

## “The Cost of Peace” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Christmas Eve – 2022

- I. **Luke 2:13-14** – <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!”
- II. **Tonight is a time of quiet reflection.**
  - a. We gather together and reflect upon the wonders of our God, and that He would stoop so low as to become a human being like us...
    - i. and a human being for us.
  - b. I often reflect on my childhood and going to midnight mass on Christmas Eve – which meant I got to stay up extra late
    - i. Yet, it was also very special to me as I imagined the Christ Child who would have been born by candlelight, in a quiet, peaceful setting.
    - ii. It brings back many warm memories for me.
  - c. However, what was the time leading up to... and the actual night like for Mary and Joseph?
    - i. The peace and quiet we often imagine is not very likely...
      1. A young woman, forced to travel 80 or so miles in her last days of an unplanned pregnancy.
      2. Crowds of people traveling... converging on the various towns and places where the census count took place.
      3. How overwhelming would it be for us if our loved one went into labor in the middle of all this chaos – and there was nowhere to go through the delivery except a dirty animal stable?
      4. I’m not sure about you, but if I were Joseph and Mary, I might be wondering what God was thinking – because it certainly could have been easier!
  - d. The quiet reflection and peace we often feel on Christmas Eve came out of chaos and profound brokenness.
- III. **That’s our story too.**
  - a. As much as we imagine peace and well-being, reality is different than that.
  - b. I don’t necessarily mean the outer turmoil that is always around us, but the brokenness in ourselves and our relationship with God.
  - c. Now, the world around us will say that each person is perfect just the way they are, and that God thinks we are perfect just the way we are too.
  - d. The Bible is really helpful in this matter though, because it is the history of humankind and thousands of years of chaos and profound brokenness.
  - e. Yes, most of us know the story of the first people in Adam and Eve, and their relationship was in perfect peace with God and each other – only to be **shattered** by their sin.

- i. Not only was all creation impacted by this first, or Original Sin, but every human being that came after... as people passed on sin from one generation to the next...
- ii. Again, we live in a world that would deny the brokenness that is innate – the inheritance of sin – by assuming that people have mostly good in them... or that God overlooks the flaws –
- iii. However, when you look at a shattered bowl... do you say, “Oh it’s just a little crack – I can make it work...”?
  - 1. No, it is broken and not good in its current state!
  - 2. From Adam and Eve until now, God looks upon the brokenness of humanity and does not see good in us...
- f. When we really think about our current condition – not one of us can claim to be perfectly healthy in mind, body, or spirit.
  - i. Sure we may have glimmers of progress... but we have to admit that we fall short... we are broken people – it is the consequence of sin.

IV. **Our reading today in Luke tells about God’s plan for true peace.**

- a. In the Old Testament, the word for peace is shalom.
  - i. Shalom means wholeness, or a being complete.
    - 1. The idea is not so much a lack of fighting, but an overall well-being.
    - 2. Shalom is making things right, restoring something that is broken or missing
    - 3. It’s about working together rather than being broken apart....
  - ii. This is the peace that Isaiah and Micah prophesy about, saying that a Savior will come into the world by God’s plan that will be our peace, the Prince of Peace.
    - 1. The One who brings wholeness, restoration, and relationship
- b. As the shepherds were informed by an angel that this Savior had finally arrived, we hear again that peace will come to all those favored by God.
  - i. I know some versions say peace on earth, good will toward men... but the likely translation is “on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased”
  - ii. In other words, all who are saved by the Christ through faith have peace, restoration, and forgiveness that cannot be found anywhere else.
- c. The best part about this restoration is that we cannot do it on our own – we must rely on God to put the pieces back together.

V. **Sin shatters, but Jesus restores.**

- a. A few months ago, I received a publication from the seminary in St. Louis.
  - i. It showed a beautiful vase that looked like gold painted on it... but it was actually a form of Japanese art called “kintsugi” which means to take broken things and restore them.

1. The broken pottery is restored using real gold, and the restored pieces are worth far more than before they were even broken.
    - ii. Kintsugi is a beautiful illustration of what God does for us in the person of Jesus.
  - b. In the definite plan of God, He sent Jesus into this world as a helpless little infant, whose mission to restore all people would not end until He had grown up and died on the cross.
    - i. The little Christ Child, the only human being born without sin and committing no sin ever... would become the only payment for our sins that would suffice.
    - ii. And in that sacrifice, the blood of Jesus was spilled out to repair, restore, and bring peace to all who believe in Him.
  - c. When you look at the **broken bowl**... what can it do to restore itself?
    - i. Nothing! It is not going to fix anything on its own – it needs outside intervention... and that’s what God does for us through His Word and the power of the Holy Spirit – who brings us to faith in Jesus.
    - ii. Jesus is our outside intervention, who gives us shalom, peace, restoration between God and us... His blood poured out so we can **be restored**.
    - iii. Peter says that... “You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.” (1 Peter 1:18-19)
      1. Indeed, no gold can fix our brokenness, but the precious blood of Christ most certainly does.
  - d. So as we sit here in the peace and quiet reflection on the night of our Savior’s birth, remember the gift of peace – real peace and restoration of our relationship with God and with others.
  - e. God sees us through Jesus now, because believing in Him and what He has done for us makes us right in God’s eyes.
    - i. Paul tells us in Romans 5:1 “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
    - ii. And in Colossians 1:20 that Jesus, God Himself, came “to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.”
  - f. God has figured out a way to come to us, restore us from broken to His forgiven children – and that way is Jesus, our peace. Amen.