

Peace Is Found In The Manger

Pastor Matthew Ude
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INI – SDG

Luke 2:8-20 ⁸ Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. ¹⁰ Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. ¹¹ "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² "And this *will be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" ¹⁵ So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. ¹⁷ Now when they had seen *Him*, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. ¹⁸ And all those who heard *it* marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ But Mary kept all these things and pondered *them* in her heart. ²⁰ Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

It's comforting to know where something is. Packing for a trip can be hectic but once everything is in the car and you are on your way there is peace knowing everything is in the car. When you finally get through the airport and on the plane, you can relax, you made it. Everything is on the plane. You can relax. There is peace in knowing where everything is.

Here we have a star. If we take away the top point you have a manger, and if you take away all the points you have a diamond. There in the manger you have the greatest gift of all, the gift of peace. There in the middle of the star is the manger is where you find Jesus. This has been the point of our whole Advent series that our peace comes from Jesus.

Peace doesn't come from an endless attempt to get more things. Peace doesn't come from getting away from it all. Peace doesn't come from being in control and having everything done just the way you want. Peace comes from the center of the Manger. It comes from Jesus.

That is where your peace is and because your peace is there in the manger you can easily celebrate, give thanks, eat a delightful meal, open presents (if any remain which I doubt) etc. You can do these things because you know that you have peace through Christ who came to earth.

8 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone

around them, and they were greatly afraid. 10 Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.

The shepherds encountered a sight which at first gave them fear, but this was not a night for fear but for great joy and peace

What is your immediate reaction when you see flashing red and blue lights in your rear-view mirror and hear the police siren? Worry, anxiety, fear? How frustrating it must be for the police to be always met with fear. Most of them just want to help.

The reaction of man to even a small part of God's glory is always fear. Adam hid, Isaiah and Gideon were certain they would die. The shepherds were filled with fear. The fear of man in the presence of the Lord's glory is the response of a guilty conscience. How frustrating to God who comes with the great good news to all people and instead is met with fear.

Someone just told me the other day that our church is too strict. Such people fear God's law and do not like it but fail to understand that God sent all his angels to preach the good news. His angels are not only the spiritual ones that appeared to the shepherds but the earthly messengers as well. We are sent to preach the good news, to say fear not, for to you is born this day Christ the Lord.

The law must be preached, for without it there is no savior. The law must be preached so that we understand the good news. Yet Christ is there in the manger and therefore there is no need to fear the law, but rather to rejoice in the good news. To you Christ the savior is born, and you know where your peace is.

11 "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 "And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 14 "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

In his famous hymn Phillips Brooks penned the words "how silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given, so God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven."

Phillips Brooks wrote that hymn after making a trip to the holy land and riding on horseback at night from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. He crossed the fields where the shepherds may have heard the angels and saw the dark and silent town of Bethlehem sitting quietly in the night. Yet, in the darkness and silence of the night over Bethlehem the church was filled with light as they celebrated their Christmas Eve service.

Brook's words do not speak of decibels on that holy night but of the whole manner in which the great promise is fulfilled.

We sometimes like to wrap our gifts so that no one can tell what is in them. I saw a post the other day of a man who took a simple gift and put it in the middle of a huge paper mâché figure bigger even than his

Christmas tree. So too God often wraps his gifts in packaging that conceals the true worth and value within.

This is Jesus, meaning Jehovah saves, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, great David's greater son, yet who would ever guess he was to be born to Mary in Bethlehem. The fullness of God hidden in a child. This gift is so great but is given so silently that no one would ever guess what is contained in it

Jesus is in a manger. We are saved by his death. His power is hidden in water and word.

15 So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. 17 Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. 18 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

Suddenly the angels are gone. What a shock. What a change from a sky filled with song and light to a sky that was once again dark and quiet. It would be easy to be disappointed. It would be easy to feel let down. Far from being disappointed the shepherds are eager to go and see this newborn king. So, they went with haste.

The angels aren't the point. They are only messengers. When the angels and lights were gone the shepherds hurry to find what remained which was the real point. They hurried to receive the Christ. Even after the angels are gone what remained was Jesus in a manger. Who had come to bring peace to us.

It'll be easy to feel like something is missing in our life in a few days when all the Christmas stuff is gone. When the Angels are gone, and the pretty dresses are put away, and the presents are broken, and the in laws have left and gone back home, does that mean it's the end of Christmas? Of course not. Christ is still here.

It's so easy to feel disappointed when the angels with their lights and songs are gone, but peace doesn't come from angels but from Christ and he is still here.

Jesus is our peace, and he is always with us. Because we know that we have peace with God through Jesus Christ we are confident our whole lives. Amen