

Peace on Earth

- Luke 2:8-14
Glory goes up to God. “Glory to God in the highest!” And peace comes down to men. “And on earth peace.” That was the announcement that came to the shepherds. One angel told them that the Savior had been born. Then a multitude of angels told them why. It was for God’s glory and for our peace. Glory to God in the highest! Glory to God on the earth, yes. But this was the most glorious thing the inhabitants of heaven had ever seen. Glory to God in the HIGHEST means that all of heaven, every angel, glorified God to see the incarnation.
- The crowds would shout the same thing 33 years later as Jesus entered Jerusalem to die. “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” (Luke 19:38) Second, peace would come to all who received Him. These are the two great purposes of Jesus coming from heaven. Glory rising from men to God, and ever increasing on the earth until one day the whole world is filled with His glory. And peace coming from God to men. God’s glory and man’s peace. God’s greatness and man’s joy. The two are inseparable. To the extent that we give God glory, exalting Him and looking to Him day to day as our Father, it is to that extent that we walk in the peace that He came to give. That He came and DIED to give. God’s glory. Man’s peace.
- The King James Version is the one most of us memorized from as a child, and so my mind wants to say it on auto-pilot: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.” But nearly all of the modern translations agree that this was not accurate. The NIV says, “. . . and on earth peace to men *on whom his favor rests.*” The NASB says, “. . . and on earth peace among *men with whom he is pleased.*” And the ESV says, “. . . and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” The point is that even though Jesus came to bring peace, and peace goes out to the whole earth, only those who know Him will have peace. The coming of the Messiah would bring peace only to those with whom God is pleased. Who does that include? The Bible says in Hebrews 11:6, “Without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him.” The message of Christmas is only good news of great joy to those who believe the promises of God and the testimony of His Word.
- John Piper writes about this: “You get a glimpse of this meaning in Luke 10:5-6, Jesus says to his disciples, “Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ [that’s the offer of peace to all] And if a *son of peace* is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you.” God’s peace in Christ is offered to the world. But only the “sons of peace” receive it. How do you know if you are a “son of peace”? How do you know if you are part of the angels’ promise, “Peace among those with whom he is pleased!”? Answer: you welcome the Peacemaker, you receive Jesus.”
- I thought about it like this: If you had a headache, would you go to the store and look at the promised cure, the Ibuprofen or the Tylenol, and then walk out of the store expecting your headache to go away? No, the help from the medicine only comes to that one who TAKES the medicine. Receives it! You can only be a son of peace if you have received the Prince of Peace. You cannot have what He promises unless you have HIM. And here’s the good news: if you have Christ, then you HAVE His peace. Remember the promise to His disciples? “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” –John 14:27. Paul later explains how we can experience both joy AND peace: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” –Romans 14:27. What’s the key? “Believing.” The promises of God are only real to us and we can only walk in them by believing them!

- I love the amazing story of Charles Blondin, a famous French tightrope walker, is a wonderful illustration of what true faith is. Blondin's greatest fame came on September 14, 1860, when he became the first person to cross a tightrope stretched 1100 feet across the mighty Niagara Falls. People from both Canada and America came from miles away to see this great feat. He walked across, 160 feet above the falls, several times... each time with a different daring feat - once in a sack, on stilts, on a bicycle, in the dark, and blindfolded. One time he even carried a stove and cooked an omelet in the middle of the rope! A large crowd gathered and the buzz of excitement ran along both sides of the river bank. The crowd "Oohed and Aahed!" as Blondin carefully walked across - one dangerous step after another - pushing a wheelbarrow holding a sack of potatoes. Then at one point, he asked for the participation of a volunteer. Upon reaching the other side, the crowd's applause was louder than the roar of the falls! Blondin suddenly stopped and addressed his audience: "Do you believe I can carry a person across in this wheelbarrow?" The crowd enthusiastically yelled, "Yes! You are the greatest tightrope walker in the world. We believe!" "Okay," said Blondin, "Who wants to get into the wheelbarrow?" Faith means you get in the wheelbarrow and let Jesus walk you through life, one step at a time. That kind of faith helps us experience the peace that God has given us. What does the peace He gives look like?
- **Peace with God.** Romans 5:1, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the most important peace and is the foundation for the others. We cannot have peace with ourselves and peace with each other unless we have peace with God. How do we get it? Through faith. Not by going to church but by faith in the One who DIED for His church. If you are experiencing peace WITH God, then you will also experience...
- **Peace with yourself.** One of the tragedies of many Christians is that they struggle daily with being at peace with themselves. What are the symptoms that you do not have peace with yourself?
 - 1- You are constantly comparing yourself to others. Which always leads to pride (I am SO much better than he is!) or envy (Why can't I have what he does?), and both pride and envy are enemies to peace. Don't compare yourself. Paul said about this, "But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding." -2 Cor. 10:12b
 - 2- You struggle with guilt. You cannot have peace with yourself if you are battling guilt. A guilty conscience is a gift from God to convict the sinner and lead him to the cross. Once there, Romans 8:1 should become your motto when it comes to past sin: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." But if you are in Christ and still struggle with guilt, go back to Romans 14:27: we have joy and peace IN BELIEVING. Receive the peace that has already been given to you. And do James 4:7 daily! "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Submit your guilt to God and resist the devil by refusing to wallow in it or let it paralyze you. If you have confessed the sin that led to the guilt in the first place, and you are no longer walking in it, then you are free! Declare yourself free every day, by the authority of Romans 8:1.
 - 3- You are best friends with worry. This is the big one. I have heard many Christians say things like, "Hey, you can't help but worry, right?" Well, actually, yes, you can. Now let's define the terms. Concern for someone or something is not worry. Concern is rooted in love and faith and leads to prayer. Worry is rooted in fear and leads to anxiety. Even to hopelessness. Again, Paul addresses this in such a practical way. "...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." --Philippians 4:6-7 What's the great truth here? God wants to guard your heart and your mind! He knows our frame, He remembers that we are dust, and that we are so prone to worry. What then does He ask us to do? Bring our requests to Him. **By**

prayer. That means telling Him our thoughts and being honest with Him about our emotions. **By supplication.** That means we ask Him for what we need. **With thanksgiving.** That's the key and the bomb that will blow up and blow away fear and worry and even bitterness and anger. Thanksgiving puts everything in perspective. It reminds us of who God is and how great is the kindness and mercy that He has shown to us when we did not deserve it.

- **Peace with others.** This is the third area where God wants us to enjoy "peace on earth." Again, it often depends on you experiencing peace with God. It is true that if two pianos are in tune with a tuning fork, they are also in tune with each other. So, if two believers are at odds with each other, and there is no peace there, something is wrong with one of them. Or both of them. Someone is off-key with God, somewhere. Paul said this: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." (Romans 12:18) So, if you are out of sorts with someone in the body of Christ, ask yourself this question: have I done everything I need to do in order to make peace with that person? If you know you haven't, and are holding something in your hearts against them but have refused to seek for reconciliation, then the real issue is your heart before God. It's not right. Until that is dealt with, the issue with your brother will not be resolved. You can't get rid of the headache by just knowing about the medicine. You have to take it. **It's one thing to swallow a pill. It's quite another to swallow your pride** and call your brother or your sister and say, "Let's get together and work this out. Our relationship is too important for this cold war between us to continue."
- Glory to God! That goes up. Peace on earth! That comes down. Because of Christ.