



Proclaiming Peace Luke

2:1-20

What traditions do you hold during this Christmas season? Do you put lights around your house – do you know why you do this?

I hope it is because Jesus is the Light of the World but research suggests it has some connection with the Norse god Odin.

Do you decorate a Christmas tree and hang tinsel inside – do you know why you do this? Some people would say it came from old Roman mythology. Others say sixteenth-century Germans or even Martin Luther started the whole thing. Much of the world takes a moment to pause for this Festive season – sadly many people don't really know why.

When we look at the first proclamation of Christmas that came through the voices of the angels, we are reminded of the “**why**” behind all the things we are doing during this season. The greatest event in history had just happened. The Messiah had been born. For ages the Jewish people had waited for this. The Angels invited the shepherds to greet the Lamb of God – who would take away the sins of the world forever.

Song - Angels we have heard on high

This is a hymn of celebration of that baby's birth, the Messiah that was promised. But these words also, in a very clear way, define

your need and mine. And in defining our need, they define the mission of that baby in the manger – they predict a death.

This was all meant to happen – why? In a sad moment of disobedience and rebellion, Adam and Eve chose their own pursuit of glory over the glory of God. They wanted something else more than they wanted God. Ever since, in all of our hearts, we experience glory confusion – we don't always live for the glory of God. We allow other glories to compete in our heart for this one glory.

This little baby, God in human form, came to show us the way back to God. Here is the plan – He would come and from day one, all of His thoughts, desires, actions, reactions and response would be fully and completely and perfectly lived to the glory of God.

He, on our behalf, would live for our glory; He would live the life that we could not live. And on the cross, He would bear our penalty and He would face the rejection of the Father so that we could know His acceptance and peace with Him.

Upward peace = inward peace leading to = outward peace. No wonder the angels proclaimed, “Glory to God in the highest!”

I don't know if you are aware, but we are all glory focused; glory attentive; glory seeking; glory obsessed. Everything we do in our life, everything we say, every choice we make, every reaction in relationships is done in pursuit of some kind of glory.

We were created to live with the glory of God in view. We were created so that the motivation for our entire life would be to praise God. What does that mean - a God-ward and upward-focused existence; so we would say that God is the reason that we do all that we do.

Imagine what the world would be like if every person lived that way; if every heart of every human being was ruled by the glory of God. We are not talking about a spiritual or even a religious thing. This is the way God designed us, we were called, chosen and created to live for the glory of God. That's humanness. That was the creation plan. And then, in a moment of self-glory and rebellion, that was shattered and all of us live in the middle of glory confusion as a result.

We were created so that the most important thing in our lives would be a relationship with God. We were created to have the high honour of being the worshipful, obedient, friends of God. That friendship with God would be the most meaningful reality of our lives.

And that peace with God allows us to have peace within – not because we are strong, or wise, or know what is happening – but peace because we have this relationship with the One who rules it all and who guides us by His hand. So even though we don't know all that we need to know and we cannot predict tomorrow, we have peace in our hearts – we have rest. When that Shalom with God is shattered, the result is that our hearts are not at rest.

Have you had any sleepless nights where your mind goes over and endless script – what if's? Where halfway in and out of sleep you wished you were the sovereign? Well peace with God is peace within.

Jesus brought us peace with God, one of the greatest responses we can have to the amazing news is to become peace proclaimers in all our Christmas traditions, preparations, and celebrations.

When you don't have peace within it is very hard to live at peace with others and your life is marked by conflict. It is amazing that all around us is unrest and conflict – we have a peace problem. Brokenness with God leads to brokenness within us and in the community that is around us.

Jesus didn't come on a political mission; He didn't come on an educational mission; He didn't come on a psychological mission – in fact Jesus didn't even come on a religious mission. Jesus' mission was much more radical and fundamental than that. If you don't understand that, you misunderstand His mission. And what was His mission - Jesus came to be our Lord and Saviour – and when we hear the word Saviour it tells us that we need to be rescued. They define our need – they define Christ's mission.

If I have a glory problem then I have a peace problem resulting in a heart problem. What we need to say to God is: "Create in me a clean heart." That's what we need – radical, personal, long-term, heart-change – because that is our problem.

As the ones who have received peace with God through Jesus, we have a special opportunity to proclaim peace in our families in a similar way to how the angels proclaimed peace to us.

How does peace figure in your family? For many of us, the Christmas season is a reminder of the lack of peace we have in our families and our lives. Many of us have conflicts with parents, children, brothers, and sisters where we just want to survive this season without the same old fights and issues. Many of us are struggling to keep it together and try to cling to whatever peace we can hold onto in our own hearts until it's over.

As a son or daughter of God brought to God through Jesus's birth, death, and resurrection, we can proclaim the good news of Jesus by being a peacemaker who lives, brings, and proclaims a peace that transforms and lasts.

This season we should be concerned with proclaiming the peace of Jesus and centering on living out the Gospel with our friends and family. Sometimes the Christmas season is the only time we get together with others; to talk about the Gospel; to pray for wisdom in those connections. Now is the time to consider how we can proclaim Christ through what we say and how we act.

How do you possess peace? We first need to realize that no one expects us to be perfect. However, it's difficult to proclaim the message of God's peace when we're stressed out, overwhelmed, and exhausted. Our proclamation must first begin with us accepting and embracing the peace we have in God.

In order to walk and remain in the peace Jesus brings, we need to be disciplined in where we allow our minds to go and the things we allow ourselves to think about. When it comes to living in peace and proclaiming peace, it's possible to lose the battle in our mind before our interaction with others has even begun.

Have you ever had a fight or disagreement with a relative or friend that took place completely in your mind? If you are trying to win your arguments before they even get started, how can you possibly hope to bring and proclaim peace when you spend actual time together?

Peace proclaimers use wisdom and patience instead of jumping to conclusions or quickly misinterpreting other people's actions or intents. Peace proclaimers refuse to take offense when they feel slighted. They refuse to allow their own thoughts to turn a careless or insensitive comment into a personal attack.

Peace proclaimers won't give themselves over to a rumour or pick up an offense that is based on one side of the story or another person's retelling of the story. Peace proclaimers always hope, always believe, and always endure!

We all know that you can't make anyone change. You can't make anyone do much of anything. But you can proclaim peace.

How far are you willing to go to share the peace you have in Jesus with the people you know?

Are you willing to take the first step?

Are you willing to take a stand this Christmas for peacemaking?

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, this morning we say – Who is a God like our God? Who has mercy rich and free like our God? Because our deepest dilemma in life is our glory seeking hearts. We cannot rescue ourselves. We are only rescued by the grace of Your cross. We thank You that the angels announced the birth of a willing Saviour who knew what He was facing, who knew what He must do and who did it with joy – so that our hearts, once again, would be released from slavery to our own selfish glories to once again live for Your glory and restoring our shattered shalom, having peace again with You, rest within and a community of love that is Your people.