

## December 19, 2021 Family Christmas Service James Gallaher

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The most familiar story ever told - the story of Christmas! It's familiar. It's common. It's celebrated throughout the world. We tend to not have reverence for the common. But the story of Jesus' birth is not common.

**Luke 2:8-20** *That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.*

Shepherds had a bad reputation, not able to uphold the rules and regulations of the day as they were always working and dirty from caring for the sheep. They were terrified when the angel appeared. God had been silent for 400 years and was not expected. Do we experience the same fear approaching God? We want to clean up before we submit to God. But God made this announcement to these unclean first.

At the announcement of the angel, there was a multitude, armies of heaven, that appeared. We tend to focus most on the "*peace of earth, goodwill to men.*" But the most significant words were before that... "*Glory to God in the highest!*" God's praise always goes before His peace. The angels understood and gave glory to God first and then declared peace. Peace is a restorative word meaning to join back together what was separated. The idea being to glue something back together so that it is whole and complete. The angels were speaking of a restorative peace.

This peace had been pursued by Israel for thousands of years that had been lost in the garden and was now returning to men. Adam and Eve started in peace with one another. They were fully exposed and yet not ashamed. There was no fear about what would be seen in their lives. The peace was broken between God and man as they sinned. A perfect sacrifice was needed to restore that relationship. The angel declared peace as Jesus came to the earth to restore.

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He came to restore:

- 1) Peace with God. Israel was always after this peace through sacrifices. Sacrifices had to continue as none were complete. Jesus came to provide the perfect and complete sacrifice. This peace with God must come first and then it leads to experiencing the...
- 2) Peace of God within. It is a peace that goes without understanding as we can't explain why God would send His Son to be our sacrifice. We must accept His Lordship as Messiah and Savior to experience this peace of God within. Then we can have...
- 3) Peace with others. Holidays certainly bring out what is lacking in relationships. We make truces when being together of what to say or not say to give a sense of peace while with families, but that's not peace. A truce is accomplished by us. Peace is accomplished by God.

**Verse 14** *On earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.* God's peace is available to All men. God's peace can only be experienced by those who make Jesus Lord of their lives. This is not God pleased by actions but that He was pleased at being glorified by these shepherds.

Now what? So the shepherds went seeking this Prince of Peace. The baby's cry broke the 400 years of silence. Upon finding the baby, the shepherds bowed and worshipped the Savior. Then they went on their way glorifying God. They took a light and shared with all who would listen to the story of the Jesus' peace that had come.

We can all take the light of this season, giving glory to His name and celebrating the peace that Jesus gives.

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How will you take the light of Jesus this week to others?

Describe the peace of Jesus.