

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Christmas Day
December 25, 2021
Luke 2:(1-14) 15-20

Peace Celebrated

When 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." 16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. 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. (Luke 2:15-20 ESV)

In the Name of Jesus, the new born King, and the only Savior of the world.

The angels announced to the shepherds, "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2:14 NKJV). So, where is the peace? Forget the world stage with conflicts and threatened conflicts, economic instability, and a never-ending peace-destroying virus. With all the excitement, laughter, and noise of a family gathering, there may be a lot of celebrating, but not much peace. For some, though, there is no celebrating anyway. It's hard to celebrate when you've suffered the death of a loved one, especially if it was a spouse, a parent, or a child. It's hard to celebrate if you've lost your job or income, or you're simply struggling to survive. It's hard to celebrate if you or a family member is ill or dying, if you have a strained or broken relationship with someone, or even if a child is simply away from home, especially if it's the first time. And what often makes it even more difficult is the feeling that you should be happy and should celebrate, but you don't feel like it. For those who suffer such things there is also little to no peace either. The whole world is in turmoil, or at least their soul is.

Yet, at least on this day, there is peace for them and for you. The angels announced it to the shepherds, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." That's the message of peace for all the world, and for you, no matter your current situation. God Himself comes down to earth to be born of a virgin. He comes in human flesh and blood to establish peace between sinners and Himself. Thus, that child, wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger, is your peace. For He was born to save you from your sins and all their effects – the grief, the sadness, the loneliness, the pain, the despair. He was born to give you peace that passes all understanding and that lasts forever.

And having announced that peace, all heaven broke loose with the sound of "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!" What a celebration! Peace on earth! God's good will! For the shepherds. For you. By God's grace you have that

peace now and will one day experience it in all its splendor, even if it doesn't seem like it now. For your peace is that God is pleased with you because of the Child in the manger.

Once the angels had done their celebrating, when things quieted down and "the glory of the Lord" had left the shepherds, those shepherds were so excited that they couldn't wait to go to Bethlehem to see that what they had heard was true. They express no doubt when they say, "Let's go see what has happened." For they recognized that it was the Lord, God Himself, that had revealed this fantastic message to them. They were so excited they had to see with their own eyes the actuality of what the angels had said.

So, they didn't lollygag or waste any time. They "came with haste." It seems that the other people in Bethlehem didn't realize what had happened – either in Bethlehem or out in the fields. But the shepherds found the Baby just as the angel had said. He was wrapped in swaddling cloths and was lying in a manger. Imagine the shepherds' joy at finding the Lamb of God. Imagine their wonder at seeing what they had previously heard. What joy and gladness and peace was theirs!

And what did the shepherds do then? They celebrated by telling others what they had heard and seen. How could they keep such news to themselves? They had seen everything exactly as the angels had said. They had seen the promised Messiah in the flesh. The Savior of the world had come. They knew the joy of having peace with God. And they couldn't keep it to themselves. They had to tell others.

And as people heard this good news from the shepherds, they marveled at it. It sounded too incredible to be true: Angels, "the glory of God," a Baby, in a manger, the Messiah. But it was true! The shepherds had not only heard, they had seen as well. And while they had believed the angels message, after seeing their Savior they believed even more strongly. Their whole life had been changed. They had peace, and they had to celebrate it.

We, too, have heard and seen the great things the Lord has done for us "which the Lord has made known to us." Because we have the benefit of looking back to the manger through the cross, we also know "the rest of the story." That God sent His Son into the flesh to be our Savior from sin and death. That the Baby born of Mary would grow into a man who would suffer and die on the cross for the sins of the world. That the Lamb of God has been sacrificed for us, His blood covering all our sins. That we can see our salvation in the very body and blood of our Lord and Savior, which He Himself gives us. That we too have peace with God. These are the "good tidings of great joy which will be to all people."

And the shepherds, after seeing their salvation, and the things exactly as the angels had told them, returned to their work "glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen." They celebrated the peace they had received. They went about their work with great joy because they had heard and seen the Gospel, Christ the Lord. They praised God for what God had done for them. This wasn't something they were forced to do. This is something that naturally overflowed from the joy they had. They couldn't help but tell others and they couldn't

help but praise and thank God for their Savior. They had every reason to celebrate, and they wanted others to celebrate the peace they knew.

So, this morning we join the celebration of the angels and the shepherds as we glorify and praise God for all the things we have seen and heard which He has made known to us. And if you don't feel like celebrating, that's okay. For the true celebration of peace is not the excitement of the emotions, though that certainly does often happen. Rather, we celebrate where God's Word directs us to our Savior. Come to the Table of the Lord where Christ is wrapped, not in swaddling cloths, but in bread and wine as He gives you His Body and Blood, forgives your sins, and gives you His peace in overwhelming measure. For He celebrates with you so that you will, one day, celebrate with Him forever. With such peace for your troubled soul, you celebrate as you receive more and more of His grace, His mercy, His love, His peace. No, all of your problems will not suddenly disappear, all that is troubling you will not instantly vanish. Yet, whenever you come to God's House, He gives you rest and refreshment for your soul. He gives you His peace, true peace, and He enables you to celebrate that peace. God bless you with such peace this Christmas Day as you celebrate the gift of life and salvation which God has given to you in and through His Son, Jesus Christ, the Lord, our Christmas King. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener
Pastor