



The Message of Christmas

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39th Christmas Celebration

Bonsoir tout le monde...C'est vraiment un plaisir d'être ici avec vous. Joyeux Noël!

I am happy to be here with each of you. It is a real honour and a joy. And I would like to say at the very beginning, a special thank you to Darlene and of course Harold—dear friends of Crystal and I and have served as wonderful mentors and helped along the journey. I so appreciate the ministry that they have here on Parliament Hill. And all who have been touched by Darlene and Harold know the impact that they have. It is such a ministry of influence—positive influence of joy and hope that they bring here to the Hill.

It is a great privilege to be with each one of you. All of my colleagues from all different sides of the House, it is a joy to be here. That is the beauty of Christmas: it brings us all together. The real meaning of Christmas is the uniting force in our world.

When asked by Darlene to just share brief remarks—and I know that that is a tough task to ask a politician and a former pastor to bring brief remarks—but I am going to do my best. And Harold is going to go like this **hand movement to cut off speaker** when I have reached my three minute mark. But I will try to get in and out of the chute as quickly as possible, because we have a great guest speaker that's going to be sharing tonight.

I will say this. I know the theme is around light and light in the darkness. I couldn't help myself as thoughts started coming as it related to that. Of course we all have images of Christmas. When we think of Christmas, we think of that starry night. I don't know how you see these images. It is almost a romantic image of shepherds on the hillside, tending sheep.

What preceded that was not quite so pretty. We romanticize the image of Christmas, but it happened at a dark time in human history. In fact Luke chapter 2 tells us it came in a time of taxation—don't worry I am not going to go into taxation time. But it says they were called to Bethlehem for the purposes of taxation. Can you imagine they still had taxes back then and they're still dealing with that today?!

During a taxing time, during a heavy time, during a season of uncertainty and great heaviness, a couple who were thrust into a circumstance they could have never imagined, stepped out on a journey of great uncertainty. We witness as this young lowly peasant girl, who was selected by God to carry out an unbelievable mission, came to Bethlehem under of the shroud of gossip, uncertainty, fear, wondering what the next chapter would hold and whether they would even be able to find a suitable place in which she could give birth to her child. And you can watch as Joseph would be doing—as all of us men in the room would do that love our spouse—frantically searching for the right place and goes to an inn and there is no room in the inn. Not that there isn't a parallel to today; there is still not much room for Him in society, sadly.

His love for us was so great, He made a way...our King of kings and Lord of lords...came by way of a barn...a lowly place. Surrounded and witnessed not by greatness, or rulers in authority, but by commoners and lowly shepherds.

But yet His love for us was so great, He made a way: even if it came by way of the back door, through uncertain circumstances, into a dark and lowly place. For our King of kings and Lord of lords did not come via the palace, He came by way of a barn, a stable, a lowly place. Surrounded and witnessed not by greatness, or rulers in authority, but by commoners and lowly shepherds.

The greatest news to ever be shared! For a darkened world that is filled with uncertainty, fear, questions, there is a Light...He will be a King for *all* people!

The greatest news to ever be shared! The Savior was being born that night and shared with common folk on the hillside and the angel said, "I've got great news, glad tidings of great joy, for a darkened world that is filled with all kinds of uncertainty, all kinds of fear, all kinds of questions. We've got some light for you: peace on earth, goodwill towards all people. This night a Saviour has been born. You will find him wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying—not in a crib, not in a bed, but in a feed box, in a manger. And He will be a King for *all* people—not just the up and out, not just the down and out, but *all* people.

You can find peace. You can find hope. There is a Light that shines bright in the darkness of night—a nightlight.

Tonight I can't help but think that in our world that is still filled with many burdens, darkness and heaviness of heart and people all throughout our country and throughout nations of the world are wondering where can we turn to for hope. I am so thankful that this evening there is still a Light that shines and it's for all people—irregardless of race, nationality or background—that offers a light in the darkened world. That says you can still find peace. You can still find hope. And there's still a Light that shines bright in the darkness of night.

And so my little Christmas message for you this evening—and I hope that I am within the timeframe here Darlene—is there is a nightlight. My little girl, she still likes her nightlight on...she's in Grade 5. She says, "Dad make sure the night light is on when you leave."

After we have our prayers and goodnight Bible story, I turn the little night light on. It doesn't take a whole lot of light to make a huge difference in a little girl's heart.

The baby in the manger, that little Light transformed our world and lightens up the darkest of places in our lives.

The baby in the manger—He seemed so small. But that little Light transformed our world and lightens up the darkest of places in our lives. Including those who are walking through the very valley of the shadow of death, depression, despair and economic hardship.

From my family to yours, to my colleagues, to all of you, I say Merry Christmas and may the Light of Christmas fill your hearts with joy and peace! God Bless you, thank you.