



Unwrapping Advent Peace

Dec 4-5, 2016

I. INTRO

- A. As we transition from our Star WARS musical theme to the 2nd Sun of Advent theme, which is PEACE – you might find it interesting that **in** the last 3,000 years only 300 have been without war.
- B. Peace in our world has been quite hard to come by.
- C. I'd like to take the next 7-8 minutes to consider the PEACE that God offers us.
- D. I'd like to **read Luke 2:7-15**, pray, and then I'd like to **unwrap the Advent gift of peace with you** *"And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. ⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." ¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." --Luke 2:7-15 (NIV)*

II. BODY

- A. We only have time to look a bit more closely at v. 14: *"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."* --Luke 2:14
- B. As I said before, PEACE is hard to come by – sometimes even for active and intentional Christians. So, what I'd like to say to you in these few minutes is that there are **TWO PARTS** of PEACE – and that we need to get them in the correct order if we are to fully know and embrace God's PEACE.
- C. What are the two **PARTS** of PEACE?

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1. PEACE WITH God.

2. (Which grows into) The PEACE OF God.

- a. Think of this way: PEACE WITH God is digging the pool. The PEACE OF God is filling the pool.
 - b. *"For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns [a well or a pool], broken cisterns that can hold no water."* --Jeremiah 2:13
 - c. PEACE WITH God makes room for the PEACE OF God.
- D. So, the **big question** is, "How do we achieve PEACE WITH God?" The answer to that question is confounding – because we **CAN'T** achieve PEACE WITH God. There is **nothing** we can do to achieve PEACE WITH God. That's frustrating for a lot of people.
- E. ****Yet**, that in fact, is the whole point of Christmas – we can't, so God did.
- F. Christmas is God's rescue plan for humankind. Think of Christmas as the cosmic D-Day, where the Allied Troops successfully landed on the beaches of Normandy. V-Europe Day is the Resurrection.
- G. There is nothing you or I can do to achieve PEACE with God. Why? Because **it's already happened, it's already complete, it's already done.**
- H. God sent His Son to live a perfect life and die a criminal's death so that you and I could enjoy PEACE WITH God. That, in essence, is the gospel (Good News). *"But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."* --Romans 5:8 (NLT)
- I. What does PEACE WITH God look like, taste like, feel like? (Two things...)
- 1. Peace WITH God is a heart that is awakened to the understanding that we cannot bridge the gap between a perfect and holy God in our own imperfect state.**
 - 2. PEACE WITH God is a settled understanding that there is NOTHING we can do to earn God's favor. God, in Jesus Christ, has done it all already.**
- J. What does the peace OF God look like, taste like, feel like?
- 1. The peace OF God means that there is renewed harmony between God and us. This is a peace that we can have immediately, through faith in Jesus Christ.**

2. **The peace OF God is a growing confidence and trust in God's wise and good control of our lives.** (Here's how one author said it: "Peace is joy at rest and joy is peace on its feet." –Anne Lamott¹)

III. CONCLUSION

- A. In closing, and with all the love I can muster, I want to be clear: If your heart has not been awakened to the understanding that there is nothing you can do to earn God's favor than you are not yet a Christian.
- B. And, of course, I would urge all of us to let go of that ingrained compulsion to try and earn God's favor by trying to be good.
- C. Be real, be honest, and surrender your heart to God so that you can have PEACE WITH God, so that you can grow in the PEACE OF God.

Study/Discussion Questions:

1. What are some reasons people assume they can't find peace with God? Why do you think people carry around these (false?) assumptions?
2. Read Romans 5:12–19. Does peace with God through Jesus Christ sound too easy? Why or why not?
3. Read 1 John 4:20. What does this verse say about how God values you and other people? In what ways does it challenge your assumptions about what it means to have a relationship with God?
4. Is it difficult for you to believe that peace with God is possible? Why or why not?
5. What is something that stands in the way of your peace with God? What is one thing you can do this week to begin to surrender in that area of your life? What can this Community Group do to support you?

¹ Anne Lamott. *Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith*, Riverhead 2006: 7.