

Celebrating God's Gifts: The Gift of Peace

Luke 2:8-14

INTRODUCTION:

All Stand and Read Scripture

Luke 2:8-14 (NASB)

⁸ In the same region there were *some* shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; ¹¹ for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² This *will be* a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there appeared 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 men with whom He is pleased."

Prayer

There are 93 occurrences of the word "peace" in the NASB New Testament. As I read through them, I noticed four things concerning peace:

1. Christ did not come to earth to bring peace on the earth.
2. True peace cannot be attained by men of the world.
3. The peace that Christ brought was for "those with whom He is pleased. NOTICE verse 14 in this morning's scripture "**And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.**"
4. We are to be at peace with all men, when possible.

We have a manger scene on the back table in the foyer. It is complete with Mary and Joseph, a little baby Jesus and even the Wise Men. This little scene is a reminder to us of the true meaning of Christmas. It is about **gifts**, but not the ones that come in bright shiny paper, but instead it is about God's **gifts** to the world through his Son, Jesus Christ.

John 3:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that He **gave** (He gave us a gift) **His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Over 2000 years ago God looked down upon this earth that he had created and saw that we needed things like hope, and peace, and some way to be free from sin and evil, so he sent down his Son Jesus in the form of a little baby boy so that He would change the world forever.

God's gift of Jesus was a **gift of peace** for you and me today. It is because of Jesus that we can have **Internal Peace**, **External Peace**, and **Peace with God**.

BODY:

I. Internal Peace.

Despite all of the craziness of today's world God can still give you peace on the inside.

Romans 8:5-6 (NASB)

⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

The **KEY to perfect peace on the inside** is to **fix your thoughts on God.**

That is how you can receive God's **Gift of Peace** to **YOU!**

Through all of the confusion and distractions of life, fix your thoughts on God. He gave Jesus to the world as a **gift** to provide salvation and peace.

Christ was the perfect example for us on how to keep our mind set on the Spirit. He stayed in constant contact with his Father in heaven. He thought about him throughout the day and he communicated with him constantly.

You can do the same thing, as your day goes by talk about it with God, share with him your thoughts, feelings, and needs. Listen to him, focus on the things of above not the things here below. If we take advantage of the **peace on the inside** that God offers by fixing our thoughts on him, this is what will happen:

Philippians 4:4-7 (NASB)

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near. ⁶ Be anxious for nothing, 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 comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

God gave Jesus to show us how to do this, if we follow his example of talking with God throughout the day and listening to him we can experience God's gift of peace.

ILLUSTRATION:

Long ago a man sought the perfect picture of peace. Not finding one that satisfied, he announced a contest to produce this masterpiece. The challenge stirred the imagination of artists everywhere, and paintings arrived from far and wide. Finally the great day of decision came. The judges uncovered one peaceful scene after another, while the viewers clapped and cheered. The tensions grew. Only two pictures remained veiled. As a judge pulled the cover from one, a hush fell over the crowd. A mirror-smooth lake reflected lacy, green birches under the soft blush of the evening sky. Along the grassy shore, a flock of sheep grazed undisturbed. Surely this was the winner.

Then the last painting was revealed and the crowd gasped in surprise. Could this be peace? A tumultuous waterfall cascaded down a rocky ledge; the crowd could almost feel it's cold, penetrating spray. Stormy, gray clouds threatened to explode with lightning, wind, and rain. In the midst of the thundering noises and bitter chill, a spindly tree clung to the rocks at the edge of the falls. One of its branches reached out in front of the torrential waters as if foolishly seeking to experience its full power. A little bird had built a nest in the elbow of that branch. Content and undisturbed in her stormy surroundings, she rested on her eggs. With her eyes closed and her wings ready to cover her little ones, she manifested a peace that transcended all the earthly turmoil.

The peace that Christ gives is like the mother bird. We have an **internal peace** AND an **external peace**. Despite all the turmoil that is going on around us, we can find true peace. We have that peace because there is nothing on this earth that can tear us away from our love for Christ, if we stand firm. Because of Christ and His death on the cross, we have a hope that transcends our life here on earth. We have the assurance of an eternal life with God.

II. External Peace.

John 16:33 (NASB)

³³ These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

- When relationships crumble, God will give you peace.
- When tragedy strikes, God will give you peace.
- When your circumstances are frightening, God will give you peace.
- When fights are breaking out all around you, God will give you peace.

The peace of God does not depend on external circumstances. It comes directly from the Lord and it is placed in our hearts. There is always going to be uncertainty in the world, but God has given you a **gift of peace** that is able to conquer anything in, under, or above this earth.

John 14:27 (NASB)

²⁷ Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

To have real peace, the kind of peace that can stand up to everything the world can throw at it, it can only come from God's **Gift of Peace** through Christ.

The Scriptures say, “Your worrying doesn't SOLVE your problems.

You get anxious because something has happened that you can't control:

- I don't have the money.
- I don't have the proper tools.
- I don't have the ability.
- I don't have the strength.
- I don't have the time...You name it, I don't have it!

Essentially, the reason we worry is because there's a problem and we can't do anything about it. We can't change it! We can't fix it! We can't do a single thing to alter our situation! But worrying will not help fix the problem?

Jesus asks "Can any of you - by worrying - add a single hour to your life?"

Well, the answer, of course, is NO! Worrying is worthless.

In fact – worrying is worse than worthless. NOT ONLY does worrying fail to change what you're facing, it actually makes everything you DO face even worse.

Matthew 6:25-29 (NASB)

²⁵ “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, *as to* what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and *yet* your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? ²⁷ And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life? ²⁸ And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, ²⁹ yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.

When you and I get bogged down with worry, we need to consider all of the blessings God has **already** given to us in the past. Why would He not help us now?

Philippians 4:9 (NASB)

⁹ The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

God wants us to remain faithful to Him. Trust that His Word is true. If he takes care of the birds of the field, how much more will he provide for YOU!

One way to combat worry in your life is to change your focus from **your problems** to **His Promises**.

As Jesus continues to tell us in Matthew 6...

Matthew 6:33 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

³³ But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Jesus is saying we need to desperately seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness in our lives. It needs to be THE highest priority in our lives. And Jesus says that when we do that He will reward us with **our needs** and **His peace** in our lives!

Paul wrote that he had found the SECRET of having peace.

- His happiness didn't depend upon what happened to him.
- His peace of mind wasn't tied to how life OR people treated him.
- It wasn't tied to the size of his home or his bank account.

- It wasn't tied to how successful his relationships were.

What was the secret of Paul's peace?

He said he had learned "I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

Philippians 4:12-13 (NASB)

¹² I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

This wasn't just wishful thinking on Paul's part. Paul had seen God at work in his life in the past, so that whether he was well-fed or hungry he knew God was close at hand. And he knew that God could and would supply all his needs.

Remember: "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the **weak** things of the world to shame the things which are **strong**," God made you just as you are to accomplish His will in your life. **YOU CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH HIM WHO STRENGTHENS YOU!** And when your SERVE Him, He will provide PEACE in your life "which surpasses all comprehension".

The final **gift of peace** that I want us to look at is:

III. Peace with God.

There has been a problem with mankind ever since the fall of man back in the Biblical story of the Garden of Eden, which has led to most people's lack of true peace. That problem is we have chosen to go **our own way**, against God's way, and as a result caused all kinds of evil and sinful things to come into this world. But God gave His Christmas gift to us, he gave us Jesus (God in the flesh) and now we can have peace with God despite our corrupt state.

2 Corinthians 5:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ God was in Christ reconciling (or making peace with) the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Jesus is the bridge between our messed up, sinful nature and God's perfect nature. When he died for us he brought us back to God and made it possible for us to be a part of God's family. Jesus made the way for us to have peace with God.

This is exactly what reconciliation is - two people who have been at odds with one another, coming together in a renewed and restored relationship.

Romans 5:1 (NASB)

⁵ Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

“Peace with God” in essence means reconciled to God. It means the barriers that separated us from God, like our sin, our worldly life, and God’s perfect holiness have all been removed by the person and work of Jesus Christ. When you open up this **"Christmas Gift"** from God you can rest assured that His judgment will not fall on you.

You can go to bed at night with peace in your heart that if you should die in the night everything will be alright when you face the Lord.

What men need is the gift of **“peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

CONCLUSION:

ILLUSTRATION:

A young man who wasn’t very religious once lost his job, and he grew more and more desperate about his situation, until at last he went to see an old preacher that he knew. He stood by the door and poured out his heart to the preacher... and then he angrily shouted "I’ve begged and begged God to say something to help me, preacher. Why doesn’t God answer?"

The old preacher, who was sitting across the room, spoke a reply so quiet the young man was unable to make it out. The young man stepped across the room.

"What did you say?" he asked.

The preacher repeated himself, again in a soft tone. So the young man moved closer until he was leaning on the preacher’s chair.

"Sorry," he said. "I still didn’t hear you."

With their heads bent together, the old preacher spoke once more. "God sometimes whispers," he said, "so we will move closer to hear him."

Jesus was God’s gift of peace and salvation 2000 years ago at Christmas time. He defeated the world’s distractions and stresses, but also he died on a cross to take away all of the times that we failed to live up to perfection. Jesus paid the price for all of our shortcomings and sins, he died to take them away. But then he rose from the grave and proved once again that he had conquered the world and everything in it. What this does for us is that it sets us free to now live in peace and have the assurance of hope even when the whole world is falling apart around us.

God Be with You till We Meet Again

God be with you till we meet again,
By His counsels guide uphold you,
With His sheep securely fold you,
God be with you till we meet again.
Till we meet...Till we meet,
Till we meet at Jesus' feet;
Till we meet...Till we meet,
God be with you till we meet again.