
GOD GAVE

Part 4 - Peace

Introduction

Phrases in the English language that don't make sense when you think about them:

- + Virtual Reality, Act Naturally, Original Copy, Civil War, Clearly Confused, Soft Rock, Pretty Ugly, Microsoft Works.

The contradiction of the hand gun called the "Peacemaker."

- + Peace sometimes requires a disturbance of the peace.

Today's passage reveals more than we might first notice about peace in the Christmas narrative.

Luke 2:8-15

War Is Over

Context of the Roman Empire:

- + Augustus Caesar declared "son of God" and "saviour of the common people."
- + The Pax Romana (Peace of Rome) enforced through military strength.

The Christmas Story as a Declaration:

- + Jesus' birth challenges the worldly definition of peace.
- + This "good news of great joy" is an act of defiance against earthly powers.
- + True peace comes from God, not the imposed peace of the world.

As you and I come to this Christmas, the powers that try to determine what peace should look like for you and me are uncovered as not truly powerful, as not sources of peace, but instead as counterfeits and fakes.

Is it true peace of God or the false peace of the world?

The offer of Jesus this Christmas is true and abiding peace from the one who is the true bringer of peace.

What's Going On?

The Role of the Shepherds:

- + Social outcasts, humble, on the fringes of society.
- + God chooses to reveal His peace to the lowly, not the powerful.

Three Angelic Appearances in Luke:

- + Zechariah in the temple.
- + Mary, an unwed mother.
- + The shepherds, societal outcasts.

The Heavenly Host Declares:

- + "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased."
- + Peace is for those in relationship with God.

Peaceful Easy Feeling

God's Peace Defined:

- + Hebrew shalom: Everything as it should be.
- + Restoration of relationships, healing, deliverance, and salvation.

God's Peace is Personal and Practical:

- + Available to everyone, even in ordinary life.
- + God meets us in our pain, loneliness, and daily struggles.

Jesus' Promise:

- + John 16:33: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."
- + God's peace doesn't eliminate struggles but brings His presence into them.

It's about God meeting us in our pain and loneliness.

It's about God meeting us in our frustration and anger.

It's about God meeting us Monday and Wednesday and Friday.

It's about God wanting to be a part of our lives every day.

Give Peace a Chance

Peace is a gift, not something to earn.

In relationship with Jesus, peace is already ours.

Invitation to Receive Peace:

- + Peace for your body, heart, spirit, and relationships.
- + Step beyond "keeping the peace" into making peace by inviting God into your circumstances.

Peace Like A River

Let God's peace flow through your life like a river.

Do you want His peace today?

Discussion Questions

1. In what areas of your life do you feel a lack of peace right now? How can you invite God's peace into those situations this week?
2. How does God revealing the birth of Jesus to shepherds encourage you in your own life? What does it tell you about God's heart for those who feel overlooked or unimportant?
3. Reflect on the difference between the world's version of peace and God's peace. What false sources of peace do you sometimes rely on, and how can you shift your focus to God's lasting peace?
4. How does knowing that God's peace is available to you in your everyday struggles change how you approach challenges or difficult situations?
5. What practical steps can you take to become a "peacemaker" in your relationships, family, or other places this week?

Action Points

- + **Scripture Meditation:** Spend some time in the next week reflecting on Luke 2:8-15 or John 16:33. Ask God to reveal His peace to you and to help you experience it throughout your day.
- + **Personal Reflection:** Identify one specific area of your life where you need God's peace. Write it down and pray daily, asking God to bring His peace into that situation.
- + **Acts of Humility and Service:** Like the shepherds, choose to serve someone in a humble way this week. This could be helping a neighbour, encouraging a friend, or assisting someone in need.
- + **Pray for Relationships:** Spend time praying for peace in your relationships. If there's someone you need to reconcile with, ask God for the courage and wisdom to take a step towards making peace.
- + **Gratitude Practice:** Each day, write down one thing you are thankful for that reflects God's peace in your life. Reflect on how gratitude helps shift your heart toward peace.