



DAVID ANDERSON | DECEMBER 8 | PEACE THAT ENDURES

Silent night, holy night, All is calm, all is bright
'Round yon virgin Mother and Child, Holy infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace

Whatever is happening in this scene, doesn't your soul ache for some of it? Can't you use some heavenly peace right now? I know I can. All the Christmas carols we sing are amazing, but this song literally slows your heart rate. What SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT means is this was a night, this was an event like no other. Joseph and Mary are from an ordinary, poor family from an ordinary town and they are tucked away in a very ordinary, noisy, smelly stable. And yet in all of history, there was nothing ordinary about this moment, this night, this boy, this glorious night.

This is a song about peace, but Jesus didn't come into peace. He came into a very chaotic, self-serving, self-centered, racially divided, pleasure seeking, hateful, sin-stained world. One thing we know about Bethlehem 2000 years ago - there was no peace on earth, no goodwill towards men. It is into this world of hatred, sin and sickness that this Christmas child enters, and what does the Christmas child offer? The coming of this child will be the greatest revelation of God's glory and the fulfillment of our heart's desire for peace. Five times in the New Testament Jesus is called "the God of peace" (Romans 5:13; 16:20; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:20). And Jesus said, "My peace I give to you" (John 14:27). And Paul said "Jesus Himself is our peace" (Ephesians 2:14).

We know that there are worldwide aspects of peace that are yet to come. As Isaiah says, "Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end" (9:7). That day will come, but my great desire for you during this Christmas season is that you enjoy real peace today.

Why did Jesus show up in that manger? Jesus came to bring peace to you:
peace with God, the peace of God, peace for others.

Peace with God

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 5:1-2) Romans 5 says that our peace rests in God's amazing act of justification. In vs.1, Paul uses legal, court room terms. We stand in the court room of heaven and have been declared righteous. Paul says we have been acquitted of all the charges against us. Why? Because Christ has intervened! Because of His miraculous and merciful act of love on the cross, He has made peace.

Paul says we have been acquitted of all of our sins because every single one of them was punished in Jesus Christ. He died for all of our sins, and we receive all of His righteousness by faith. Who is going to bring a charge against us? Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." No one shall bring a charge against us because it is God who justified us. No charge or accusation can stand up against us. Because of our faith in the Person of Jesus Christ, the verdict is out: not guilty.

Why did Jesus have to make peace? Because we have no human ability to pull it off. I want you to hear this very clearly. Our hope is not in ourselves! It is not in our ability to measure up to God's perfect standards. Our hope is not in our ability to somehow outwit the scales of God. Somehow my good works will outweigh my sins? Our good deeds are not going to outweigh our sins. If this was true, Jesus would have never invaded history.

The Peace of God

First and foremost, Jesus came to give you peace with God, but Jesus also came for you to possess the peace of God. God actually wants you to walk through your life and the painful circumstances of your life with some genuine peace.

As you survey the Gospels, it feels like Jesus is constantly trying to teach his followers about peace. In John 14:27, Jesus says in the Upper Room Discourse, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." Obviously this statement is rooted in the final peace of all things and the new heaven and the new earth, but I really think He has in view your heart, and the peace of your heart, and the fearlessness of your heart, and the untroubled waters of your heart. He wants his people, right now, to be free from anxiety.

He says, the peace I offer you isn't what the world can give you. The only kind of peace the world can give us is the peace of good circumstances. That's why the whole world is frantic and worship the gods of good circumstances. The peace that Jesus wants to give you is an anchor in spite of bad circumstances. That is why Jesus can say in John 16:33, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world, you will have tribulation. But take heart in that tribulation; I have overcome the world."

Here's the deal: it's His peace, not our peace. It's "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding" (Phil. 4:7). We cannot grasp it or produce it. Why not? It's not human peace; it is God's peace. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you" (John 14:27). Jesus is saying, "I am not creating your peace or your version of peace, I'm bring you into My peace!" If think one of the most profound and practical passages in all of Scripture is Philippians 4:6-7. "Do not be anxious about anything [What's the opposite of anxiety? Favorable circumstances? No! It's peace], but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

This is the way the peace of God is unlocked in your life. Your hearts are under assault - guilt, worries, threats, confusions, uncertainties - all of these things are trying to squeeze out the peace of God. And Paul says that God wants to "guard" your hearts and minds. He guards them with his peace. Our job: in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God! Why thanksgiving? Because He is good and loving God and whatever He brings, whatever He allows He is a good and loving God. His job: to bring you peace, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Peace for Others

What we find in the Christian life is that nothing is just about us. In fact, if you want to make sure that you never experience the peace of God, continue to believe that life is about you. As we bring our anxiety to Him, as our heart grabs hold of His renewing peace again. He then wants us to make peace. Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Mat. 5:9).

You have been graciously and mercifully given peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Everyday Jesus offers you His genuine peace. All of this is to give you a fighting chance to make peace in your worlds and spheres of influence. Paul says that God is pleading through us as ministers of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19-21).

This season we have the thrill and responsibility to be ministers of peace and reconciliation. This is your calling, to share this peace with a world that is filled with unrest and anxiety.

"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

