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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. 1261**

**1939 December 24**

**Address at Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremonies**

This is a copy of the  
President's Reading Copy.  
The Reading Copy was given  
to Miss Daisy Suckley.

RADIO ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT  
CHRISTMAS, 1939.

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The old year draws to a close. It began with dread of evil things to come and it ends with the horror of another war adding its toll of anguish to a world already bowed under the burden of suffering laid upon it by man's inhumanity to man.

But, thank God for the interlude of Christmas. This night is a night of joy and hope and happiness and promise of better things to come. And so in the happiness of this Eve of the most blessed day in the year I give to all of my countrymen the old, old greeting -- "Merry Christmas - Happy Christmas".

A Christmas rite for me is always to re-read that immortal little story by Charles Dickens, "A Christmas Carol". Reading between the lines and thinking as I always do of Bob Cratchit's humble home as a counterpart of millions of our own American homes, the story takes on a stirring significance to me.

Old Scrooge found that Christmas wasn't a humbug. He took <sup>with</sup> to himself the spirit of neighborliness. But today neighborliness no longer can be confined to one's <sup>more</sup> little neighborhood. Life has become too complex for that. In our country neighborliness has gradually spread its boundaries -- from town, to county, to state and now at last to the whole nation.

For instance, who a generation ago would have thought that a week from tomorrow - January 1, 1940 - tens of thousands of elderly men and women <sup>living</sup> in every state and every county and every city of the nation will begin to receive checks every month for old age retirement insurance -- and not only that but also insurance benefits for the wife, the widow, the orphan children and even dependent parents? Who would have thought a generation ago that people who lost their jobs would, for an appreciable period, receive unemployment insurance - that the needy, the blind and the crippled children are receiving some measure of protection which will reach down to the millions of Bob Cratchits, the Marthas

and the Tiny Tims of our own "four room homes".

In these days of strife and sadness in many other lands,  
let us in the nations which still live at peace forbear to  
give thanks only for our <sup>own</sup> good fortune in our <sup>own</sup> peace.

Let us rather pray that we may be given strength to  
live for others -- to live more closely to the words of the  
Sermon on the Mount and to pray that peoples in the nations  
which are at war may also read, learn and inwardly digest  
these deathless words.

May their import reach into the hearts of all men  
and of all nations.

I offer them as my Christmas message.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's  
is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall  
be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit  
the earth.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst  
after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven".

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HOLD FOR RELEASE

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FOR THE PRESS

December 25, 1939.

CAUTION: The President's Christmas greeting must be held for release.

Release is automatic for five ten o'clock (5:10)  
P.M., U.S.T., December 24, 1939.

NOTE: Please safeguard against premature release.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT  
Secretary to the President

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RADIO ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT

CHRISTMAS, 1939.  
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The old year draws to a close. It began with dread of evil things to come and it ends with the horror of another war adding its toll of anguish to a world already bowed under the burden of suffering laid upon it by man's inhumanity to man.

But, thank God for the interlude of Christmas. This night is a night of joy and hope and happiness and promise of better things to come. And so in the happiness of this Eve of the most blessed day in the year I give to all of my countrymen the old, old greeting -- "Merry Christmas -- Happy Christmas".

A Christmas rite for me is always to re-read that immortal little story by Charles Dickens, "A Christmas Carol". Reading between the lines and thinking as I always do of Bob Cratchit's awfully lame as a counterpoint of millions of our own American homes, the story takes on a stirring significance to me.

Old Scrooge found that Christmas wasn't a humbug. He took to himself the spirit of neighborliness. But today neighborliness no longer can be confined to one's little neighborhood. Life has become too complex for that. In our country neighborliness has gradually spread its boundaries -- from town, to county, to state and now at least to the whole nation.

For instance, who a generation ago would have thought that a week from tomorrow - January 1, 1940 - tens of thousands of elderly men and women in every State and every county and every city of the nation will begin to receive checks every month for old age retirement insurance -- and not only that but also insurance benefits for the wife, the widow, the orphan children and even dependent parents? Who could have thought a generation ago that people who lost their jobs would, for an appreciable period, receive unemployment insurance - that the needy, the blind and the crippled children were receiving some measure of protection which will reach down to the millions of Bob Cratchits, the Martins and the Tiny Tims of our own "four room houses".

In these days of strife and sadness in many other lands, let us in the nations which still live at peace forbear to give thanks only for our good fortune in our peace.

Let us rather pray that we may be given strength to live for others -- to live more closely to the words of the Sermon on the Mount and to pray that peoples in the nations which are at war may also read, learn and imminently signat those deathless words.

May their import reach into the hearts of all men and of all nations.

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 contemporaneously 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.



I offer them as my Christmas message.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven".

\* \* \* \* \*

CHRISTMAS, 1939.

*A*

~~This is the season for the observance of those rites and customs~~  
so dear to every family's heart, <sup>A Christmas</sup> ~~and these rites~~ for me is always  
to re-read that immortal little story by Charles Dickens, "A Christmas  
Carol". ~~Reading~~ <sup>Reading</sup> between the lines and thinking as I always  
do of Bob Cratchit's humble home as a counterpart of millions of our  
own American homes, ~~the~~ <sup>This</sup> story ~~is~~ <sup>topic</sup> on a ~~rather~~ stirring  
significance to me.

Old Scrooge found that Christmas wasn't a humbug, ~~and became imbued~~  
~~with~~ the spirit of neighborliness. But today neighborliness no longer  
can be confined to one's little neighborhood. Life has become too  
complex for that. In our country, neighborliness has gradually spread  
its boundaries--from town, to county, to state and now at last to the  
whole nation. ~~With the Social Security Act and other Federal measures~~  
~~aimed at the conservation of our family life, we have made neighborliness~~  
~~an American nation.~~

*B*

~~And this year we have taken another big step toward making the  
well-being of every family the prime concern of the nation. For on  
January 1 additional benefits will begin to be paid under the amended  
Federal Social Security Act. I wonder how many of us realize that from  
now on the Social Security Act provides not only monthly old age  
retirement insurance for the individual wage-earner but also insurance  
benefits for his wife, his wife and orphaned children and even his  
dependent parents. These new insurance benefits, together with unem-  
ployment insurance and the other more familiar aids your Government gives~~

*He took to himself*

to the needy, the blind, and the crippled children, will provide some measure of protection for the millions of Bob Cratchits, the Martins, and the Tiny Tims of our own "four-room homes".

While we still have a long way to go in providing adequate protection to all the families of this nation let us be thankful for the progress we have made and let us pledge ourselves anew to help one another in this great cooperative undertaking we have come to call Social Security.

Radio address of the President to be broadcast on a nationwide hookup from the Ellipse at 5:11 P.M., E.S.T., December 24, 1939.

The old year draws to a close. It began with dread of evil things to come and it ends with the horror of another war adding its toll of anguish to a world already bowed under the burden of suffering laid upon it by man's inhumanity to man.

But, thank God for the interlude of Christmas. This night is a night of joy and hope and happiness and promise of better things to come. And so in the happiness of this eve of the most blessed day in

the year I give to all of my countrymen the old, old greeting <sup>"Merry</sup> ~~— the —~~  
~~Christmas — Happy Christmas!"~~  
~~— singing of the angel choir which sang on the first Christmas — "Gloria~~  
~~to God in the highest and on earth, peace, good-will towards men"~~

A + B With what hope of peace and joy do we turn this year to the manger in Bethlehem whence came through the message of an angel to an obscure young woman of Galilee a Revelation which was destined in the fullness of time to remold the hearts of men and to redirect the history of the world.

When the Babe, whose birth we celebrate tonight, became a man He delivered His message in deathless words which have come down to us as the Sermon on the Mount. That message was the guide of our fathers. It was the strength of those who laid the foundations of this, our country. It still has power to give new strength and new courage even to the heroic. It is the hope of mankind.

The lesson of the Sermon on the Mount, the heart and soul of Christian Revelation, is summed up in the eight Beatitudes which so many of the millions to whom I am speaking tonight first learned at their mother's knee. Those eight simple declarations of blessedness are as sure

~~a guide to peace today as when they first were uttered nineteen hundred years ago above the Sea of Galilee in the far off Syrian hills. Would that their import might reach the hearts of all men and of all nations. I offer them as my Christmas message.~~

"Blessed are the poor in spirit; for their's is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for their's is the kingdom of heaven."