthood had to hide its face and could not see Jesus. They wanted to kill Him and finish Him off. But human society felt the warmth of His light. Those who received His rays retained them. The words of Jesus stored up in the Bible still energize people. If we meditate on them, the Sun of righteousness rises in our hearts. As you study the Bible more and more you feel His warmth more and more. Healing also takes place.

When a man has the true righteousness of God, he ultimately treads down the enemies of righteousness. Jesus was crucified, but who stands condemned now? Those that condemned Him stand condemned now. Healing is automatic when we walk close to the Lord.

*“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.” (Malachi 4:5)* John the Baptist was Elijah. He came before Christ. He came with the spirit of Elijah. When he preached the people trembled. He did not care for food or dress. He ate wild food and wore very rough clothes and lived by river Jordan. The Jordan flows 600 feet below sea level and at the dead sea it is 1,300 feet below sea level. In the Jordan valley there were caves in which there were a number of Jewish priests, but only John the Baptist had the vision of Christ, and began to preach the gospel. People flocked to hear him. He preached and baptized. He said he was not the Christ. When he saw Jesus he said, *“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* Jesus came when the nation was astir by the preaching of John the Baptist.

When Christian living goes down, it is the family that is hit; the unifying love and discipline fail and children turn against parents; Homes are ruined. During those 400 years between the Old and New Testaments

many set-backs came to the Jewish religion.

The greatest hindrance to the preaching of John the Baptist was the sinful life of Herod, who pretended to promote the Jewish religion by building them synagogues, while living in overt sin. He had to go boldly and rebuke this big man. It meant imprisonment and death to him but the whole country felt the impact of this rebuke.

After this came Jesus, who brought them the perfect Truth. The world never heard such words or saw such a consistent life. People thronged to hear Him and be healed. Have you found the key to this powerful life?

May Jesus put the principle of the new life and the resurrection power into us!

— N. Daniel

## “The Wonder of Incarnation”

*“And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” (Luke 2: 12)*

When God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ was incarnate among men, it was a complete identification of the deity and humanity: God in Christ became man, in all points like unto man, except that He only of all the Sons of man was completely free from sin. The Lord of glory became a child of earth. How great a mystery! The tiny Babe lying in the manger of Bethlehem

**REALITY CHECK!**

“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.”

JOHN 3:16

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was the One without whom “*was not any thing made that was made.*” The tiny, chubby hand upon the cheek of the Virgin Mother was the hand of Him who holds the universe in the hollow of His hand. The baby arm about the mother’s neck was the arm of the One whose everlasting arms are underneath all things.

The whole wonder of the incarnation is this: it was for us, for you and for me, that God became flesh and dwelt among us. The personal application of His shed blood to our sinful hearts cleanses us; faith in Him imparts salvation to us. How wonderful that God should take upon Himself the form of man, become an inheritor of the “ills that flesh is heir to,” suffer the ignominy of the Cross! But how much more wonderful that He did this for us!

*He who is the Bread of Life began His ministry hungering.*

*He who is the Water of Life ended His ministry thirsty.*

*Christ hungered as man, yet fed the multitudes as God.*

*He was weary, yet He is our rest.*

*He prayed, yet He hears our prayers.*

*He was sold for thirty pieces of silver, yet He redeems sinners.*

*He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, yet He is the Good Shepherd.*

*He died, and by dying destroyed death.*

— Selected

## “The Joy of Giving- Santa Claus”

Long ago, in the country of Lycia, there lived a nobleman who had three daughters. He was a good, kind father and, while his daughters were young, he was able to give them all the things they needed because he was very rich.

When the girls grew up, troubles fell on the family and their father lost all his money. The family became so poor that often the girls did not have enough to eat and had to go to bed without any supper.

The time came when the girls wished to get married, but their parents told them sadly that they had no money for marriage, and this made the girls very unhappy.

In a monastery nearby there lived a saintly man called Nicholas. He heard about the plight of this family and was very sorry for them. His parents had left him some money when they died, but he felt it would be wrong to use it for himself. He loved people, because he loved Jesus, and he wanted to do the sort of things Jesus would do.

*‘Now there is a family I should help,’ thought Nicholas, ‘but I must do it without them seeing me or they will want to thank me. God has entrusted my money to me so that I can help others. It is God whom they must thank.’*

So he went to his treasure chest and counted out a bag of gold coins. He waited until it was evening and then he set off into the darkness.

As he drew near the nobleman’s house he saw, by the light of the moon, that one of the windows was open. He dropped the bag of gold through the open window, and turned and hurried away.

When the nobleman found the bag of gold on the floor he was very surprised.

*‘Wherever can this have come from?’* he asked, but as no one had seen Nicholas, no one could tell him.

*‘It must be a gift from a very kind person,’* he thought and, because he too was kind, he gave the gold to his eldest daughter. She was delighted. Now she had money and could marry.

A few nights later Nicholas went to the house again with a second bag of gold, and dropped it through the open window as before. Again he made sure no one saw him, and when the nobleman found the gold he was more puzzled than ever. He gave the gift to his second daughter, and she was delighted: now she too would be able to marry. The nobleman decided he would keep watch for the next few nights to see if he could discover who his kind friend was.

When Nicholas came for the third time, the girls’ father was ready for him. Just as Nicholas was turning to go, the nobleman appeared out of the shadows and caught hold of his robe. He drew him into the moonlight.

*‘Why! It’s Nicholas, the servant of God!’ he exclaimed in amazement. ‘Why do you hide yourself away like this?’*

Nicholas replied that he did not want the world to praise him for his deeds. *‘It is God who sent me to you, for he put the thoughts into my mind. You must give him the thanks,’* he finished.

So the nobleman and his wife had the joy of giving all three daughters a lovely wedding; and how happy they all were! But the one who had the greatest happiness of all was Nicholas himself, because he had discovered that there is no higher joy than in making others happy.

Later, Nicholas became Bishop of Myra, and spent his life helping others. Many years after he died, he was made a saint, and is now called Saint Nicholas.

The story of Saint Nicholas spread across the world and other people wanted to copy his good deeds. So when children receive presents at Christmas, and no one sees who brings them, it is said that Santa Claus has brought them. Santa Claus is another name for Saint Nicholas and, dressed in his red robes, he is known the world over. Some call him Father Christmas, but whatever Saint Nicholas is called, his kind actions are remembered as people copy his deeds and leave presents without being seen to do so.

— Selected

## Weekly Meetings —Welcome to All—

Sunday Morning Worship at 10:00 am at:  
**Community Christ Church**, in Novi MI  
46200 West Ten Mile Rd.

Call (248) 486-6326 or (248) 380-8633  
**University of Michigan** Mondays 7:00 pm  
Angell Hall, Room G-144  
Call (248) 446-3009

**University of Windsor** Sundays 5:00 pm  
Iona College 208 Sunset Ave.  
Call (519) 966-4603

**Oakland University:** (248) 374-5565

For info on other meetings, Call:  
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**Miami FL:** (561) 542-4890 or (561) 450-8414  
**Cincinnati OH:** (513) 478-4512

## Hear “The Lord’s Challenge” Weekly Gospel Radio

**Buffalo, NY:** 99.5 FM (WDCX) Sat. 9:00 am

**Detroit, MI:** 560 AM (WMUZ) Sat. 5:00 pm

**Shortwave** (Sundays 2:15 pm, EST)

WHRI 19 Metre band 15.355 MHz

**Des Moines, IA:** 1460 (KDMI)

Sat. 7:30 am, Sun. 11:00 pm

**Fort Wayne, IN:** 1090 AM (WFCV) Sat. 4:00 pm

**Council Bluffs, IA:** 1560 AM (KLNG) Sun. 8:00 am

**Atlanta, GA:** 86 AM (LOVE 86) Sun. 2:00 pm

**Guyana:** GBC - Sundays at 6:30 pm

**Trinidad:** 610AM (NBS) Mon. 9:30pm

## U. S. Thanksgiving Weekend Retreat ALL ARE WELCOME

Friday, November 28th Through Sunday November 30th  
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