

The Peace of Christ

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Luke 2:14

When I was a child, I loved snow. Snow meant snow days. You might get out of school. Yet, in Northern Oklahoma, that required a good bit of snow. Yet, I still loved snow. I remember coming home one night in my high school years. I came home, late in the evening. We had a blanket of snow on the ground. The moon was bright shining through a light cloud cover. It was blue above and white below. Our house sat on an acre of land out on the edge of the city. It was quiet. Snow dampens sound. It was winter and all was quiet. It reminded me of the Christmas hymn, Silent Night. That picture still paints a peaceful scene for me.

We celebrate Christmas in winter, even though Jesus was likely born in summer. The shepherds and the sheep stay in the fields in summer when the grass is green. They pin their sheep in the corals in winter. Christmas comes in winter because the church wanted to help pagans leave their winter solstice rites where they worshiped idols. They didn't remember when Jesus was born. So they put the worship of Jesus' birth in the place of a pagan celebration. And so we have a winter Christmas. Besides, people had time to feast in winter. Summer was too busy a time taking care of crops and fields.

Today, our theme is peace. The theme largely comes from the angelic pronouncement in verse 14 of our text. The angel speaks of a peace on earth.

Luke 2:18-14 NIVO

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. ¹² This will be a

sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

Where is this peace on earth?

The angel said there would be peace on earth. Where is it? The world doesn't ever seem to find peace. Peace seems to elude people as well.

So, is the angelic message wrong? Is it just a pie-in-the-sky wish. Does it prove that the Bible is wrong, just a myth? Isn't it what the angels proclaimed: Jesus has been born, now the world can have peace?

It seems this way when reading the King James version:

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Lk. 2:14 KJV) *eudokia*

The KJV versus modern versions is due largely not to a difference of translation as much as different readings in the Greek text. The focus is on the word *eudokias* (genitive) versus *eudokia* (nominative). The difference is a final "s," which if the word occurred at the end of a line, it would be written simply as a scratch or "-" and could easily have been not picked up by a scribe making the copy.

And on earth peace in men of Good-will. *eudokias*

Or, on earth peace in men of (His) good pleasure (as divine choice).

The Greek word for "good will" *eudokia*, can mean things like: those who choose good things or make wise choices. It is certainly not a blank promise that all the world will suddenly be at peace now that Jesus has come. *Eudokia* is in the genitive case, whereas glory and peace are nominative (subject). If goodwill is to be translated as KJV has done, we would expect it to be nominative, or a verbal form such as an infinitive. As a genitive, it describes the properties of the men, "men of good-will."

Why not? Because sin is still the character of this age. Jesus has secured salvation, but not every soul receives it. Even among those who receive it, they often fail to choose to follow the Holy Spirit's guidance. Selfish hearts still prevail.

Our world knows little peace.

Consider the Christmas carol: **It Came Upon a Midnight Clear.**

Edmund Sears, wrote this hymn in 1849, at the just ended Mexican-American War, and just a few years before the American Civil War. He was a minister in the Universalist Church. The hymn is a social gospel addressing the lack of God's peace in the world because the world refuses to listen to the message of the angels. Although he believed in the divinity of Christ, he says nothing about Christ. Verse 3 is often omitted from many hymnals. Yet it is the point of his hymn. His last verse suggests that eventually peace take hold of the world as prophets have foretold. Yet, he never sees Christ as the reason for that peace.

It came upon the [midnight](#) clear,
That glorious song of old,
From [angels](#) bending near the earth,
To touch their [harps](#) of gold:
"Peace on the earth, goodwill to men,
From heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come,
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains,
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its [babel sounds](#)
The blessed angels sing.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel-[strain](#) have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they bring;
[O](#) hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing.

Edmund, following the King James, sees the proclamation as a message from the angels to the world to live in peace. In his last stanza, he pushes the peace out to the end of the age. If we think of the angelic message as a portent of coming peace on the earth because the Christ has come into the world, then this peace has proven to be very elusive.

Yet, I remember a statement one of my professors made once. He said we could have peace in the world today if everyone in the world chose to obey God. If everyone did the will of God, the world would live in peace.

Which brings us to the real meaning of the Greek, men who have good-will. NIV and NASB those who have God's favor (those who are saved). The idea seems to be that peace comes to those who choose to have peace. What is certain is that the world will not live at peace until the new age comes.

Zechariah 9 talks about the cessation of war from sea to sea with Christ' coming.

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

¹⁰ I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. (Zech. 9:9-10 NIVO)

Yet, wars have never ceased. The battle bow has not been broken and the shields have not been burned. Instead, as Jesus said, we have wars and rummers of wars until the end of time.

Could it be that this peace that the prophet foretold was not a peace to be found on this earth in this Age? The Bible speaks of two ages. This age is the age of sin. In it sin and Satan fill the hearts of souls to disobey God. Yet, Jesus is coming again to usher in the new age. The new age is the age to come when Jesus brings in the kingdom of God to earth. Those who experience salvation experience the presence of the new age in Christ. Yet, even we are not made perfect in our flesh in this place. So, the world living in perfect peace is set for the age to come when Jesus returns again.

If you go back to Zechariah's prophecy, he speaks about the resurrection and Jesus's return.

11 As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit. (Zech. 9:11 NIVO) (resurrection)

14 Then the LORD will appear over them; his arrow will flash like lightning. (Zech. 9:14 NIVO) (second coming)

The world will only know the peace of Christ when he comes to restore all things. When sin and Satan are removed, then we can have an end to strife.

Why can't people find peace?

Christ offers personal peace though most people seldom find it. Even among Christians, personal, inner peace seems to be elusive. Much like panning for gold in the Yukon, some people can find bits of it from time to time, but for most people it is hard to find. Even among those who are born again, many still live their lives in fear and unhappiness. They try to find inner peace in all kinds of activities, but it never seems to stay very long. People look for peace in a cup, or a bottle, or a pill, or the latest tech toy, or the latest trend in home decorating or clothing design. Yet, their hearts are always panting after the next best thing. Yet, it is not that we shouldn't have desires. I don't suggest we become monastic monks and live a life free of all desire. I rather like C. S. Lewis's concept better.

C. S. Lewis:

It is not that we desire too much. We desire too little. We are like children who are satisfied making mud pies when they could have the real thing.

Lewis is saying that every desire has some aspect of the divine nature in us pointing to something of God. Everything we might label as a lust has a basis in something legitimate, something given us by God that awakens a need whose fulfillment is found in God's design. The fullest sense of that fulfillment cannot be found in the present life because it is affected by the Fall. Yet, desire is not wrong. We are created with desire. It is just that in a fallen world, our desires can never be fully met. Everything we latch hold of in hopes it will bring us inward peace always disappoints because it is part of this fallen world. Decay is etched into everything's DNA. A new car will eventually have parts that fail. A new toy will someday be an old toy. The latest tech will quickly be forgotten by the newest-latest technology. Unless

you are a Spartan, your latest weight loss diet and body sculpting program will give way eventually to a middle age bulge in a body that will some day break when you fall.

If you are looking for peace in earthly designs you are likely to spend much of your life singing the blues.

There is a peace that is possible in Christ.

There is a peace of salvation that comes to the believer who can stop striving to be saved. Here, the peace of "good-will" in the sense of the NIV, those whom God favors, implies those who know God inwardly in salvation. Those who are saved can find peace with God because they are released from the bondage of sin and its hold on the soul. We can have confidence at death that brings peace when we die. We can have confidence it is not up to us that we are saved. It is what God has done through Jesus' sacrifice at the cross that we are saved. Our faith is in Christ and He gives us peace. Such a peace is possible.

Inner peace is also possible, although, many Christians never obtain it much. It comes when we surrender our lives, all that we have, into God's hands.

It is this trusting all of life to God who alone is the Master, that brings a cessation from the unrest of life.

Consider Paul again who wrote about the peace of God that is beyond comprehension.

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:6-7 NIVO)

We love these verses. Yet, we fail to attain to them well. We must remember, Paul wrote this in a Roman prison. Paul in chains has peace. He was in a place of peace in his soul he did not have years before when he held the coats of those who stoned Stephen. What is the change? Paul's heart is given over totally to God. He has left all of his life in God's hands.

What costs so many peace is that they are in the center of their lives instead of God being in the center of their lives. They are in the center of the controls trying everything they can to find some peace to their troubled soul. Yet, that peace doesn't come no matter what they dive into. It won't come because it does not come that way. It will only come when by faith you can trust God to run the show of your life. That is called faith. It is this faith that celebrates God in worship in a prison cell. If you want to have inner peace, you must get YOU out of the control room of your life and invite Jesus in!

You can find peace in Jesus Christ.