

Glory and Peace

John 14:27-28, Luke 2:8-14

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Welcome. 'Tis the season, right? We are in week two of our Advent series talking about peace. Now when we think of Christmastime, is peace typically the first word that comes to mind? When was the last time you guys said, “I had a peaceful Christmas”? I mean, just think about it. We're doing all the shopping, working out all these travel plans, trying to get everything decorated, coordinating travel plans with relatives--brace yourself for those relatives you don't even like to come over, and all that kind of stuff. It's just so busy, so crazy and hectic, and probably peace is the last word that comes to mind. And add to that, if you go deeper than that, think about all the conflict and the war that has ensued out of an association with the name of Jesus.

In fact, Jesus Himself says something rather odd in Matthew 10:34-36. He says: “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter in law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies will be members of his own household.’” And yet we call Him the Prince of Peace, from Isaiah. And so it sounds like Jesus is contradicting that. Like He's saying, “I don't know what all this Prince of Peace stuff is, but I'm not the Prince of Peace.”

1. Is Jesus really the Prince of Peace?

a. The Upper Room (John 14:27)

So that begs the question, is Jesus really the Prince of Peace? How can He be the Prince of Peace when it seems that everything surrounding Him is the complete opposite of peace? Well, we're going to explore the answer together. If you'll turn with me in your Bibles to John chapter 14. Here's how it's going to go this morning. We're going to keep one foot with the shepherds and the angels--we're going to come back to that. But we're going to jump ahead 33 years into the upper room. And here Jesus is talking to His disciples, preparing them for His upcoming death. And so this is starting at verse 27, if you'll read along with me in your Bible to yourself. John 14:27: “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” So you see, this is the key here, that Jesus is indeed the Prince of Peace. And He does give peace, just not the kind of peace that the world gives.

2. The world's peace

a. An inherently restless world cannot offer true peace

And what kind of peace does the world give? The bottom line is that an inherently restless world cannot offer true peace. So, for example, this past spring, we had our first father-daughter dance here. Anyone been to that? Some of our dads came, I came with my daughter, and it was a great time. But something about me you might find surprising knowing that I'm a musician, I can't dance worth squat. I mean, like, the most I can do in worship is just this kind of swaying thing. And that's about the extent of my dancing. I just, whatever the Lord gave me in music, He did not give me in my feet. I can turn guitar pedals like that, and that's about it. And so I would be there trying to do the moves and Ellie is just laughing at me. "Dad, it's so simple. You just put this foot right there. That foot right there." It's like, I can't figure it out. Just about the only thing I can do is to slow dancing, and I can even do the twirl, but that's about it.

And so imagine someone came up to me and said, "Hey, Danny, I want to be a world class dancer. I want to be the top dancer in the whole world." How ridiculous would it be for this person to come to me for dance lessons? That's what it's like when we go to the world looking for peace. "World, will you fill me up with peace?" You see how ridiculous that is? And the world tends to offer three types of peace.

i. Inner peace (inner turmoil)

You can see this pop up in different forms. It can attempt to offer us inner peace to address our inner turmoil. It'll tell you "Find yourself, find your own truth," or it might put you on medication, or lead you to meditation and all these other techniques that you can try to do to get that inner peace.

ii. Interpersonal peace (interpersonal conflict)

It'll also try to give you interpersonal peace. You might try group therapy or team building exercises in the corporate area.

iii. Political peace (political unrest, war)

Or what we all think of when we think of peace on earth, we think of world peace. This big happy utopia where every country gets along. And so the world tries to do peace treaties and pass laws to reduce violence and everything.

And that's not to say that most of these things are bad. I mean, there's no shame in taking medication if you deal with anxiety or depression or something like that. There is no shame in going through some training in the corporate area to learn how to better get along with

your coworkers and find out some things about yourself. That's useful stuff. It's not bad for countries to attempt to keep violence at bay through passing various laws. All of these can be really good things, but they are not going to give lasting peace. Because this world is war-torn. It's violent. It is vicious. And so, like I said earlier, an inherently restless world cannot offer true peace. And there is a fourth kind of peace which the world can't even do a knockoff version of.

3. Peace with God

a. Enemies of God

And this is called peace with God. Because, you see, whenever we were born into this world, we were born at enmity with God. We were enemies of God. When we think of our pre-Christian life, we tend to think of this big chasm, this great separation, you know. God was over here, and then man was over here, this long breach that we couldn't cross. And that's a valid illustration. That's a Biblical illustration.

b. Hostile to God

But there's also a sense in which we're up in God's face with our fists up. "Come on. You want to fight me? Come on. I'll take You down." And there's that sense where we're just fighting Him. We're in rebellion. We are countering everything that God stands for. It's like, my parents have this little dog. Her name is Lucy, and she's a nice dog and everything. But for whatever reason, she hates other dogs. She'll see these other dogs pass by and then she'll get all vicious. And one day, one day, she goes on a walk with my dad, who's taking her out, and she sees this big German Shepherd, and she decides to try to intimidate that German Shepherd. But he wasn't having it and he chased her down and ended up hurting her. Thankfully, the vet was able to put her back together and she's okay now. But that's kind of like if we try to fight a battle with God, it's going to be a losing battle. So it's like we might as well not even try.

And going along with that dog thing, any dog lovers in here? For all you cat lovers, there is hope and forgiveness. But it reminds me of a rabid dog. You know? Have you ever seen Old Yeller? Do you remember that very famous scene at the very end? Old Yeller has been bitten by this rabid wolf. And so he's being kept up in this little cabin-type structure. And by the end of it, Travis, his owner, goes to check up on him. And there's this vicious dog hate in his eyes. He's slobbering, he's growling, and if let loose, he would tear that entire family apart. And so there is no reasoning, there is no training, there is no conditioning that will work to cure this dog. And so Travis has no choice but to pull out his rifle and end the life of the dog.

c. God cannot allow sin to remain

And so that's a lot what it's like when God comes face to face with sin. You see, God in His holiness cannot simply allow sin to go unaddressed. He can't give sin a free pass. He can't just look at us with all of our filth, all of our crud, and just say, "Oh, that's okay. You get a free pass. I'll just look the other way like it never happened." That's not going to happen. That can't happen. And so what God could do is just put us all to death and be done with it. But I got good news for you. That's not what God decided to do.

d. Christ offers true peace by breaking the curse of sin (Romans 5:1-2)

And instead, Christ was born to offer us true peace, true peace by breaking the curse of sin. And that would be accomplished by Jesus Christ upon the cross, as He would take what we deserved for our own sin. Isn't that good news, saints? It's just like Paul tells us in Romans 5: 1-2; "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God." Amen!

So that means we are no longer enemies of Christ. We no longer have our fists in the air waiting to strike Him, but instead we are like children running to the Father and embracing Him. You see, no longer are we shameful, but now we can stand face to face with God and look upon Him as He looks upon us with love. I'm reminded of the story of Moses. Do you remember his first encounter with the burning bush? How he comes and he's ashamed and he's afraid. He can't even look at God in the face. But then jump ahead to Exodus 33 and it says that he is standing before God in the tent of meeting, face to face as one friend to another.

e. Peace **with** God, peace **of** God

And that's what Jesus offers us. That we don't need to cower in shame anymore. But now we can boldly approach the throne of glory and see our Savior face to face. That is incredible. And then when we have this peace **with** God that makes way for the peace **of** God. We hear about that peace that surpasses all understanding. This is what that is. This is that peace that allows us to be calm in every circumstance. With this kind of peace, we can have peace with ourselves. We can know that we are no longer slaves to sin, but that we are children of the Most High God. We can know that it is no longer I, yet Christ who lives in me.

We can know that we are new creations because the old has gone. And what? The new has come. Yes, the old is gone, the new has come. And so this is such good news. That's why Christmas should be a very wonderful time of the year. And not because of the holly and the presents and all that kind of stuff, but because Jesus has come to us. And you see this

peace of God. We have peace with ourselves, we have peace with others as we bear with one another in love and submit to one another.

i. Based on knowing God intimately

And there's two things that we have to understand about this peace of God. The first is that it's based on knowing God intimately. Not just knowing about Him, not just being a student of the Bible and knowing facts and knowing this Greek word and that Hebrew word and everything. Although it starts with knowledge, it doesn't end there because we have to know God, not just know about Him. For example, you could say that I know my wife pretty well, I know Heidi. We started dating about 17 years ago, I think, and I learned a lot about her then, and I'm still learning more about her to this day. My knowledge is increasing, but at the same time, I know the sound of her voice. I know the different voices that she has in response to different things. I know the faces that she makes. I know what makes her laugh, what makes her cry. I can tell that it's her when she comes up behind me. I know the feeling of when she walks into a room and the presence changes.

You see, that is not just knowing about someone. I didn't just look her up on Wikipedia and find out all these things about her, but I got to know her--and I got to **know** her, if that makes sense. And that's how we are with our Savior. We are steeped in the truth. Everything is rooted in the truth. But yet we know Him intimately as we seek Him, as we desire, as we hunger and thirst for the living God. And He satisfies us in a way that nothing else can.

ii. Not dependent on conditions

The second thing is that this peace of God is not dependent on our circumstances. The stars don't need to align in order for us to have the peace of God. We don't need to have ideal conditions in order to have peace, because that's not peace. That's just ease, and ironically ease can easily be taken away. So as I was praying and meditating on this passage here, I felt like the Holy Spirit brought a picture to my mind of this cabin that's out there in these fields, in the midst of a hailstorm. Looking outside the window, the ground is turning white because of all the hail rocks that are just piling up. The wind is blowing the trees around, just billowing and blowing. Hail just smattering on the rooftop, just noise everywhere. But yet being near this warm fire, pressing further into it as these raging noises start to become this white noise in the background. And I'm at rest around the warmth of the fire, and I'm allowed to fall asleep and be at peace.

You see, we don't need to be storm-free in our lives. We simply need to be free in Christ. And so this asks the question, where do you find the peace of God? How do you know that it's coming? How do you know what to look for? Well, now let's step into our Biblical time machine and go back 33 years to what the Leong family read. So if you'll turn with me in

your Bibles to that passage in Luke, this is Luke 2:8-14. I'm not going to read the whole thing again, but I just want you to have that ready there.

4. The Shepherds and the Angels

So here we are with the shepherds. Now, these shepherds, these are kind of the lowest class of people of that time. And they're living in this society that's called Pax Romana. If you've ever studied world history, this is the golden age of Rome. And there was this general peace that went around the Roman Empire. But it was a peace that was enforced by violent brutality. So it was not a true peace. And so here you have these shepherds in Bethlehem, which is already not a big deal at all. And then these shepherds who are like as low class as you can get. Anyone ever worked food service before, or a grocery store or anything like that? You know what it's like whenever that one person comes in and they want you to know that they're a big deal, and then sometimes it's not enough, they need to let the manager know that they're a big deal, too.

And so that's kind of like what these people are, who are just mistreated, looked down upon. The last people that you'd expect to be a hero in an epic story like this. But it is this group of people that becomes the very first congregation to receive a gospel message. Because--just picture this scene: these shepherds over here, they're just minding their business. They got stuck with the late-night shift, and they're not expecting anything to happen. Just like counting down the hours so they can get off their shift. And then boom, the glory of the Lord comes with this angel. And then they're terrified. They're like, "What is going on?!"

And they've never seen anything with like CGI or special effects. But even if they had, I guarantee you they'd be just as terrified because the glory of the God just totally transcends anything that our imaginations can come up with. So they're just, like, scared stiff. But then the angel's like, "Hey, chill out, it's okay. Don't be afraid. I bring good news." And so then look what he says here as he's declaring this news to the shepherds. He's saying this in verse 11: "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord."

a. Savior, Messiah, Lord-born

Now stop there. There is so much that's jam packed in here. It can be easy to miss, but this is like, just meaty stuff. And I love what the commentator Thabiti Anyabwile says about this: "To the lowliest of people, He gives the highest theology." You see, it's clear, it's succinct, it's plain, but yet it's so profoundly rich and weighty. You see, He is the Savior, the One who

has come to save us from our sins. He is the Messiah, the One who has been prophesied by the prophets of all who has come to ransom captive Israel like we just sang about.

He is the Lord who will rule and reign over His people forever. And He has been born to us in the flesh. In many ways, this is just simply another way of saying “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” Man, sometimes I just can't help but think, what would the shepherds be like if they'd switched shifts like, “Oh, I got off, I don't have to go to work today.” But then those shepherds come back and say, “Hey, guess what we saw today?” You'd hate to be that shepherd that missed out, but that's just incredible news.

b. Glory to God in the highest

And so then the angel is joined by this great heavenly host, and then they start praising the Lord, saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth on whom His favor rests.” And there is a lot to be found in here.

c. Peace on earth

If you think the whole pursuit, it seems, throughout human history is like, how do we achieve world peace? How do we possibly get everyone to get along with each other? So world leaders, if you're watching right now, take notes, because I've got the answer for you right here.

5. The glory of God precedes peace

Glorify the Lord. If you glorify the Lord, peace will come. Can you imagine if every world leader said, “I am not going to pursue my own power, my own might, but I'm going to pursue the glory of God?” Can you imagine how this world would look if that was the mindset of every world leader? This is further developed if we jump back ahead 33 years to John 14, if you'll turn there with me. And this is what he says in verse 28. He said, “You heard Me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.”

a. The Father is greater than the Son

Now this is a verse that has long confused and stumped many a theologian. There's been a lot of misconceptions about this. “The Father is greater than I.” So is He saying that “I'm not really God, the Father is?” No, that is not what He's saying at all. Some people say, “Well, it's saying that Jesus is still God, but He's not as much God as the Father is. He's a lesser deity than the Father.” No, that is not what He's saying. And then some people will say, “Well, it just means that Jesus is eternally subordinate to God the Father.” It's like, no, that's

not what He's saying either. So then what is He saying? What He is saying is that "It would be better for Me to return to my former place of glory, at the right hand of the Father."

That's what He's saying. He is every bit as much God as His Father is, but He's saying "It would be better for Me to be where I'm meant to be, in glory, before everyone to see." And then, by the same token, "If it is better for Me, it will be better for you as well." Because Paul tells us in first Corinthians 15, "If Christ has not been resurrected from the dead, then you are still in your sins."

b. If we want peace to rule in our lives, God must rule in our lives.

And so, it is when Christ was raised up in glory that we were able to have true peace. So Jesus is saying, "It is in everyone's best interest that I return to the Father and be glorified," because the glory of God precedes peace. We can't have peace if God doesn't get the glory. You see, sometimes I get a little jealous of the disciples. I think about, "Man. They got to walk alongside Jesus. They got to hear the physical sound of His voice. They got to hug Him and all this stuff. Man, what I wouldn't give to be with Jesus like that."

Now, I hate to use this word. I hate to say that it's overrated. But think about it for a second. Think about who the disciples were. These were people who were scared of a little water on the sea. These were people who were arguing, "I'm going to be the best. No, I'm going to be the best. Jesus, who's going to be the best in your kingdom? Can my son sit at the right hand of the Father?" It's like all these things. And then they deny him. They run away. They're cowards. But then look at the book of Acts. It's the same group of guys. But now they're starting the church. They are facing persecution. Yeah, they still have their issues here and there, but they are completely changed. And Jesus is not there physically, but His Spirit is with them. And the Spirit has given peace.

And so, you see, we are in better shape right now without the physical form of Jesus than the disciples were with Jesus physically there, because we have the Spirit of peace in us. Does that make sense? You guys following me? God needs to get the glory and then we will receive peace. And it's just like we saw in Romans five: as we have the peace with God, then we can rejoice that Jesus is glorified, and boast in that. And if you want peace to rule in your life, then Jesus must rule in your life. He must be the King of your heart if you hope to receive peace.

1. Christ was born for you

I'm going to ask the worship team to come on up as I close with this. This Christmas season, with all the hustle and bustle that you've got going on, I just want to encourage you to just take some time and reflect on who Jesus is. And remember that Jesus Christ was born for you. Of all the ways that He could have chosen to bring glory to the Father, He chose to come for you. He chose to leave behind His glory, His rightful place at the right hand of the Father, and come down as a humble man. Because He loved you so much, because He desired that you would be with Him where He is, and to behold His glory. Jesus was born for you, and this is the greatest gift that you can ever receive this Christmas, or any other day of the year.

2. No matter who you are or where you come from, God's peace is for you

And then I want to tell you that no matter who you are or where you come from--doesn't matter. God's peace is for you. You could be like the shepherds who had nothing. You could be like the wise men who were wealthy, or anyone in between. God's not impressed by your gifts, by your status. He gave them to you. And God's not ashamed of your lowliness because He was made love.

3. Glorify the Lord and He will fill you with His peace

And then I want to tell you this morning, glorify the Lord, and He will give you that peace that surpasses all understanding. Don't just say "Jesus is one of the influences in my life. He's an inspiration, or He's a big part of my life." The cry of your heart should say, "Jesus is my life! Take all this world, but give me Jesus. I consider this as loss for the sake of knowing Jesus Christ, my Lord." Settle for nothing less than Jesus Christ and His righteousness and His peace in us.

Some of you here are in a dry spot. You're just going through the motions, but you've forgotten your first love. Start by just simply bowing down and saying, "Yes, Lord." If you have said that with your heart, you have already started to glorify Him. And some of you here do not know the Lord. And so I would tell you, if you want this peace that you can't get from the world, that you can't get from social media, that you can't get from medication. But this peace that doesn't make sense when you see followers of Jesus and you see the things that they go through and your saying, "It doesn't make sense. How can this person go through so much pain, so much torment, and yet they be filled with this joy and this peace?" And knowing that they are not in control but that's okay, because God is.

If that is you, then I would love to pray with you. Any of the pastors or elders who are present today, would love to pray with you and tell you how you can know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. But I want to tell you this morning, glorify the Lord with everything that He has given you your mind, your heart, your soul, your strength. Glorify the Lord and He

will give you peace. So to answer the question: is Jesus really the Prince of Peace? You bet He is.

Lord God, would you fill us with that peace that transcends all understanding, Lord God? This peace where we can be in the midst of the storm with the elements raging all around us, yet be at peace underneath the Father who sings over us, Lord God. May the song of Your voice put us in a state of rest, Lord God. May we lay down our burdens and come to You, because Your yoke is easy and Your burden is light. So may we find rest for our weary souls and have this peace in You, Lord God. We can't do this alone, Lord God. No amount of work that we can try to do on our part will get us peace. But Lord, You can help us to say, "Yes, Lord," and the rest will follow if You are our first love. So, Lord, I just pray that every person in this room would call upon Your name, and that their number one desire is that Jesus Christ would be glorified. Because there is going to be a day. There's going to be a day when You will receive all the glory, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus is the Lord. You will return more glorious than You have ever shown Yourself before. And one day we will have world peace, because we will be a holy nation with the glory of God shining through us. And we will enjoy peace like any we could ever know and imagine here on this earth. So be glorified this morning. Be glorified. Amen.