



“Unwrapping Advent Peace” (Luke 2:7-15)

I. INTRO

- A. Welcome to Advent 2019 at Community Covenant Church! Most of us have at least heard the word Advent but if you don’t remember what it means, it comes from the Latin word, *ADVENTUS*, which means **coming** or **arrival**.
- B. The main idea behind Advent is for us to **reflect**, **anticipate**, and **celebrate** the coming/arrival of Jesus Christ, who left the comfort, majesty, and perfection of heaven to become a man, born of the virgin Mary, who lived a perfectly obedient life and died a criminal’s death so that you and I could have access to a perfectly holy God.
- C. As you know, the Christmas/Advent season can get a little crazy with shopping, travel plans, and even anticipating family get-togethers—all of which can be quite stressful. With all that in mind, **we want to serve you in two ways** this Advent Season...
 1. We have produced a **resource** for you—either a hardcopy or a downloadable PDF version. It’s an **Advent Study and Resource Guide** that will help you to reflect on the meaning of Advent.
 - a. Parents will find it particularly helpful because there are projects you can do with your kids.
 - b. There is also a section which unpacks the biblical connection to many of the Christian traditions: Like why Dec 25th? The Advent Wreath? Christmas Candle? Christmas Bells? Christmas Carolers? Gift-giving? and even the Candy Cane?
 2. The second way we’d like to serve you this month is our Sunday services, which are designed for you to come in from the stress and anxiety of our culture’s frenzied pace and spend an hour worshipping and inviting God to refresh your soul.
- D. Over the next few weeks we will “unwrap” these ‘gospel fruits’ of peace, joy, hope, and love through the retelling of the Christmas narrative.

- E. (On Dec 29th we are going to have just one gathering at 9:30)
- F. Today we are looking at Luke 2:7-15 (p. 851) and we will focus most intently on v. 14.
1. Luke chap 2 is, by far, the most widely known chapter in the Bible because it tells the story of Christmas (John 3:16 is the most widely known verse).
 2. The essence of the Christmas narrative is that the Creator of the universe, the eternal God, put on humanity and entered the human condition as a baby. (The theological term is **Incarnation**.)
 3. “God hid His glory in the weakness of skin.”
 4. *“The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood.”*
John 1:14 (MSG)
- G. With that said, I invite you to follow along with your own Bible...Luke 2:7-15:
*“And [Mary] gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. ⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you **good news of great joy that will be for all the people.** ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and 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 among those with whom he is pleased!’**¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.’” [pray]*

II. BODY

- A. As I mentioned, in seeking to Unwrap Christmas Peace, we will take a close look at v. 14: *‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!’*
- B. We see from this angelic chorus that this “good news” (v. 10) has two outcomes, two great purposes:
1. “Glory to God in the highest,” and...

2. “On earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!”
- C. What does that mean to us in this complicated 21st century where **peace and peacefulness** seem so hard to come by?
- D. The most straightforward way to understand this verse is to see that as we give glory to God, God gives peace to us.
 1. Think of it this way: When glory goes up peace comes down.
 2. It’s a little bit like Chance the Rapper’s song, *Blessings*. He sings, “When the praises go up, the blessings come down.”
- H. To unpack it a bit more, I’d like to ask **two questions** of the text that will help us to deal with our anxiety as we live our lives in these uncertain times:
 1. **What is the glory of God (in the highest)?**
 2. **What does peace on earth look like?**
- I. We will look at them one at a time...
 1. **What is the glory of God (in the highest)?**
 - a. The Greek word for “glory” is *doxa*, the same word we get the word doxology from.
 - 1) The doxology “Glory to God in the highest” would seem to have been one of the most familiar doxologies of the Jewish people, it reappears 33 years later with Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem—what we refer to as Palm Sunday (see Mat 21:9 and Luke 19:38).
 - 2) The idea implied in the words “*in the highest*” (the Greek is plural), means that the praise reverberates through the very highest regions of the universe as well as throughout heaven. [Think of an echo.]
 - b. So, what is the glory of God?
 - 1) Defining God’s glory in human terms is exceptionally difficult. When we try to use words to describe God’s glory we end up reducing glory to some kind of human emotion or feeling.
 - 2) Here’s a definition that I pieced together from a book entitled, “A Heart for God’s Glory”: **The beauty and excellence of God’s manifold perfection; the magnificence**

and purity of God's holiness; the overflowing fullness of God's infinite goodness. The perfect harmony of all of God's attributes gathered into one infinitely beautiful, personal, and intimate being.

- 3) The Scriptures teach us that all the works of God have as their **ultimate goal** the **display of God's glory**.
- c. Now, let's personalize this glory...The literal meaning of the Hebrew word *glory* is **weight**. Here's the implication of when you and I encounter the glory of God...Picture a pool of water (that's you and me). Now picture a large rock (that's God). Now, what happens when you drop a large rock into a pool of water? The rock would disrupt and displace the water—sending ripples throughout the pool—because the rock has more “glory” than the water.
- 1) When God's glory splashes into your life, everything is disrupted and displaced as God's glory ripples through your life. In a few moments your view of God, yourself, and your future are completely changed. (This is what happened to Isaiah in chapter 6 when he encountered God in the temple.)
 - 2) When we encounter the weight of God's glory it disrupts everything in our life. Pastor and theologian Tim Keller talks about it this way: **There is a difference between God as a *concept* and God as a *reality***. It's the difference in believing in God and actually having experienced of God's presence.
 - 3) When Isaiah walked into the temple and encountered God (Isaiah 6:1), it wasn't as if he didn't believe in God until that day—but it was a day when God moved from being a *concept* to being a *reality*.
 - 4) The begs the question: **Has God moved from being a concept to being a reality in your life?**
- d. So, how do we glorify God? The way we glorify God is grateful heartfelt worship for the gift of our salvation and through actively seeking to find our greatest comfort, joy, and delight in God more than in anything else. (All sin is momentarily worshiping something or someone other than God.)

- 1) A by-product of finding our joy, comfort, and delight in God is that we begin to experience a growing freedom from selfishness, and we are moved to seek the good of others— and to respond in grateful responsive obedience to God.
 - 2) (Obedience is the fruit, not the goal of the Christian life. If you are here today and you believe that obedience is the goal of the Christian life, I would suggest that you have not rightly understood the gospel.)
- e. If we read the Bible with the expectation that it is primarily about us, we will tend to see the Bible as a rulebook instructing us regarding what we must do to please God. But if we read the Bible with the understanding that the Bible is written FOR us but is ABOUT God, then we will begin to see (in new ways) what God has done for us!
 - f. God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him. – John Piper
2. **What does peace on earth look like?**
- a. The most basic need all humankind has is peace with God. This is foundational to all our pursuits of peace—and why our government will never be able to provide it for us. Their best attempts are similar to the **peacekeeping** troops stationed around the world, but to be followers of Jesus, we are to be **peacemakers** (as we learned from our study of the Beatitudes).
 - b. If we don't pursue peace with God first and foremost, all other attempts at peace will be superficial and temporary.
 - c. As we move toward a definition of peace let's ask, "What is the opposite of peace?" Worry and anxiety.
 - d. Our world system would define peace as the absence of conflict. But a biblical definition of peace is not the absence of conflict but the absence of anxiety (or dread) in the midst of inevitable conflict.
 - e. So, the essence of the gospel is that Jesus came to give us peace IN our conflicts not necessarily peace FROM our conflicts.
 - 1) God will use our conflicts—and our grief, to grow and strengthen us.

- 2) Many Christians (or churchgoers) don't understand this, some want God to deliver them from conflicts or circumstances—and when God doesn't oblige, we can become disheartened.
- f. *“I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” --John 16:33*
- g. Those of us who have responded to the call of Christ and have placed our faith in Him, experience the first fruits of this peace He offers. Having tasted this we anxiously anticipate the fullness of Christ's peace that will come when we see Jesus.
- h. The whole history of redemption, climaxing in the birth, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus is God's strategy to bring about a just and lasting peace between us and God—and between us and one another (see Ephesians 2:14-22).

III. CONCLUSION

- A. As we conclude and move toward celebrating the Lord's Supper together, we Unwrap Christmas Peace by acknowledging, first and foremost, that God is glorified because this Child Jesus is born. And second, peace begins to spread everywhere this Child is received. These are the great purposes for the **incarnational birth** of Jesus.
- B. My great desire for you this Christmas is that you relax and enjoy this peace. We know that there are global aspects to this peace that lie in the future when:
 1. *“The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” --Habakkuk 2:14*
 2. Or, as Isaiah says, *“Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end” --Isaiah 9:7*
- C. So, the key to our peace is keeping together what the angels kept together in Luke 2:14: God's glory and our peace.