



Pray

If you are a Christian, Jesus has given you peace because you are one “he favors.” How will this stunning truth shape your prayers?

How can this passage impact the way you pray for yourself and others?

How does this passage move you to thank and praise God in prayer?



Live in Heavenly Peace | Luke 2:8-16

Study Guide 2 for Advent Sermon on 12/13/2020



Introduction

What do infomercials, bad boyfriends, and new cell phones have in common? They promise to give you peace, but they never deliver. They may provide a brief reprieve or momentary distraction. However, their promises are shortsighted and hollow. We are fundamentally people without peace.

What a devastating thing to realize. We live with such a deficit of peace that peace-lessness feels normal. In fact, many would argue that non-peace is actually peace! How important then for us to hear these familiar words again, “peace on earth, to people whom he favors.”



Overview

Context: Chapter 2 opens with an explanation of the census that required Mary and Joseph to travel to Bethlehem. Luke gives stunning details in such a straightforward way. Mary gave birth to her baby and laid him in a manger, a feed trough for animals, because there was no guest room available. Christ’s humble birth was announced to another unlikely group, not kings, or priests, but shepherds. Nothing about this story is normal. It is a stunning description of an incarnation that no human could invent.

Structure:

- I. A Holy Visitation (vv. 8-14)
- II. A Visitation to the Holy (vv. 15-16)



Engage

1. What do we know of shepherds in the 1st century? You may need to look at other resources to answer this. What was their work like? What kind of reputation did shepherds have?
2. Why are shepherds an unlikely audience for this announcement? Does it mean anything for us that the announcement was given to shepherds?
3. A common portrayal of this scene places the angels in the sky above the shepherds. Could you argue from the text that the announcement and song occurred on ground level? Are you team “sky” or team “ground”?
4. Other angelic appearances occur in 1:11-20, 1:28-37, and also in Matthew 1:20-25. What similarities and differences can you find in these accounts?
5. The angel begins the announcement with these words: “Don’t be afraid.” What does that line tell us about God? What does it tell us about ourselves?
6. Describe the significance of the titles the angel uses of the newborn Christ in verse 11: Savior, Messiah, Lord.
7. Engage your imagination. What do you think it was like when the other angels appeared in verse 13 and then sang together in verse 14?
8. The angels’ song declares that the birth of Jesus means, “peace on earth to people [God] favors.” Read the following paragraph in order to get a better understanding of peace/shalom. Cornelius Plantinga Jr. described the biblical concept of *shalom* in his 2010 essay, “Sin: Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be.”
“The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call shalom. In English we call it peace, but it means far more than just peace of mind or ceasefire between enemies. In the Bible shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight – a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as the creator and savior opens doors and speaks welcome to the creatures in whom he delights. Shalom, in other words, is the way things are supposed to be.... In sum, shalom is God’s designed plan for creation and redemption; sin is blamable human vandalism of these great realities and, therefore, an affront to their architect and builder.”
9. Does peace come to us because of Bethlehem, Golgotha, or both?
10. How does a Christian’s peace with God empower him/her to have peace with other people?