

Remnant Life Church  
December 8, 2024  
**At the Heart of Christmas is Peace**  
Second Sunday of Advent  
Luke 2:14; Mark 5:1-15

Last Sunday was the first Sunday of Advent

- We examined the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Isaiah
  - A prophet to the nation of Judah during the dark time of their sin and the consequences they were living under
  - In the midst of that darkness, the prophet wrote words of encouragement for the people
  - He told them that One would be coming who would bring light to the darkness and make things right again
  - He was, of course, speaking of Jesus
- But that hope was given with a requirement that would be difficult for anyone – patience!
- Isaiah’s prophecy of hope centered on two primary messages
  - First, it acknowledged the brokenness and sin of the people
  - Second, it was the assurance that God had not forgotten them

One of the reasons this time of year and these advent services resonate in our hearts is because we, too, live in a land similar to that of Judah

- Our world is dark and corrupt because of the preeminence of sin
- And we must remember Isaiah’s message
  - Sin must be confessed and repented of by each of us
  - God has not forgotten us either!
  - That same hope is given to us today, and it too will also require a measure of patience

This morning, we continue in our advent series called *The Heart of Christmas*

- We are examining the true meaning of Christmas because of Jesus Christ
- The first piece at the heart of Christmas is hope
- Today, the second is peace because of Jesus

The account of Jesus’ birth begins with an unusual group of people who were on the leading edge of the birth announcement

- We will talk about them in more detail next week but, of course, I am referring to the shepherds
  - They were chosen to hear the news first about Jesus’ birth
  - And notice what the angel who spoke with them said when he first appeared
    - **Luke 2:9-10** - *An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.*
    - The same phrase of *fear not* is spoken many times throughout the Bible

- Gabriel said it to both Zechariah (John the Baptist's father) and to Mary when he told her that she would be the mother of Jesus (**Luke 1:13,30**)
- Jesus said it to the disciples as He walked toward them on the water (**Matthew 14:27**)
- And Paul was encouraged with these same words in a dream before he had to face Caesar (**Acts 27:23-24**)
- It is in the absence of fear that there is peace
  - This is why Satan wants so much for us to embrace fear
  - But can there really be peace on earth, like the angels told the shepherds?
  - With God, yes – with man, no
- Since the beginning of recorded history, the world has been at peace only 8% of that time
  - IOW, in approx. 3100 years of history that has been preserved through writing and various other methods...
    - Only 286 of them have been without war
  - During that same time span, over 8000 treaties have been struck and broken
  - And that unrest and conflict finds its way into our homes, our workplace, our schools, and our hearts

**READ – Luke 2:14** – *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!*

Through a heavenly choir, the angels convey God's message and meaning of this coming child and what it can mean to all people – peace

- This peace would not mean the absence of war and conflict
  - It is a different type of peace
  - A peace that is life-altering because it is one not controlled by the external things of life
    - It is *shalom*
    - Shalom is the word Jews speak to one another when they meet and when they depart one another
    - It means peace, blessing, fulness, completion, health, and even prosperity
  - This is the peace Jesus brought and the angels were saying that it was through the Christ-child that it would come
- Go back to the 11th verse of the second chapter
  - **Luke 2:11** - *Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord.*
  - There can be no question that Jesus is the One who comes to bring peace
    - The angels use three names to describe Jesus in this one verse
      - Savior – from the Hebrew which translates as rescuer
      - Messiah – a Greek word that means the anointed or chosen One
      - The third word, Lord, a Hebrew word referring to Father God
    - By this one sentence, the angel said that Jesus would be the rescuer, the anointed one and God Himself
- But there was a condition to receive this peace that needs to permeate our hearts and souls today

- **Luke 2:14** - *Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests*
  - This peace comes in all its fullness when we worship and give glory to God
  - Again, this peace is not the total absence of conflict, it is a peace that resides within you
    - It is a peace that you wait in when you the doctor's report is likely a difficult one
    - It is a peace that holds you when your bank account is lagging behind your monthly obligations
    - It is a peace that comforts you when a loved one is taken suddenly
    - And it the peace that sustains you in the midst of whatever storm you are currently experiencing
    - This peace comes to us when we give God the glory and worship Him even in those dark times
  
- Notice that God did not bring this message of peace to the rich and powerful of the time
  - He came to the least of the culture
  - The amateurs, not the professionals (the priests, the pious Jewish leaders)
    - It has been said that war is too important to be left to the generals
    - In the same way, peace is too important to be left to the diplomats
  - Professionals, it would seem have a way of losing the importance and centrality of the message
    - That is also true in many churches today
    - It was amateur preachers who were entrusted with the first messages of the Kingdom of God
      - And the world still reverberates with the messages of those amateur preachers such as Paul, John, and even Luke himself

Peace, however, is not just a desired state of living

- It is an action – an action many times of reconciliation
  - Jesus is called the reconciler
  - *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation (2 Cor 2:17-19)*
    - Reconciliation is when something that is broken is brought back together
    - Unity is restored
      - But satan is the father of division and disharmony
      - When there is conflict, you can be sure that satan is close by orchestrating what is happening
      - As children of God we are called to be peacemakers – but in what way?

1. Make peace with God

- a. That is where it begins
- b. Some of you may be running from God because you are afraid
  - i. His message to us is the same as it was to the shepherds, Fear Not!
  - ii. Because that reconciliation with God is not difficult
  - iii. Simply call on His name, and He will hear you
    1. The OT prophet Joel, the apostles Luke and Paul all write the same thing...
    2. *Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved* (Joel 2:32; Luke 2:21; Rom 10:13)
  - iv. Stand still, and the presence of the Lord will surround you
    1. God has dealt with our sin, and His grace is sufficient (2 Cor 12:9)
    2. You belong to Him
    3. Whatever you have done, you can come home to Him and be reconciled

2. Make peace with others

- a. There is likely more division today in this country than perhaps any other time in our history
  - i. You can generalize it by the haves and the have nots
  - ii. You can get very specific however by race, political affiliation, economics, and even spiritual beliefs to name just a few
- b. Yet that is not how we are told to live in the Scriptures
  - i. **Rom 12:16** - *Live in harmony with one another.*
  - ii. **Rom 16:17** - *I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them*
  - iii. **I Cor 12:25** - *...there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.*
  - iv. **Psalms 133:1** - *How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!*
- c. We are called to live in the peace of reconciliation
  - i. In our families, between husbands and wives; parents and children
  - ii. Within the political system of our land – left and right; liberal and conservative, the majority and the minority
  - iii. Understand this is not only between those within the church and those without
    1. It is important for inside the church
    2. Are you at peace with the brother or sister who has a radically different way of looking at things than you do?
  - iv. At peace does not mean agreement
    1. Just as loving someone walking or living in sin does not mean you embrace or ignore the sin
    2. The truth is each of us is very capable of being on either side of that scenario

- d. One of the most important things you can do to enhance and embolden your witness is to be at peace with all the people in your life
3. Finally, you must be at peace with yourself
    - a. Now what does that mean?
      - i. Are we venturing into the world of psychoanalysis?
      - ii. Not at all – it is a biblical principle of harmony between the spirit, mind, and body
    - b. Consider what Jesus did for the man possessed by multiple demons

**READ – Mark 5:1-15**

- c. Here is a man demonstrating the effects of sin (in his case, demons) on the individual
  - i. He was divided
  - ii. He was not at peace
  - iii. There were multiple, divided parts of himself within those demons possessing him
- d. When Jesus cast out the demons, he brought the man from division to unity
  - i. From being in disharmony to reconciliation within himself
  - ii. His spirit, his mind, and his body were now one
- e. How at peace are you with yourself this morning?
  - i. How much of your past, or even your present, divides you?
    1. To be at peace means there is unity in your heart and mind
    2. That type of peace can only be realized through the presence of Jesus Christ in your life
  - ii. But it is not one-and-done
    1. It is continually “working out,” as Paul called it, your walk with Him
    2. The battle of the spirit and the flesh

But that is what is at the heart of Christmas

- There is hope, and there is peace
  - Peace with God, peace with others, peace with yourself
  - When that is the condition of your life, you then deal with the storms and the trials and the struggles with a peace, Paul writes, that passes all understanding (**Phil 4:7**)
  - Because the peace is not just about that moment or that event, it is about the totality and fullness of your life

At the heart of Christmas is a peace that cannot be achieved by your actions or your determination

- It is achieved by praising God even in the darkness of uncertainty
- The shepherds were told not to be afraid, so was Mary and Zechariah
- We too are told not to be afraid – be at peace for the Savior has come