

# Christmas Eve

December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007

“By the tender compassion of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” (Luke 1:78-79)

On this day before Christmas, many people wait for the tender compassion of God to manifest in their lives. The old woman in the city high rise will spend this Christmas season alone, and the day will drag by ever so slowly for her. Can God’s compassion break in upon her loneliness? A woman with three teenage children and a husband that she loves deeply will spend this Christmas in the hospital because the cancer that has invaded her body has depleted her strength. She wonders if there will be a moment without pain, a moment when she can smile on her last Christmas here on earth. Will God give her that tender gift? A soldier crouches down in the doorway of an abandoned store in downtown Baghdad and wonders that if God is compassionate how He can allow this bloodshed to continue. A child is excited about the Christmas presents under the tree but wishes that both parents would be present when she opens her gifts. Divorce has taught her a hard lesson about love and she wonders why miracles don’t happen in her life.

The tender compassion of God is needed so badly in the world that it may seem that it will never arrive. But the truth is that God’s compassion falls upon us every single day. We just don’t realize it. God’s compassion is all about grace and not so much about life turning out the way that we want it to. God’s love is about taking the lemons of life and tasting their tartness in order to clean the palate, so that when the next course of salvation is offered we will be able to experience it more fully.

In the compassion of God the dawn of creation did not include the beginning of human life for we would not have survived. God waited till just the right time, when all the conditions were just right for humanity to begin the journey of life. Like a parent who understands that it is not good for a child to get whatever he or she wants God did not send the Savior right away either. There was a right time for Jesus to walk the dusty roads of Judea and a right place for Him to die upon a cross.

God knows that to rescue us before we have learned the hard lessons of life is indulgence, not compassion. All we can be certain of is that God will grace us with tender compassion at the moment that we need it the most.

## *Reflection Questions*

- 1.) What “hard lesson” is God trying to teach me now?*
- 2.) Does my ministry bring light to neighbors in spiritual darkness?*

*Prayer: Lord, on this Christmas Eve may I be willing to wait for the right moment to know Your tender compassion.*