



Advent 2020
Wk. 4 “Promise of Peace”
By Pastor Jody May

Luke 2:8-20 ESV

The Shepherds and the Angels

⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

¹⁵When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁷And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

This Advent season hopefully you have had some success as we talked about our first week, suspending between looking forward to the second coming of Christ and looking back at the first coming of Christ.

- **Hope** is the joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation.
- God’s **Love** is Refining – proven, perfecting and preserving.
- The **Joy** of the Lord is something to fight for, ask God for it, and then choose to give it!



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Then in Luke 2:14 we focus in on what is delivered to us this last day of Advent, it's Peace, specifically a Messianic Peace. That was prophesied by Zechariah in the first chapter of Luke 1:79. *"to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of **peace**."* Messianic Peace doesn't deliver you out of the valley of the shadow of death, but the gift of Messianic peace is that it is no longer eternal, and He walks with you through this life because He mastered it.

John 16:33 ESV

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have **peace**. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

- **Peace, the Peace of God that surpasses all understanding is a peace that makes life bearable because the Messiah walks through life with you now.**

These 4 things are all connected to the fruit of the Spirit, these things are **naturally being produced in the lives of believers**. So really the season of Advent is **1st** to remind the believers what one already has. **2nd**, it proclaims the gospel to those He's calling in what could be theirs! What's more they are all connected. When you realize your Hope is in Christ, when you accept this refining love, when you choose to fight this world to keep it from robbing your joy, it will lead you to peace.

Philippians 4:4-7

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the **peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**



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Peace will guard you from throwing in the towel and giving up even when you just went through a year like 2020. When you throw in a World Pandemic on top of Election Year on top of Social Justice Issues on top of Governmental overreach it has made for a really bad tasting series of events in our mouths. For some of us it has kind of left you **shell shocked** if we are honest. This time last year you didn't know you were going to have this kind of year.

Comparatively though, the world has been through this type of year many times. For example, Christmas 1914, the world had been plunged into the War to end all wars, WW1, since July of 1914. Europe was introduced to the atrocities of trench warfare brought to life with the invention of the machine gun and mustard gas. The soldiers stuck in those trenches over a century ago, thought the war would be over in a few months. They were desperately seeking something to believe in at that moment, and wouldn't you know it, on Christmas Eve in 1914 they received a reprieve.

An unofficial Truce sprang across the front lines all across Europe. Soldiers for one night put down their weapons, they walked up on the battlefields, they exchanged goods for cigarettes, they sang Christmas carols together, and in some places, in history, they say they even shared a game of soccer. More importantly, the dead could be honored and pulled off the field. For one night they were awarded peace, but it never came again, for four bloody years the officers never allowed the soldiers to meet again like that for fear that they would find sympathy for the men they were trying to kill. It was a passing peace that in the end produced 20 million dead.

2020 may have been a hard year for you but it was nothing like what those boys had in 1914. But more importantly than that, right now, God has an offer for true everlasting peace for you. It's an offer for a type of peace that cannot be taken away no matter what 2021 has in store for you. Even if your struggles are only beginning, like those soldiers, God's promise for peace for your life can sustain you, it will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus as Paul told us.



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So, let's go back to this famous Christmas story and discover why this gospel proclamation of peace to these shepherds was really such great news.

1. Peace is delivered to those that need it the most.

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

How were **shepherds viewed in ancient times**? Perhaps the picture in our head is a person that is caring, honest, hard-working but in the ancient world this is the farthest thing from the truth. ¹ Although, ironically enough, many of the heroes of the Jews had been Shepherds.

The shepherd was actually considered the lowest class of people in that day and age of Palestine. You see the nature of their profession meant that they would not always be able to participate on the Sabbath, nor were they able to attend the synagogues because watching sheep when they were in the fields was a 24-hour job. When you went to sleep you slept with them inside a pen and you were the physical door to that pen.

Not only that but fighting off predators would put you into the contact with all types of dead animals which was another way that a shepherd would be made unclean under mosaic laws. And because they could not get away from the sheep, they could never perform the ritual cleansing required to be accepted among the populace.

So, it is only natural that shepherds garnered the reputation for not being trustworthy. They were considered to be unscrupulous and therefore could not even give testimony in their court of law, which also meant that if charges were brought up against them, **they could not defend themselves.**

¹ Sproul, R. C. (1999). [*A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke*](#) (p. 30). Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications.



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That means we need to understand in our story that the people who received this most glorious of all declarations – **“Peace to you!”**, the greatest news that the world will ever hear other than “He has risen” or what we all long to and will hear one day the declaration that the “Lord has returned”, **these people were the Lowest of the Low, the ones that needed to hear the good news of delivered messianic peace the most.**

As a matter of fact, if you were running a marketing campaign to get the news out about a revolutionary product **this would be the last group of people to pick** because they don’t talk to anybody and nobody trusts them! Look, one of the most **unfavorable food choices of all time, TANG**, was successful because it was marketed by saying it was the drink that Astronauts drank. American Astronauts in the 60s and 70s were loved by everybody, now that’s a good choice. Shepherds, for the coming of the Messiah, who was running that add campaign!?! Well God was, that’s why it doesn’t make sense, **His ways are not our ways** (Isaiah 55:8,9) but remember **He likes to use IRONY** to make a point and make it stick!

So why does God send the angels to lowly, dirty shepherds in the hills? The simple answer is because He wants to! God loves to extend **MERCY** to those that are in most need of it (**Isaiah is looking at what the Messiah will do**)

Isaiah 61:1,2 ESV

The Year of the LORD’s Favor

61 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
2 to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;



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God had prophesied through Isaiah that the Messiah would come, and to look for Him as someone that brought good news to the poor, brokenhearted, those held captive by life events, opening up like a life-long prison sentence to those condemned by fate to live out this lowly existence. They would be the ones to hear the Gospel first, to give them hope through the **promise of peace**. They would no longer be unrepresented in this world the Messiah/the King would stand for them!

Do you see the Irony in this story yet? **We are the shepherds**, born into sin with no choice but to serve this world. To serve those better off than us, never attaining a status of being worthy. If you are in here this morning brokenhearted and you feel undeserving of the good things in life, then this is for you today as well. God is declaring to His people, PEACE is yours! **GOSPEL** - **It matters not what condition you are born into but what matters is the state in which you will leave this world.**

God changes your status far before he ever changes your physical world. The question is will you accept that status, will you accept that you are loved by our God? Don't let the world tell you that your standing with God, is determined by what kind of luck you have been having lately.

So right in the middle of this lonely, cold night, there came some light into this spiritual gloom!

2. Peace is always precluded with some Righteous Fear!

⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the **glory of the Lord** shone around them, and they were filled with **great fear**.

The Shekinah Glory of the Lord – This glory, the presence of God manifested in a shining light, this has been referred to by scholarly resources to be the Shekinah Glory of the Lord.² We don't see the word Shekinah in the Scriptures, but Rabbis

² “What is Shekinah Glory”. <https://www.gotquestions.org/shekinah-glory.html>. Web. Oct. 12, 20018.



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have been using this term for centuries to describe this visible manifestation of God.

Examples - God came to His people in Exodus to save them from the Egyptians while fleeing and He led them through the wilderness in this form, He passed by Moses in the cleft of the rock causing Moses to pick up some of the glow, he settled on the Tent of the Tabernacle to show He was with His people, He visited His people on Mt. Sinai in this way, and He showed His presence entering the temple when Solomon had finished building and consecrating it. It was this same manifestation of glory that God warned His people not to get close to it or they would die.

It was this same manifestation of glory that visited the shepherds that night along with the armies of the Lord. This has never been seen!

With this revelation comes not peace at first but **abject FEAR**, that’s what it means in the text, GREAT FEAR = **literally scared to death**. You see for the Shepherds being in the Shekinah Glory of God meant death, they weren’t even clean by Jewish standards how could they hope to endure the manifested glory of God? **If it would kill Moses, then there is no chance for them (Remember *Raiders of the Lost Ark*)**. Being in God’s presence, being found in their status, meant to be obliterated, to stop existing.

Fear is always the appropriate response to God when you are made aware of the reality that He is real, near, and on the move accomplishing His will. Your **fear means you understand the unclean state, your imperfectness, and your need for someone to represent you before God.**

You see one of the **qualifications for being a Christian** in this room is to **have feared a holy and righteous God**. The reality is, it is dangerous to not feel a sense of fear for God and it’s damning. **Hell is a reality that people will suffer unless they are found righteous before God.**



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Perhaps you have mistaken this past year what your true need is. 2020 has got you fooled, because you forgot about what is really important and that is a righteous standing before the Glory of God, and there is only one being that can bring you that peace!

We negate an essential quality of the gospels if we don't remind one another every once in a while, that you cannot be found to be unclean and stand in the presence of a Holy God. Yes, we need to be reminded of that and the shepherds were fully aware of it but look at the good news they received!

3. Peace when received needs to be celebrated and rejoiced over!

¹⁰ And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you **good news of great joy** that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is **Christ the Lord**. ¹² And this will be a **sign** for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

¹⁴ **“Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”**

Good News brings Hysterical Joy – good news, that is the word for gospel hear in text that brought a great joy that matched the great fear, **you see in order to douse the fear of the flames of hell people need to hear great joyful news that matches that fear.** This joy is that not only has the Messiah come but **HE is GOD(Lord)** (v.11), Shepherds, He came for you **FIRST**, and to put the cherry on top if you want to go looking for this person, be my guest look for the **baby in cloth.**

Then the Angels bust out with one of the biggest and longest lasting songs on the Christmas Song Charts, “Gloria”. “*Gloria in Excelsis Deo*” Latin for “Glory to God in the Highest”! It is the proclamation that the giving of the Son means Peace, to those with whom God is pleased. The Doctrine of Election pops up again and we see God's sovereignty at work.



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I have read, and I agree with this. The shepherds were destined for death but to them the good news was proclaimed, that peace had come to them, that means that unless in that moment unless someone stood in their place they would have died. So, it seems, these guys, had faith in the Messiah already, remember that is how **Salvation worked in the OT they believed in the one who was to come that would save Israel from their enemies and sin.** The most unexpectant witnesses got the greatest helping of joy. God in the Highest had imputed on them already the righteousness of the Son, **the life He would live, the death He would die, and the resurrection of vindication, THE FATHER** placed that on the boys that night! **Saved by faith in action! They were finally at PEACE with God!**

We all need to remember this fact. That God allows our pain, our rejections, and lonely nights so that we would put our hope in He who came, so that when the fear of God visits us, we will be ready to receive the good news ourselves, to receive true joy that God is saving us. **Fear increases the level of exaltation when you are saved from destruction. 2020 was just a primer for our spiritual eyes to awaken our dead senses of a true need for a King that saves us from what is truly deadly, our sin....** Fight for your joy, celebrate this year your peace with our God, because you do have something to rejoice over!

Finally, we come to what happens when real salt of the earth people are saved by the gospel.

4. Peace returns changed people to a world glorifying God.

¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds **returned, glorifying and praising God** for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Shepherds don't stop being shepherds. Shepherds go back to work, there were sheep to be watched but now the difference would be that it did not matter



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anymore what the Jews in town thought of them. **Law no longer applied to these boys; they had been saved by Grace through Faith in the Christ alone.** Shepherds returned to the life of an outcast but the life had become bearable for they had witnessed their savior.

Mary had to go back to become a poor housewife, tasked with all that would be required of a young wife, make a home, give birth multiple times, raise a family, and **suffer as every mother and wife does, by bearing the heartache of the family in her soul.** But **she became rich for she treasured these things in her heart,** the text means she practiced remembering and pondering this birth, not just as a mom but as a person in need of Messiah. Her soul became rich, there was a change to her perceptions in life now. What the world would tell her to believe about herself she would tell the world through her life that they had to believe in what she believed in.

No matter how dull, hard, trying, life would become their eternal point of view had been changed. Bearing heartache for her family became something that she could pour into that treasure in her heart and it would not be so bad. **She would remember that her son was changing everything!**

You see dear friend this is not just her hope that is the hope of **every person** that Jesus calls His **disciple.** We are to pour our regrets, our sadness, our depression, into the hope of Jesus, the light of His glory for He will make all things new.

When we obtain Jesus as our Messiah, we will treasure what we experience in our lives: faith, trials, grace, mercy, and through that we glorify God. But I would **leave you with this last thought.** **The shepherds did not go back to their lives alone, they were with each other.**

Walking back into the world you and I will need to have others with us that have not just felt the fear of God but have gone through the joy of being relieved of that fear of receiving PEACE. Maybe we need to do a better job of regulating who we are around better. Maybe we need to spend more time with those we do



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community with. Maybe we all need to take a break from watching the news this year!

Have you suffered alone lately? Are you more prone to worry about how you are not worthy enough for God? Do you find yourself doubting your value in this world? Then my friend you need to be around other people that know how to ponder on Jesus, that know how to apply the Gospel in their lives, and like to share their lessons with you. If you don't have that then that is where you need to **start with your repentance this morning, determine to stop living your life in isolation and commit to being a disciple among other disciples.**

My family, rough seasons do have an end. For many of us in here I have an idea of what you are going through and please know that life is about living through a rough patch so that you may learn about how Jesus is changing you in the midst of that trial. We learn to deal and fight with our sin by returning to the real world AND the path to glorify God is by the sharing of those trials with true friends that follow Jesus and celebrating in the midst of those trials that **you still HAVE PEACE!**

Prayer

Communion

Benediction

Go in the name of the **Father** that has chosen to love us; the poor, lowly, and obscure to glorify Him, and to receive Peace.

Go in the name of the **Son** in whom we are to treasure and pour our worries into as He walks with us through our trials establishing Peace.

Go in the name of the **HS** that guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, establishing Peace and glorifying our God.