

Luke 2:1-20

The Songs of Christmas (Gloria in Excelsis Deo)

Introduction: We are currently going through a series on Advent. we've been calling it the songs of Christmas. The first two Chapters of Luke read like a musical... An announcement will be made, and the recipient will burst into song or praise.

Now the last two weeks we have heard songs that are filled with anticipation, tension and hope. They are setting us up, preparing us, pointing us to a grand event. In Music, this is called tension and it is the perceived need for relaxation or release created by a listener's expectations. Tension may also be produced through reiteration, increase in dynamic level, or gradual motion to a higher pitch. So this is where Mary and Zechariah's songs have left us... In tension, in great anticipation and wonder. And now we are given that release here in the third song.

This hymn is unique among the hymns of Luke because it doesn't come from Men who are the recipients of salvation, but from Angels, who need no salvation. This hymn gives us a heavenly view on Christmas; we get to hear what Christmas meant to the Angelic world.

What does Christmas mean to you; If you were to summarize it in a few words how would you describe it? Present's, family, charity, Yule Log, Chestnuts roasting on an open fire....etc.

Let's allow the Angel's message to inform our perspective on Christmas. So what is their message; how do they summarize the meaning of Christmas?

**“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,
“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”**

For the Angelic world, Christmas means: Glory to God and Peace on earth.

1. Glory to God

- a. What does that mean?
- b. God you deserve Glory because you are sending the Savior. You deserve all the praises and fame and cheers. Because you are such a great God you deserve that everyone would recognize how great and glorious You really are.

2. Peace on Earth

- a. The Old King James version says, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. The ESV translation says, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"
- b. The older wording seems to be saying that Christmas means that everyone will have peace through Christ the Savior. The newer ESV seems to be saying that only God's special favorites will have peace through him. Neither of these interpretations is the most accurate..
- c. First we need to remember what Peace usually means in the Bible. It is not a general peacefulness with prosperity, and a trouble -free life. "Peace" means the end of enmity and warfare.
 1. The peace that the angels sing of is the Hebrew word shalom. Shalom is not simply the absence of war, but it is the positive peace of righteousness/justice, truth, and love... Shalom is peace in its fullest meaning.
 - a. Health to the sin-sick soul.
 - b. A sound and healthy relationship between God and sinners, and sinners and fellow sinners.
 - c. Sound condition of universal righteousness and prosperity prevailing over the earth.
 - d. Talk about the need for peace....

Heaven on earth

We need it now

I'm sick of all of this

Hanging around

Sick of sorrow

Sick of pain

Sick of hearing again and again

That there's gonna be
Peace on earth
Where I grew up
There weren't many trees
Where there was we'd tear them down
And use them on our enemies
They say that what you mock
Will surely overtake you
And you become a monster
So the monster will not break you
And it's already gone too far
Who said if you go in hard
You won't get hurt?
Jesus can you take the time
To throw a drowning man a line?
Peace on earth
Tell the ones who hear no sound
Whose sons are living in the ground
Peace on earth
No who's or why's
No-one cries like a mother cries
For peace on earth
She never got to say goodbye
To see the color in his eyes
Now he's in the dirt
Peace on earth...

3. How are the two connected? Earth's Peace brings God Glory

- a. "The angels have offered a two line summary of good news that encompasses not only what salvation looks like, but for whom such salvation is intended, and by whom. The story's central character, God, intends, peace on earth. This, apparently, is God's glory: to find peace among those on earth whom God favors." -Borgman
 - i. Listen to that again..what pleases God? What Glorifies him??
 - ii. What is happening in heaven (glory to God) is connected with what happens on earth (peace among those whom God favors). This means, God's glory is connected to, expressed in, Earthly peace. Such peace presumably brings glory to God. "Glorifying God and

recovering human wholeness (Peace) are not mutually exclusive: they are an indissoluble whole. - Charles Talbert

- b. “If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak.” -Lewis
- c. The fact that it glorifies God to bring peace to mankind is an amazing statement because it seems that most of us would view these ends as mutually exclusive. But it is only logical to assume that the creation would find it’s purpose, wholeness, it’s peace in it’s Creator....and that God would be most glorified when we are most satisfied in him.
- d. “God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on petrol, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion. God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. - Lewis

4. How Does Peace with God Come About?

- a. Our cultural narrative tells us the only way to experience true peace, freedom and happiness is if we are fully in charge of our lives. But of course this self-centered desire to command and control is what leads to conflict with other human beings (as we talked about last week). The Bible actually tells us that Hostilities with God are actually the root of hostility with others.. There is no peace on earth because there is no peace with God.
 - i. The claim of Christmas though is: God and Sinners reconciled!
God and Sinners at peace.
- b. Maybe you don’t feel that you are hostile to God - but we need to be clear about which God or version of God we are talking about. We are talking about the God of the Bible. The God who says, I created you, you are mine. I deserve to have all of your allegiance all of your praise and affections. I alone have the rightful kingship or authority

over your life. The God who says, You are a wretched sinner who desperately needs my grace, my love, my light, for your own healing, wholeness and hope. That's the God we are talking about.

- c. The truth is that every single one of us Christian or not, have a problem with this God, we have a cosmic authority problem. At the core of the human heart there is an impulse that says, " No one tells me what to do," and this as I said is the root to all our other problems in life. We actually create God's of our own liking to mask our own hostility to the real God, who reveals himself as our absolute King.
 - d. Augustine said, If we loved God perfectly we could do whatever we want. But the truth is that none of us do and this leads to also sorts of self-centeredness, chaos, wars, and evil.
 - i. We express our hostility to God both in disobedience and Irreligion (I want to live the way I want to live, no one tells me how to live) and also in religious or moral ways (using obedience as a way to put God in our debt.... I'm a "good" person so God owes me - blessing, health, happiness, eternal life). A way to control God, not trust him.
5. Here in our passage we have God's message to the world! Peace. It's not a negotiation, it's not asking us to come half way. It's a declaration of something that is coming to pass.
6. We have great fears about giving up control of our lives - how can we trust God to be gracious, how can we trust him to be good and in control, How can we trust this declaration of peace?
- a. First -the host of heaven - the armies of God who in the OT destroyed great armies are here announcing Peace from God...
 - b. Second - recognize how God has made peace with you - the message - **"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.**
 - c. "Come and stand amazed, you people, see how God is reconciled! See his plans of love accomplished, see his gift, this newborn child. See the Mighty, weak and tender, see the Word who now is mute. See the Sovereign without splendor, see the Fullness destitute." - Klaas Hart
 - d. Look at Jesus! Jesus lived a life of radically allegiance to God - the life we owe to God. He was fully surrendered to Him. He had total

peace with God. But he lost that peace there at the cross so that we might have peace with God.

- i. If the omnipotent Son of God would radically lose control - all for you - then you can trust him. This should dispel our fears.
- ii. He has laid down his weapons of warfare. Again, God could have come with the sword of his wrath and demanded allegiance and dealt out justice. But instead the bow of God's judgment against sinner's is pointed into the heart of heaven. Or look to the end of his life - there he is again laid out in helplessness, arms and feet pinned to a cross -all for you. How can you not be disarmed by his love? How can you doubt his good intentions for you?
- iii. Accept his offer of peace - surrender - give up your warfare. Lay down your arms and surrender to him.
- iv. And know this, to surrender to God the creator, to Jesus Christ is to truly become human. It is what you were made for. You were made for God, for his love, for his friendship, for His fatherly care, to know him, to serve him, and when you surrender to him all these things come together to give you a whole new way to experience life. Life in all it's fullness. Life at peace with the Creator. This is the peace being offered to us.
- v. Does this mean then that Christmas only brings peace for christians; for those who have surrendered and made peace with God?
- vi. No, in the sermon on the mount Jesus calls all of his followers to be peacemakers.(admitting faults and weakness, surrendering their pride, to love without needing to control. These skills or characteristics have amazing power to defuse conflicts, to facilitate forgiveness and reconciliation between people.)
- vii. Those who have peace with God, and have been filled up with his love, approval, acceptance, with his life and power now go out into the world and diffuse that peace everywhere they go. They are agents of God's peace and reconciliation among races, classes, families, neighbors. If you can make peace with God, then you can go out and make peace with everyone else...

Conclusion:

- 1. Are you experiencing Peace with God, peace in your soul, peace with others?**

- a. God's great Glory is to bring peace on earth, by bringing peace to our individual lives.... You might think that your peace and joy are in conflict with God's glory, and they might be.... At least, your version of your joy and peace, your thoughts and dreams of what will truly satisfy you and give you the security that you long for...but of the things that you've sought for in the past, and the things that you've received have any of them brought the peace or satisfaction that you thought they would? I don't imagine they have.

- b. Only God, your Creator knows what will truly satisfy you, what will bring peace to your life...and the good news is that he has made a way that you can come to him and receive that peace, and that life. It is through the work of his son, Jesus Christ, who came and established the kingdom of God, and died for your sins that kept you from God, from his kingdom, and from the joy and peace that he has for you. So now you can be part of that kingdom, now you can draw near to God, and have peace and true fulfillment.....In his presence there is fulness of Joy and at his right hand are pleasures evermore... There is joy, peace and righteousness in the Holy Spirit.... He satisfies the longing soul and the hungry soul he fills with good things.....God declares that he is the fountain of living waters; Jesus said if you are thirsty you can come to him to have that thirst satisfied..... See God's glory and our peace are not mutually exclusive, they are bound up together in an eternal bind.

- c. If you want this peace of God at work in your life call out to him today, Luke says, it is for those with whom he is pleased...over and over again the scriptures tell us that God looks upon and favors those who are humble, those who call out to him in humility and dependence on him... So there is peace waiting for any and all who call upon the Lord in humility..

2. Who are you gonna tell?

- a. What an awesome God, who is glorified in giving peace to his creation. It's like what Zechariah's song said, "God is tender in mercy."...When we see that God's heart, his glory is to bring peace to fallen sinful mankind doesn't it cause your heart to cry out, Hallelujah what a Savior?!

- b. When the Shepherd's saw for themselves what the angel had described, they made known the saying that had been told them

concerning this child Glory to God and peace on earth...who are you going to tell?