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**Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”**  
**The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945**

**Series 2: “You have nothing to fear but fear itself:” FDR  
and the New Deal**

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**File No. 1106**

**1937 December 24**

**Lafayette Park, WA - Christmas Greeting**

THIS IS THE PRESIDENT'S  
READING COPY

SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT

CHRISTMAS TREE

~~JACKSON-PARK~~

DECEMBER 24, 1937.

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Last night before I went to sleep I chanced to read in an evening paper a story by a columnist which appealed to me so much as a Christmas sermon that this afternoon, on the occasion of lighting the National Christmas Tree in *Lafayette Square* ~~Jackson Park~~ in front of the White House, I am going to read to you from it. *Here is his parable:*

"We were sitting in a high room above the chapel, and although it was Christmas Eve, my good friend the dominie seemed curiously troubled. And that was strange, for he was a man extremely sensitive to the festivities of his faith.

The joys and sorrows of Jesus were not to him events of a remote past but more current and living happenings than the headlines in the newspapers.

At Christmas he seems actually to hear the voice of the herald angels.

My friend is an old man, and I have known him for many years, but this was the first time the Nativity had failed to rouse him to an ecstasy. He admitted that something was wrong. "Tomorrow," he said, "I must go down into that chapel and preach a Christmas sermon. And I must speak of peace and good will toward men. I know you think of me as a man too cloistered to be of any use to my community. And I know that our world is one of war and hate and enmity.

And you, my young friend, and others keep insisting that before there can be brotherhood there must be the hashing of heads. You are all for good will to men, but you want to note very many exceptions. And I am still hoping and praying that in the great love of God the final seal of interdiction must not be put on even one.

You may laugh at me, but right now I am worrying about how Christmas came to Judas Iscariot.

It is the habit of my friend when he is troubled by doubts to reach for the Book, and he did so now. He smiled and said, "Will you assist me in a little experiment?"

"I will close my eyes and you hold out the Bible to me. I will open it at random and run my fingers down a page. You read me the text which I blindly select."

I did as he told me, and he happened on the twenty-sixth chapter of St. Matthew and the twenty-fifth verse. I felt sorry for him, for this was no part of the story of the birth of Christ but instead an account of the great betrayal.

"Read what it says," commanded the dominie. And I read, "Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, 'Master, is it I?' He said unto him, 'Thou hast said.'" "

My friend frowned, but then he looked at me in triumph. "Now I remember. My hand is not as steady as it used to be. You should have taken the lower part of my finger and not the top. Read the twenty-seventh verse. It is not an eighth of an inch away. Read what it says."

And I read, "And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink ye all of it.'"

"Mark that!" cried the old man exultantly. "Not even to Judas, the betrayer, was the wine of life denied. I can preach my Christmas sermon now, and my text will be, 'Drink ye all of it.' Good will toward men means good will to every last son of God. Peace on earth means peace to Pilate, peace to the thieves on the cross and peace to poor Iscariot."

I was glad, for he had found Christmas, and  
I saw by his face that once more he heard the  
voice of the herald angels."

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SPRENCH OF THE PRESIDENT  
CHRISTMAS TREE  
LAFAYETTE SQUARE  
DECEMBER 24, 1937

Last night before I went to sleep I chanced to read in an evening paper a story by a columnist which appealed to me so much as a Christmas sermon that this afternoon, on the occasion of lighting the National Christmas Tree in Lafayette Square in front of the White House, I am going to read to you from it. Here is his parable: -

"We were sitting in a high room above the chapel, and although it was Christmas Eve, my good friend the dominie seemed curiously troubled. And that was strange, for he was a man extremely sensitive to the festivities of his faith.

"The joys and sorrows of Jesus were not to him events of a remote past but more current and living happenings than the headlines in the newspapers. At Christmas he seems actually to hear the voice of the herald angels.

"My friend is an old man, and I have known him for many years, but this was the first time the Nativity had failed to rouse him to an ecstasy. He admitted that something was wrong. 'Tomorrow,' he said, 'I must go down into that chapel and preach a Christmas sermon. And I must speak of peace and good will toward men. I know you think of me as a man too cloistered to be of any use to my community. And I know that our world is one of war and hate and animity.

"And you, my young friend, and others keep insisting that before there can be brotherhood there must be the bashing of heads. You are all for good will to men, but you want to note very many exceptions. And I am still hoping and praying that in the great love of God the final seal of interdiction must not be put on even one. You may laugh at me, but right now I am worrying about how Christmas came to Judas Iscariot.'

"It is the habit of my friend when he is troubled by doubts to reach for the Book, and he did so now. He smiled and said, 'Will you assist me in a little experiment?'

"I will close my eyes and you hold out the Bible to me. I will open it at random and run my fingers down a page. You read me the text which I blindly select.'

"I did as he told me, and he happened on the twenty-sixth chapter of St. Matthew and the twenty-fifth verse. I felt sorry for him, for this was no part of the story of the birth of Christ but instead an account of the great betrayal.

"Read what it says,' commanded the dominie. And I read, 'Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, 'Master, is it I?' He said unto him, 'Thou hast said.'

"My friend frowned, but then he looked at me in triumph. 'Now I remember. My hand is not as steady as it used to be. You should have taken the lower part of my finger and not the top. Read the twenty-seventh verse. It is not an eighth of an inch away. Read what it says.'



Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

"And I read, 'And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink ye all of it.'

"Mark that!" cried the old man exultantly. 'Not even to Judas, the betrayer, was the wine of life denied. I can preach my Christmas sermon now, and my text will be, 'Drink ye all of it.' Good will toward men means good will to every last son of God. Peace on earth means peace to Pilate, peace to the thieves on the cross and peace to poor Iscariot.'

"I was glad, for he had found Christmas, and I saw by his face that once more he heard the voice of the herald angels."

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# It Seems to Me

By Heywood Brown

We were sitting in a high room above the chapel, and although it was Christmas Eve, my good friend the domestic seemed curiously troubled. And that was strange, for he was a man extremely sensitive to the festivities of his faith.



The joys and sorrows of Jesus were not to him events of a remote past, but more current and living happenings than the headlines in the newspapers. [On Good Friday I have almost expected to see the stigma on his hands, for each year he feels that Christ is crucified again. But on Easter morning the scene is literally rolled away, and at Christmas he seems actually to hear the voice of the herald angels.]

My friend is an old man, and I have known him for many years, but this was the first time the Nativity had failed to rouse him to an ecstasy. He admitted that something was wrong. "Tomorrow," he said, "I must go down into that chapel and preach a Christmas sermon. And I must speak of peace and good will toward men. I know you think of me as a man too clattered to be of any use to my community. And I know that our world is one of war and hate and enmity."

## The One Recourse.

"And you, my young friend, and others keep insisting that before there can be brotherhood there must be the bashing of heads. You are all for good will to men, but you want to note very many exceptions. And I am still hoping and praying that in the great love of God the final seal of interdictio must not be put on even one. You may laugh at me, but right now I am worrying about how Christmas came to Judas Iscariot. [You may remember that one of your great heroes, Gene Deib, once said, 'As long

as there is a soul in prison I am not free.' Peace on earth must be for all or it is not peace.]"

It is the habit of my friend when he is troubled by doubts to reach for the Book, and he did so now. He smiled and said, "Will you assist me in a little experiment?"

"Like the men of Athens," he added, "I am too superstitious. I will close my eyes and you hold out the Bible to me. I will open it at random and run my fingers down a page. You read me the text which I blindly select."

I did as he told me, and he happened on the twenty-sixth chapter of St. Matthew and the twenty-fifth verse. I felt sorry for him, for this was no part of the story of the birth of Christ but instead an account of the great betrayal.

"Read what it says," commanded the dominie. And I read, "Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, 'Master, is it I?'" He said unto him, "Thou hast said."

## Close to the Test.

My friend frowned, but then he looked at me in triumph. "Now I remember. My hand is not as steady as it used to be. You should have taken the lower part of my finger and not the top. Read the twenty-seventh verse. It is not an eighth of an inch away. Read what it says."

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"Mark that!" cried the old man exultantly. "Not even to Judas, the betrayer, was the wine of life denied. I can preach my Christmas sermon now, and my text will be, 'Drink ye all of it.' Good will toward men means good will to every last son of God. Peace on earth means peace to Pilate, peace to the thievets on the cross and peace to poor Iscariot."

[And whether the old man was right or wrong,] I was glad, for he had found Christmas, and I saw by his face that once more he heard the voice of the herald angels.

SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT

CHRISTMAS TREE

*Leffayette Square*

~~JACKSON PARK~~

DECEMBER 24, 1937.

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