

Experiencing Peace on Earth This Christmas

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[0 : 00] Oh, me. If you have sent or received a Christmas card this year, you most likely have found at least one that had this phrase, peace on earth, goodwill to men.

We sing that too, don't we, in a carol. That is a paraphrase from Luke chapter 2, verse 14, from the King James translation of the Bible. It says, glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, goodwill toward men.

Those words were spoken by angels to shepherds right after Jesus was born. Now, ever since those words were said or recorded, a lot of things have been written, written questions asked about that phrase, peace on earth.

And one of the questions is, why? Why would they say that? There's never been peace on earth. You know, the United States has the largest number of professing Christians of any country in the world. But if you just look around at what has been and is happening in our country right now, peace is the last word anyone would use to describe the attitude or the mood in our country right now.

[1 : 34] You just think about it. The coronavirus pandemic has, for now over nine months, produced one of the most stressful environments that most of us have ever experienced in our lives.

Throughout this past summer and fall, almost every day, a riot took place somewhere in this country. We've just gotten through with an election, and almost every emotion except peace has come out all along the campaign trail.

So when you see that phrase, peace on earth, in a Christmas card, or in a Christmas carol, the question in our minds, at least sometimes, were the angels wrong?

Now, if you really believe the Bible is God's inerrant word, you know the angels were not wrong. You know that the message that they proclaimed would not have been an erroneous message. So I think a better question is, what kind of peace were the angels singing about?

[3 : 00] What kind of peace were they proclaiming that night? Well, that's the question I want us to answer this morning. And the fact is, the angels were not announcing the end of all hostility kind of peace that we might wish for.

They were not saying that peace and goodwill would be experienced between all people at all times on the earth. The angels were really praising God for what he was going to do through Jesus to bring peace between himself and sinful people.

That message is clearer in other translations. For an example, the English Standard says, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

The NIV says it this way, Glory to God in the highest, or glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.

The angels were saying that God will bring peace to the life of a specific group of people. Look at it. Those with whom he is pleased.

[4 : 27] Those on whom God's favor rests. On that first Christmas, the angels were announcing truly good news of salvation that would come through that baby born in Bethlehem.

The message of peace was about peace with God and the peace of God. That's what I want us to look at and think about this morning.

That's the kind of peace that Jesus came to provide in this world. Look, number one. Jesus came to provide peace with God. A good example of just a clear statement of that is Romans 5.1.

Look at it. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, declared right with God by faith in Christ, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, the Bible describes a universal human problem. We're sinners by nature and by choice.

[5 : 39] You know, the Apostle Paul goes to great lengths to describe how all people, people who've never even heard of Jesus, as well as people who have His word, how all people have really ignored God or rebelled against God and are rightfully declared sinners in His sight.

Romans 1, beginning in verse 18, all the way through chapter 3, verse 20, describes that. I want to do a little plug for my Wednesday night Bible study here.

We're doing a study in the book of Romans. We started it a little while ago. And we're just getting started in the study. And we've looked at, you know, what all the Bible says about why all people reject what God does reveal Himself, how God does reveal Himself to them.

We're going to really start moving in the book of Romans, which is the greatest explanation of the good news of Jesus found in the Bible. I mean, just a comprehensive study of what God has done for us in Christ.

We're going to start back on Wednesday night, the first Wednesday night in January, in here at 630. And I want to encourage you to come and be a part of that just in a couple more weeks on Wednesday nights, about 30 minutes worth of study.

[7 : 04] I hope you'll come and be a part of what all the riches of Romans that we're going to find from the pen of the Apostle Paul. But the Bible describes sin as a universal problem.

And I've said on many occasions, because I think it's the best example, children illustrate that. Your children, my children, our grandchildren, your nieces and nephews, especially when they're real small in the nursery, and as they get a little bit older, children just break the rules.

They'll tell you a lie to get out of getting in trouble. They'll jerk something away from another child. It's just a part of their nature. No one has to teach them to be that way.

That was our nature when we started out in this world. And you know, we are now sinners by choice. Now I want to make a sort of a point of clarification here.

Everybody is not just what we would call wicked and evil. Some children grow up. They're more compliant.

[8 : 21] Some children you just sort of look at, and they're going to do whatever they think will please you. Some are more defiant. Some are, you know, they're looking for a rule to break.

One of my sons, he was a real little fella. I forgot exactly the context, but we asked Michael. Played a little game. Asked Michael. Things would be better if, and he filled in the blank, if there were no rules. Who taught him that?

His mama did teach him that by her example. But really and truly, it was just in him. It's in all of us. The more compliant ones, they're not being compliant because of just the goodness in their heart. They just have a gentler way.

[9 : 27] Some of them learn to manipulate adults. By being more compliant. To get their way like that. We can all look back on our own lives and see that we have never outgrown these tendencies to just be selfish.

Do what I want to do. The way that I want to do it. This is a serious problem that the Bible calls sin. We ignore God, or we rebel against God.

We just sort of close our eyes to him, or we shake a fist in him, at him, or we're somewhere in between. The Bible talks about this being a problem called sin.

It separates us from God. It prevents us from having and enjoying a right relationship with him. That's the bad news of the Bible. But the Bible's main message is good news about how that relationship can be made what it ought to be made.

The good news of the Bible is that God sent his son into this world to save us. That message has already been announced in the Christmas story.

[10 : 42] It was presented last week in the great job the choir did. It's one of my favorite Christmas statements about the gospel, why Jesus came. Look at Matthew 121.

The angel told Joseph, She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. Jesus came into this world to save sinful people, people who would trust him.

And the way he did that, he came into this world and lived a perfect life. He always obeyed his heavenly father. He always followed the rules. When we trust Jesus, his perfect, righteous life is credited to us.

But Jesus was crucified by evil people. But that was a part of God's plan. As he hung on the cross, Jesus became our substitute.

He became our sin bearer. And on the cross, God unleashed the fury of his wrath against sin. Look at it.

[11 : 52] Romans 5, 8 explains this very well. God shows his love for us in that while we're still sinners, Christ died for us. We don't do a thing.

We enter the world as sinful people. We live life our way, instead of God's way. At some point, you who are a Christian, somehow or another, God got your attention.

He made it clear to you that you are a sinner separated from him. You may have had it explained to you. The penalty for sin is death.

God so worked in you to awaken you spiritually to that reality. To cause you to want to change or be changed.

God gave you the desire and the ability to turn from the way you were living, your way, the sinful way, and turn to God. God is the one who gave you the thoughts and the desires.

[12 : 58] I don't want to live this way anymore. I don't want to dishonor God, disrespect him any way anymore. I truly want him to change me. And God opened your eyes to see that when Jesus died on the cross, he was dying for you, paying the penalty for your sins.

God so worked in you, if you're a Christian, that you called upon Jesus to save you. You started trusting him as the Lord of your life, whenever that was.

And by God's grace and his spirit's working, you're still trusting him that way. If you are not trusting him like that now, I want you to know today can be your day of salvation.

If God's opening your eyes, softening your heart, turn from your sin, trust Jesus, call upon him to save you. The Bible promises, look at this, from Romans 10, but whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Jesus came into this world to give us peace with God. Now if you're a Christian, are you experiencing that peace right now?

[14 : 19] That peace with God. If you're truly a child of God, trusting Jesus and him alone for your salvation, do you realize that you don't have to perform a certain way for God to accept you?

You see, Jesus did all the performing for you. You're accepted in Christ. You don't have to try to undo your past.

The penalty for your sin has been paid. You're accepted in Christ. I want you to understand, if you are a Christian, you should not be afraid to go to sleep at night.

If you are a Christian, you should have this sense of rightness with God. The Spirit of God should be working you in such a way that you know him as your heavenly Father.

You have a true love for him and a desire to please him and do his will. That peace of God, or that peace from God, or with God rather, is something that we all as Christians should experience.

[15 : 32] And if you're not experiencing it, there's something wrong. It may be that there's some things going on in your life that you know aren't pleasing to God.

Sinful, selfish things that you just won't turn loose with. Well, you'll never know peace with God until you confess it and repent of it. Jesus came into this world so that we might experience peace with God.

But I want you to see that that's not all. Jesus came to provide also the peace of God. And I think one of the best statements about that is in Philippians chapter 4.

We're going to look at verse 7. But I want you to understand verse 6 tells us that instead of worrying, we need to learn to pray. And if we'll substitute prayer, prayerful trust in God in place of our worries, we can experience the peace of God in our lives.

Look at this. Paul writes, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

[16 : 49] The peace of God refers to some type of unexplainable, supernatural, inner peace that we as children of God can experience.

I want you to think for a minute. Who are some of the people in your life that you have a real close relationship with?

I mean, everybody in this room. There are people in our lives. For some of you, some of the people you think about that are in the past. But all of us, we have people in our lives.

A spouse, child or children, parents, siblings, close friends. We have people in our lives that we have had a real close relationship with for a long time.

We've lived life with them. We've enjoyed life with them. We've shared life with them. What does it feel like when you have unresolved conflict with that person or with any of those people?

[18 : 04] You know what it's like. Don't you tell me you've never had conflict with anybody close to you. Don't ever say, my wife and I have never had a conflict at any point in our lives.

People who say that will lie about other things as well. You know that. Think about how it feels. There's conflict between you and your spouse, between you and your child, between you and your parent.

You feel stressed, don't you? You feel sort of maybe depressed. Maybe you feel hurt. Maybe you're just angry right now if it's going on right now.

If the anger goes on too long, you feel bitter. Well, how do you, how do you talk to a person you're having conflict with like that?

Your conversation is sort of strained, isn't it? Sort of cold. Sort of harsh. They ask you, how you doing?

[19 : 16] Fine. What are we going to eat for supper? Food. I've heard that for 40 something years, you know.

Oh, me. Don't you tell them you've heard that for 40 something years now. You know what I'm talking about though. Life is not good good when there is this strain or conflict between someone that we do have a relationship with.

We love them. They love us. But we don't experience the peace. Now think about when everything, when the conflict is resolved in a healthy way.

When the conflict is resolved, you feel relaxed. The anxiety is gone. You feel just at ease.

You smile. How was your day? It was a good day. What would you like for supper? Whatever you would like. It's totally different, isn't it?

[20 : 28] You let down your guard. You talk freely. You laugh. You just sort of share life together. You go along living life together.

Life is good when those who are close to you and you have a real healthy relationship with them.

And life is good even in a pandemic, isn't it? You know, no one in their right mind would say, well, I have just thoroughly enjoyed this past year with the coronavirus pandemic.

No. But I have heard and I have said, you know, there are some positive things that have happened as a result of this pandemic. Lisa and I have spent more time together, especially back in, you know, March, April, and May.

We ate more meals at home together. And some of you have a, this might tear some of you up, but I don't really care. My boys and I, we played more golf during the spring than we have in a long time together.

[21 : 42] There was just some positive things relationally that happened in a lot of our lives during the worst pandemic or the only pandemic we've ever experienced.

Well, experiencing the peace of God means that we know that all is well deep within us even when everything is not well all around us.

The peace of God described in verse 7 there, as I said, is actually the result of praying instead of worrying. Look at it in verse 6. Do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

That was the first message I preached back in March, March the 22nd when we shut things down for the pandemic.

In fact, March the 22nd was on a Sunday. I preached that standing here to an empty sanctuary except for Michael and Colton on Thursday. We don't need to be anxious about this.

[23 : 05] We don't need to worry ourselves sick about this. We need to pray, we need to trust God and we can experience peace, the peace of God within our souls as we face who knows what in the days to come.

That was the message. Praying instead of worrying is the key to experiencing what we're talking about this morning. But there is no prayer, I want to make this clear, there is no promise anywhere in scripture that our prayers will make all of our sources of worry disappear.

Paul's point is that we can experience the peace of God in the midst of our problems. Joe Thorne is a pastor. He describes how God provides peace in the midst of life storms.

I think this is a good reminder. This is sort of the most un-Joel Osteen-ish thing you'll see today.

Look at it. And by the way, for those of you who don't know, one of my goals every Sunday is to be

non-Joel Osteen.

Because Joel Osteen is non-biblical. or theological. Joe Thorne says, God does not promise to rid your life of affliction and difficulty.

[24 : 34] He does, however, offer to give you the grace needed to suffer well. It isn't wrong to ask God to relieve you of your pain, but it is more important that in the midst of the pain, you rely on the promise of God to work such experiences for His glory and your good.

To use these times as a means of perfecting your faith, strengthening your spirit, and transforming your life in such a way that you are becoming more like Jesus.

As we've looked down many times, that's God's goal, to make us more like Jesus. God does not promise to always, or even most of the time, rescue us from our troubles, but He does promise to replace our anxiety in the midst of troubles with His peace.

And note, Paul describes this as something that cannot be explained, a peace that surpasses all understanding. It's a supernatural experience that we cannot explain, but it is something we can experience.

some of us in this room, you know exactly what I'm talking about. Some of you in this room have gone through a job, a family, a health crisis.

[26 : 04] You didn't know what the next day would hold, none of us ever do. But God gave you what you needed. He didn't take all the stress of the unknown away, or what should I do, but He gave you what you needed to be calm, to be wise, to think, to make good decisions.

I've heard some of you talk about that. Explain the experience of having the peace of God, but you couldn't really explain it.

I don't know what the new year is going to bring, but there's going to be some kind of hardship.

There's going to be times of uncertainty for every one of us, and when those times come, we have two choices.

We can just worry, panic, subject ourselves to all kinds of fear and anxiety and misery, or we can pray.

We can trust God to do what only He can do. We can seek His wisdom to help us know what we ought to do.

[27 : 30] And when we do those kind of things, He will give us that supernatural peace that we can't describe, but we can experience, and that will help us to better weather life's storms.

Now, what I want us to understand is this choice I'm talking about is something we've got to make in every situation. It's not a once and all decision. You can't pray some kind of prayer this morning or make some kind of commitment.

I'm never going to worry again. I'm always going to trust God. I'm always going to seek to experience His peace in every situation. No, what I'm talking about is something that it's just a daily thing.

You and I, we've got to learn to trust God, that He really is in control, that He's sovereign. He's working everything according to His good purpose because He is good.

He loves us as His children. If we'll learn to do that day by day, situation by situation, sometimes hour by hour, I truly believe we can count on God to replace our fears and worries with His confident peace deep within our soul.

[28 : 59] The Christmas story. Jesus came into this world so that we might know peace with God and the peace of God.

That's what the angels were praising God about that first Christmas. and I want you to so respond this morning and every day that we can praise God this Christmas for the peace we have with Him through faith in Jesus and for the peace we have that is His that He gives to us by continuing to trust, to love, to obey Him.

Let's bow together in prayer and ask Him to help us that way. Father, show us now what needs to take place in our lives, our thinking, our attitudes, our relationships.

that would help us to leave here today truly experiencing peace with you because we're united to you by faith in Jesus.

Show us how we should respond so that we can live each day, even in the hard times, experiencing that supernatural peace within us.

[30 : 41] because we trust you that you're working everything for your glory and for our good.

That's just an attitude of prayer.

Not just listen to the Lord, but obey the Lord. Let's use these next few minutes to make that kind of commitment. Heads bowed, eyes closed. Jesus. Tie 16■■■ análiserieben korp■ mās pos Madison mel answering senin