

We Believe: All Is Well
By Jason Huff
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All is well. That's the title of our special music tonight, and that's a theme we hear in Christmas music a lot. Sometimes we even make it sentimental – in *Away In A Manger*, baby Jesus wakes up but doesn't cry. If you know of a baby who is woken up from a sound sleep unexpectedly that doesn't cry, I'd like to know about it. *O Holy Night* says “a weary world rejoices” when the Savior comes. *Silent Night* tells us on the night of Jesus' birth, “all is calm, all is bright.” It's a wonderful picture we have of Bethlehem, one that maybe we'd like to believe, even though there's very little in the Bible that says those things are true.

But at a deeper level, we know that all is not well. The last twenty months, things have not been well; we've been in what feels like constant questioning, constant fear, constant concern. Some of us have lost loved ones. Some of us have had diagnoses that we didn't really want to hear. And tragic events of recent days have struck all too close to home. Nothing feels safe anymore. All is not well. We'd question the sanity of anyone who said that it was.

We know that sin is the ultimate issue, that we have done this, that our disobedience to God as the human race has brought calamity on us all. We know that, as Paul's letter to the Romans tells us, that the wages of sin is death. We know, in the depths of our hearts, that all is not well because all is not well with us. We can pretend that we are good people, we can pretend that things are fine, but we know they are not. We know we need a Savior because there's so much that needs saving in our world. We live in a world of violence and injustice, of sickness and death, and we're all tired of it. We're not just tired – we're soul weary. But that's precisely why we need Christmas, because we need Christ.

In the 1300s, there was a Christian mystic named Julian of Norwich. She was the first woman we know who wrote in English. She lived during the time of the Black Plague, so she knew what it was to live in dangerous times full of fear. She herself became sick and was near death when she had a series of visions. She eventually got better, and she spent the rest of her days meditating on and interpreting those visions. Her words certainly aren't Scripture, but they do help us to think through our state.

In her most famous vision, she confessed wondering about why God did not stop sin from entering the world. She had longed to know God better, but her sin had hindered her. And in the vision, Jesus answered her saying that sin was necessary, yet “all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.” And she described Christ talking to her saying, “These words were said most tenderly, showing no manner of blame to me nor to any who shall be saved.” And Julian concluded that no matter the situation, no matter how bad things might be, she should be compassionate and joyful because in Jesus, all things will eventually be set right. All is well because all will be well, and all manner of things will be well.

Like I said, I don't take visions of Jesus at face value. They may happen, but they aren't Scripture. But what Scripture tells us is pretty much the same thing. Think about Jesus' words in John 16:33. He tells the disciples, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." In other words, despite all the heartache and loss and persecution they face, take heart – all is well! Why is all well? Because Christ has overcome the world.

Paul writes his second letter to Timothy while sitting in prison, awaiting certain death, having been abandoned by most of his friends; he's cold, and he doesn't even have his Scriptures with him, it seems. And yet he writes, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day -- and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." All is well and all manner of things will be well because of Christ's salvation.

Over and over again, when people are greeted by an angel of the Lord or some vision of the Lord, they are terrified. And yet, almost every time, they are told, "Do not be afraid." All will be well. At the end of time, recorded in Revelation 21, we're told, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." All is well, and all manner of things shall be well.

Friends, on this night, we celebrate the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We live in trying times. They may not get better any time soon. And yet, because Christ came, all is well, and all will be well, and all manner of things will be well. Not because this world is getting better, but because we are not meant for this world. Christ came to our world so that one day all who would believe might be transported to His world, His heavenly Kingdom, where the new heaven and the new earth will meet.

I encourage you, friends, believe in Christ tonight. Our hope doesn't lie in this world at all. Our hope lies tonight in a manger. Our hope lies in Jesus, who came to rescue us. Our hope lies in the Christ who came down from heaven for us, who lived and died and rose again for us. Whatever is troubling you tonight, whatever you grieve, whatever is holding you back, bring it before the manger tonight. The truly good news of salvation comes from the king of creation come to us. When we turn our lives over to Him, we can know that no matter our circumstances, all shall be well, both now and always.