

Heavenly Father, today we pray for peace.

The threat of terrorism continues to cast a fearful shadow over the free world.

The free world still needs to address the root causes of terrorism in ways that bring greater equity to all nations and peoples.

Tensions are rising between nations.

We seem always to be on the brink of war.

Precious resources in our own nation are being redirected to bolster homeland defense and stimulate economic recovery.

Americans are still contemplating how life has changed since 9/11, dubbed by many in the media as "the day that changed the world."

Yet, 9/11 is not really the day that changed the world.

Oh it certainly has deeply impacted the world, but it has not created change as much as it has reawakened old human strategies for dealing with old human sins.

We are meeting violence with violence, because once again we have reached a point where we do not know what else to do to stop evil forces.

Our fear is motivating us to beef up our security and to practice a strong offense as the best defense.

As necessary as these things may be in our fallen world, they are not new and, other than more effective technologies of destruction, they have not changed.

They are very old strategies for very old problems.

This Christmas we will celebrate the day you began to fulfill your promise to change the world, and on Easter Sunday we will celebrate the day that truly changed the world.

O God, let us truly hear once again your astounding message to the shepherds:

"Do not be afraid, I proclaim to you good news of great joy!  
For today a savior has been born for you. And you will find him lying in a manger."

And on Easter, you announced that the world had changed forever when you raised your own Son from the tomb.

For on that day, the perishable was clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, and the saying written in scripture became true

"Death has been swallowed up in victory."

Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?"

But thanks be to God!

He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

And, Lord, this victory is the only one that counts.

It is the victory of perfect love over fear.

It is the victory of life over death,

Of obedience over sin,

Of reconciliation over alienation, and

Of your grace, that we do not deserve, over the judgment and punishment we have earned.

You birthed a new world that day, O Lord, and it is still aborning.

Make us, and everyone, children of this new kingdom.

We see its signs all around us.

You have promised that in the end, your kingdom will prevail.

Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.

Again.

Amen.