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Something happened on Christmas Eve in 1914. It was during WWI. Some accounts say that WWI was the bloodiest war of them all. They contend that there was more death, destruction, suffering, and mud than experienced by soldiers in any war to date.

An amazing thing happened during the Battle of Ypres. The British were dug in on one side and the Germans were dug in on the other side of the battle. As night began to fall on that Christmas Eve, the Brits could hear the unusual sounds of laughter and even the tunes of familiar Christmas carols coming from the German side.

Then, the Brits heard an invitation from the Germans to come over. The Germans said, "Tommy, come on over." "Tommy" was the nickname by which the British soldiers were known. After numerous invitations, one British soldier put down his rifle and took a few tentative steps into No Man's Land. Then another followed, and soon a large group of British soldiers made their way into this forsaken area and were met there by German soldiers who had come out as well.

The accounts of some soldiers who were part of this unusual happening remembered the events of that gathering. Upon meeting, the soldiers talked with one another. They told jokes and they laughed. They exchanged gifts of buttons, badges from their uniforms, hats, food, and even some schnapps were shared. Each side retrieved their dead and burials were held with the Brits and Germans sharing in this dreaded detail.

A British officer wrote in a letter he sent home that one of his machine gunners, an amateur hairdresser back home, was seen cutting the long hair of a German soldier. He noted that the German knelt patiently as the Brit ran the razor across his neck.

Another soldier, in a letter to his mother, told her of smoking a pipe that had been gifted to him by Princess Mary but was filled with German tobacco.

As Christmas Eve gave way to Christmas day, each group returned to their respective sides. The shooting had stopped. The conversations continued as the 'enemies' shared jokes by yelling across the battlefield.

An amazing thing happened at the Battle of Ypres that night. The soldiers saw each other as humans. They realized that they came from different cultures, spoke different languages and

had different life experiences. These differences were put aside. The power of honoring and recognizing each other as human beings trumped all societal identifiers.

Today, it seems that we are 'dug in' on opposing sides with those in our country, state, and communities. We are influenced by the media and others to believe that there is a tremendous chasm that separates people of differing viewpoints, traditions, and life experiences. Those who have been identified as our enemies are not far away from us. They are just far enough that they appear as enemies.

Some of those soldiers really understood what was happening in that unusual meeting. They realized that simple conversations revealed their similarities. They realized that no matter which uniform was worn, they all shared similar emotions. They were afraid, they longed to see their families, and they had no basis for disliking one another. They must have wondered why they were there. They questioned what had gotten them to that place.

What would happen if we began to look deeply at those around us and saw them as humans? What if we could cast aside our obvious differences, stop listening to those who would influence us to base our thinking on skewed, biased opinions, and seek to befriend those identified as our enemies?

Peace is a possibility. We have the capability to live in harmony with others. That's part of the created order that God so delicately put into place. The old hymn says, "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me."

How about that?

