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## I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY

Henry w. Longfellow, 1807-1882

“And He will be their peace.” (Micah 5:5)

The cruel miseries caused by the Civil War greatly distressed the beloved American poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. With heaviness of spirit he put his thoughts into words to create this fine carol. Since he was the most influential American poet of his day, Longfellow brought fresh courage and renewed faith to many of his countrymen who read this poem. Although he was a member of the Unitarian church, he maintained a strong belief in God’s goodness and personal concern for His people.

“I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day” was written in 1864 for the Sunday school of the Unitarian Church of the Disciples in Boston, Massachusetts. It originally had seven stanzas and was titled “Christmas Bells.” References to the Civil War are prevalent in the omitted verses. The plain, direct-wording of the present five stanzas gives this clear message: God is still in command and in His own time will cause the right to triumph and will bring peace and good will once more. The beautiful chiming bells of Christmas reassure us of this important truth.

The personal peace of Longfellow’s life was shaken again 18 years after he wrote this poem. His second wife, to whom he was very devoted, was tragically burned in a fire. Her death was devastating shock to him. In his remaining years he continued to write, however, and some of his greatest works came during this period of his life. After his death, his bust was placed in the Poets’ Corner of London’s Westminster Abbey as one of the immortal American writers.

- ♪ I heard the bells on Christmas day their old familiar carols play, and wild and sweet the words repeat of peace on earth, good will to men.
- ♪ I thought how, as the day had come, the belfries of all Christendom had rolled along th’ unbroken song of peace on earth, good will to men.
- ♪ And in despair I bowed my head: “There is no peace on earth,” I said; “For hate is strong, and mocks the song of peace on earth, good will to men.”
- ♪ Yet pealed the bells more loud and deep: “God is not dead, nor doth he sleep; the wrong shall fail, the right prevail, with peace on earth, good will to men.”
- ♪ Then ringing, singing on its way, the world revolved from night to day—a voice, a chime a chant sublime of peace on earth, good will to men! AMEN.

“Peace on earth among men of good will!” This is the blessed promise of Christmas. It is the antidote for any fear or hysteria that may enter our lives. Let the glorious sounds of Christmas remind you of this truth. AMEN.

*Amazing Grace -366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions*  
By Kenneth W. Osbeck

*“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”*  
Matthew 28:18 – 20

