I would like you to listen to something. (play Seven O'clock News/Silent Night over the sound system).

That was a song by Simon and Garfunkle called: Seven O'clock News/Silent Night. If you noticed, there was a news broadcast in background. It is hard to hear at first, but by the end it drowns out the strains of Silent Night. It was supposed to be there. It is what makes the song so haunting and so delivering of a very important truth about Christmas.

You know sometimes we get lost among the candles and decorations and angels singing over the sweet Nativity sets. Everything seems so bright and wonderful in the Christmas season. All is calm, all is bright. Right? We try to keep it that way in our homes. Turn off TV, turn on Christmas lights, just peace and quiet. We do not want anything to intrude on peaceful family moments.

Even in the church we focus on God coming into the world. We tell of and sing of angels from the realms of glory coming to earth. We speak of the Son of God, the King of kings coming from heaven to earth. We paint idealized images of Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger amidst the friendly beasts. We visualize halos hovering over their heads while shepherds interact with angels and worship the God-Child.

It is so easy to do this to Christmas both here and at home because it helps us forget. Forget? Yes, the way we tend to celebrate Christmas helps us forget the real world. The place beyond the carols where people are sick and in pain and emotionally distraught, where sin - not Santa - reigns supreme.

It has been a while since I had heard the song we played earlier. I had forgotten how dated the news cast was. The news cast talked about escalation of US involvement in Vietnam, poverty, racial unrest, riots, homelessness, drug overdoses, Martin Luther King Jr as still being alive, and Richard Nixon as a former vice-president. That was the real world when Simon and Garfunkle released this song in 1966.

What struck me is that as bad as things were then, they got a whole lot worse. Many of our sons died in Vietnam. King would be murdered. Our cities would riot and burn. Drugs would sweep through the society. Poverty grew. Nixon would resign. And we could keep the tape rolling with more stories of death and destruction, sin and sorrow down through the years space shuttles exploded, AIDS epidemic in Africa, 9/11 and Las Vegas shootings. That is the soundtrack of our world. It perpetually goes from bad to worse.


Is it any wonder that we tend to use Christmas to forget? Is it any wonder that we try to turn off the news and create at least an evening's worth of All is calm, all is bright - a silent night!? But that is not the solution. Even if we succeed in forgetting, even if we truly do shut out the real world, it just comes back, because we have to go back into it. We do not perpetually live in Bedford Falls.

What we need is a solution to what causes all that is wrong in the real world. And that solution comes when we stop trying to get lost in the Christmas story, and start realizing its profound truth: that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, came into the world. He
came into a real world, not a Christmas card. He came into a world so full of sin, sickness and death, that he did not have much time to just lay on the hay and listen to the angels sing. He came into the real world, in order to be where the darkness and the pain and the sinners and the suffering and the death were. He came here - to the real world - so he could be its real Savior - our real Savior - your real Savior.

I pray that Simon and Garfunkle's Seven O'clock News/Silent Night helps you remember what is so easy to overlook the Christmas Gospel, Today in the town of David - a place in the real world – a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. But while we grasp this truth, let's not totally forget the angels and that some saw a miracle. Common, everyday, real-world shepherds trying to feed their families left the flocks in the field to go and see the thing the angels told them about. And let's remember how they went and then told everyone all that they had seen and heard. And how people were amazed. It is not everyday in this real world that one hears angels and sees light from heaven and finds God laying in a manger crying. That is not real world stuff. That is something from another dimension, from the heavenly realms. And so all were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

The truth is Jesus came from realms of glory into the real world, our real world. A world where people are sick and hurting and distraught and depressed and oppressed - a world where people sin and where people die. But that is why he came bringing life and light, forgiveness and love, peace and hope, and eternal salvation to all who would believe.

A little while ago we sang Silent Night. When this service is done, we will walk into a 7 o'clock news world, as we always do. But this time, consider it your chance to record your own version of Seven O'clock News/Silent Night. This time do not let real world troubles drown out the Gospel's song of this holy and silent night. At the same time hear the real troubles of the real world, of our world, of your world. And so believe the profound truth of Christmas truth that it was for the salvation of this real world that Jesus came on that silent night so long ago. Amen.

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