

## Christmas Eve 2024

I wonder how many of us would be willing to trade in all of the Christmas gifts, and decorations, and parties for true peace.

Is that kind of peace even attainable? I mean really...no anxiety about work, kids, family, finances, friends. Can that really be?

If we are honest, true peace seems impossible to attain in our souls. With everything going on in our lives and our world...I just don't know how it can be.

But what if the reason we don't think its attainable is because we have the wrong definition of peace? You see, for many, peace is simply the absence of conflict.

I think if we dig a little deeper we'll see the Christmas story defines peace in a different way.

Before we jump into that let me pause and say Merry Christmas and thank you so much for being here. I cannot thank you enough for spending part of your Christmas holiday here with us.

On behalf of our team, Thank You! We are extremely honored and want you to know that your presence matters. It matters to God, and it matters to us.

If you live in the area and are searching for a church home, we would love to have you. You will find a bunch of people who are normal, (most of us) but we love well, and we are super passionate about seeing people experience Jesus.

I want to ask you to pray with me as we continue our service...As we bow our heads and close our eyes, can I ask a small favor of you. Wherever you are in your journey with God, would whisper this short pray to him...God, would you speak to me today?

Pray

The Christmas story is one that stretches the span of time. God's plan from the beginning was to send His only Son to this world for our sake.

Some 700 years before Jesus was born, Prophets foretold His birth. One specifically named Isaiah said it like this... **Isaiah 9.6 I For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.**

It wasn't just Isaiah talking about peace...The Christmas story mentions peace several times as well.

The shepherds who were out in the fields were met by a host of Angels in **Luke 2.13-14 I Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising**

**God and saying: <sup>14</sup> Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors.**

The angels here declared glory to God in the highest and emphasized peace on earth—this is a deep, comprehensive peace.

Some of you may have heard the Hebrew word, **Shalom**. This is used as a greeting... In saying this they are saying more than just hello or goodbye, and more than just a simple 'peace be with you'.

They are actually saying something more along the lines of, “may you be filled with a complete and perfect peace and be full of well-being”

Shalom is signifying wholeness and divine favor rather than merely the absence of conflict.

This passage here in Luke 2 captures not only the joy of divine intervention but also the peace that comes only through God's grace.

Even in the midst of a world burdened with hardship, God's redemptive plan through Christ offers hope and reconciliation for all.

I want to stress how big of a deal this really is... The context here unfolds in a time of social and political turmoil...The shepherds, often marginalized in society, received this divine message first.

This shows God's intention to reach all of humanity, especially those lowly and overlooked.

Jesus' birth is a moment of celebration for all people, indicating that God's goodwill was now made manifest in a way that is accessible to everyone, not just a select few.

In other words, **Peace is for anyone who wants it.**

Here is another part of this story...It wasn't just prophets that talked of peace before Jesus. It wasn't just angels who talked of this peace during Jesus.

The Apostle Paul was a sold-out believer of Christ whom God hand-picked to speak on His behalf. Listen to what He tells us of this peace as well.

**Philippians 4.6-7** <sup>6</sup> **Don't worry about anything,** (BTW, Paul was in prison while writing this letter. Talk about practice what you preach) **but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.** <sup>7</sup> **And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.**

Paul is telling us some really good news here. Let's break this down. He tells us how to get it before he explains it...prayer, petitions, and requests...but then he gives it to us.

**The Peace of God | "Peace which reassures the heart."**

**Surpasses all understanding | "To exceed or excel your mind, understanding, & reason."**

**Guard your heart and minds in Christ Jesus | "This peace will work to defend your mind from all invaders. It will take whatever defensive or offensive action is necessary to protect your heart and mind."**

This is the kind of peace God brings to us through Christmas. Doesn't that sound amazing.

Maybe you find yourself this Christmas seeking peace. An Inner calmness amidst the chaos of life.

This is something that people from the beginning of time have been seeking out. I believe this starts with listening to the right voice.

Maybe for some you're not quite sure what voices to listen to...you're not even sure how you ended up listening to this bald head preacher.

But here you are....a God-orchestrated moment in your life. Maybe you've been pretending you have it all together...but behind, its turmoil.

Maybe you feel as if you have fallen so far that God doesn't want anything to do with you.

Either extreme is unhealthy and not from God. Right now, God is saying...I want you to listen to my voice.

This reminds me of a story I read about not long ago....

*Story: May 1, 2023, 1 Small aircraft with 7 passengers crashed into the Amazon Rainforest.*

*The plane failed midair and it went down into the jungle floor. All 7 presumed dead. The search area was 100 miles long and 20 miles wide. Special forces took 2 weeks to find the plane. The deceased bodies of 3 adults were found. Something puzzling happened...They couldn't find the 4 children who were with them. 13 years old down to 11 months all siblings. Columbia sent 150 soldiers and volunteers and dogs.... Every so often they found something to give them hope.... Baby bottle, toy, used diaper. The older children had been raised near the jungles edge.... they had been taught what to avoid and be careful of. Days turned to weeks. Rescuers dropped food, water and even whistles. Over a month of looking somebody finally raised this question.... what if the*

*children don't want to be rescued. Maybe they are afraid of us. Turns out, this was the case. Multiple times the rescue crew was less than 50 feet from the kids. The children didn't know they were there to help save them. They didn't know how to respond so they ran from the very one who was trying to save them.*

I wonder if this parable reflects humanity today. How many times have we ran from the one who is trying to rescue us? How many times have we turned away from the one who offers an everlasting peace?

The truth is...this has been happening since the beginning. Adam and Eve hid from God.

I wonder...is that you? Maybe you're here and truth is...True peace eludes you because you're hiding or running from God.

You're heavenly Father is so ready for you to come back...or come for the first time.

The whole meaning of Christmas...The whole narrative of Scripture is that God send his Son Jesus on a rescue mission. To seek you out and offer you an everlasting peace.

*Story Continued: The Columbian army never gave up. They came up with a plan. They lowered speakers down into the jungle. Through those speakers...they played over and over a voice recording from their grandma. She said stay in one place they are here to help you. They played this over and over. And on day 40 all 4 children were found...And taken home.*

*The grandmas voice pulled them out of the shadows. They needed a voice they could trust. So do we.*

God became flesh in His Son Jesus...so that we could have a voice we could trust.

All of these Scriptures about Godly peace are wonderful, but there is one voice that trumps them all.

It was Jesus himself who said to his disciples... **John 14.26-27** I <sup>25</sup> **"I have spoken these things to you while I remain with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you. Jesus's Gift of Peace <sup>27</sup> "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful.**

This is a different kind of peace. Not the kind the world offers. Only Jesus can give this kind of peace.

This is a word for somebody who may be anxious or a little afraid. For somebody who doesn't know true peace.

## **Jesus promised us His peace.**

What religion can't do...Jesus can!  
What rule following can't do...Jesus can!  
What relationships can't do...Jesus can!

What if you were to turn to God tonight and tell him...I'm coming back.

Here is the good news this Christmas Eve...God loves you so much that He sent His Son,  
Born of a virgin, conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was not born in sin, and He never sinned so He could be the perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins.

And God raised Him from the dead so that anyone, doesn't matter who you are, doesn't matter what you've done, anyone who calls on His name, your sins would be forgiven, and true peace comes in.

Today, there are those of you, you're not here by accident. God brought you here for this moment. An opportunity to surrender to the Prince of Peace.

If you're not at peace with God today...we're stepping away from our sin and surrendering!

All over this room, lets bow our heads...

When you call on the name of Jesus, He'll hear your prayer. He'll forgive your sins. You can start brand new.

The Bible says if we confess with our mouths and believe in our hearts...Jesus will come in and give peace. If you want peace...peace with God...you can step into that today.

Here is your prayer...say it with me

*Father, Forgive my sins. Be the Lord of my life. Thank you for sending Jesus into this world, so that I can have peace. Thank you for being a voice I can trust. Today I turn to you. Come into my heart. My life is not my own, I give it all to You. In Jesus' name I pray.*

If you prayed that prayer with me just now...here is what I want to ask you to do. Would you take your candle and turn it on right now. We want to celebrate this wonderful moment in your life with you.

City Hope Church can we celebrate those born into the family of God today!!!