

THE HEART OF CHRISTMAS

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Find Peace In The Heart Of Christmas

Luke 2:8-14; Colossians 1:19-22; Matthew 5:9

¹³And 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!"

~ Luke 2:13-14 ~

The announcement of Jesus's birth was delivered to shepherds who lived on the fringe of society, in the fields, watching their sheep by night. If a king were born to the world, you would expect these shepherds to be the last to know about it. Yet, the heavenly angels told them peace was coming to the earth for those on whom God's favor rested. What a shocking message! God's favor was even on the shepherds. They were being offered peace, and if it could be given to them, we can rest assured it is also offered to us. Now, that is good news for a world that is in turmoil!

Think:

Jesus's birth offers us peace amid our difficulties and stresses.

Feel:

Peace is not the absence of conflict; it is the presence of Christ.

Do:

Take time to share the stresses of your life with God and trust that His favor is on you today. He longs to bring you peace .

The Christmas story in the Bible begins with an unlikely group of people. A multitude of heavenly angels announced Jesus' arrival in Bethlehem to a group of shepherds who were out in a field watching their flocks to keep them safe at night.

Read Luke 2:8-14. Shepherds in first-century Israel were individuals who existed on the fringe of society. They were considered stinky, dirty, and untrustworthy. They lived on

their own for months as they traveled with their flocks. It would have been shocking to the first readers of the book of Luke that these were the people God chose to entrust with such an important message.

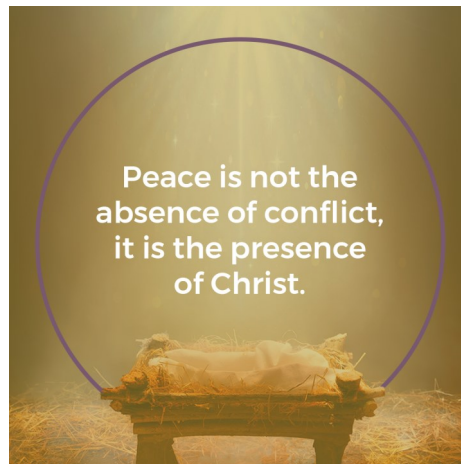
POINT #1 - THE PEACE OF GOD IS FOR ALL PEOPLE

The angels had to steady the shepherds by telling them not to be afraid because they were terrified of their presence. The message they brought was good news because a baby had been born who was the long-awaited Messiah—the one who was promised long ago to rescue God's people. The angels told them where to find Jesus, and before they left on their search, a heavenly host spoke over them: peace to those on whom God's favor rests. Jesus was ushering in peace.

What is most amazing is that when God wanted to announce the arrival of his son, he did not do it in the presence of kings or queens. He announced it to the poor and

the forgotten. This is truly good news because if God's favor was offered to the shepherds, then surely God's favor and peace are also available to us.

It is the world's greatest need. From the time sin entered the world and affected all of creation, we have been at odds with God. The Bible says we were enemies of God and in rebellion against his rule and reign. Sin did not just stop there; it also caused us to be in conflict with one another and ourselves. This is why Jesus's birth was and is such good news. It is the



ultimate answer to the brokenness that exists because of sin—brokenness between us and God, ourselves and others, and our inner voice.

Discussion Question:

- ✝ What kinds of things tend to rob peace from people's lives?

Read Colossians 1:19-22. To understand the peace ushered in at Christmas, we must realize that, although Jesus arrived in a cradle, his life would lead to a cross. Jesus intentionally lived a sinless life and willingly offered his life through crucifixion. Paul said the blood of Jesus Christ makes peace between us and God. Christ's sacrifice on the cross pays for the sin we have committed; it appeases God's anger toward sin, and it destroys the power of evil in our lives. Being reconciled to God is the key to experiencing peace in every other area of our lives.

POINT #2 – JESUS RECONCILES US TO GOD

When we receive the gift of forgiveness offered to us by faith, we become friends of God, and He offers us his power to help us navigate life's difficulties. Some may believe that being made right with God means never facing any problems. This is not the case. One biblical scholar says: "Peace does not mean you won't have any problems. Peace means that your problems won't have you."

The peace offered to those on whom God's favor rests does not equate to the absence of conflict. We may still have circumstances that don't go our way or challenging relationships to navigate. It promises God's presence in our lives; if He is with us, there is nothing we should fear. We can go to him for guidance and strength. We can lean on him when we get weary. He promises to bind up our wounds when we are hurt.

God desires for us to make peace with ourselves. Every past mistake, personal struggle, or worry for the future is met with God's love and grace. We also make peace with others because of God's forgiveness. When we recognize God's grace, our hearts are transformed to offer grace to others.

Discussion Questions:

- ✝ How is the presence of God and the presence of peace related?
- ✝ Why is Christ's sacrifice necessary to reconcile us to God? To ourselves? To others?

POINT #3 – PEACE IS OUR PURPOSE

The world needs more people who have God's peace in their hearts and are willing to share it with others. Embodying this peace is not optional. It is an expectation

that Jesus has for his followers. Joining God in making the world a better place is the purpose of our lives. Jesus speaks to this in the middle of his most famous sermon, the Beatitudes.

Read Matthew 5:9. The angels told the shepherds peace was available to those on whom God's favor rests. Jesus said something similar when He stated that peacemakers will be blessed and called children of God. When we are willing to seek reconciliation with others and fight for harmony rather than sowing dissent, we are identified with the heart of God, Who longs to reconcile the world to Himself. We look like the Father and are recognized as children in his family. We find peace at the heart of Christmas because God desires us to be in the right relationship with him, ourselves, and others. It is the very reason for which Jesus came to earth.

Many people do not value peace in their relationships, so they live in constant conflict. Some people are looking for a fight because they aren't in one. This is reminiscent of what Linus said to Charlie Brown in *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. Charlie Brown was having trouble getting into the Christmas spirit, and Linus observed, "Charlie Brown, you're the only person I know who can take a wonderful season like Christmas and turn it into a problem."

Unfortunately, this is the outcome for people who believe Christmas is about other things besides hope, peace, joy, and love.

Discussion Questions:

- ✝ What is one practical way to live as a peacemaker?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for the good news of peace that came to earth through the birth of Your Son, Jesus. Just as You entrusted the announcement of this peace to the shepherds, help us to recognize that Your love and favor extend to every one of us. Lord, we ask that You fill our hearts with Your peace—a peace that surpasses all understanding and brings comfort amid life's challenges. Guide us to be peacemakers in our relationships and in the world, reflecting Your grace and love to others. May we trust in Your presence and cling to the hope and reconciliation offered through Jesus Christ. In Jesus' Name. Amen.