

1. Going to look at a very familiar passage used this time of year

- A. 1000's of Christmas cards will be given to the general public quoting this verse
 - 1). Treating it like it's a universal promise – I want to look at it today

Lk 2:8–14 (ESV) And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁽⁹⁾ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

1. It was a fearful thing to see an angel in glory

- A. I believe I have seen angels disguised as men on the mission field – Ex. China
 - 1). They leave and you think – I bet that was an angel
 - Heb 13:2 (NIV)** Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.
- B. But an angel in glory is a frightening thing – John fell at one's feet as though dead – Revelation

2. Angels comforts them

Fear not! This is good news – news that should cause celebration

Lk 2:10–14 (ESV) And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ⁽¹¹⁾ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ⁽¹²⁾ And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” ⁽¹³⁾ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ⁽¹⁴⁾ “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

- A. Lying in a manger in Bethlehem is the most amazing thing – there has been a birth!
 - 1). God himself is lying in that manger – He has come down to visit rebels
 - 2). He has stooped in love to rescue man
- B. This was the first Christmas morning

3. 2 chapters later Jesus tells us why he had come to earth

Lk 4:18 (ESV) “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

- A. **Good news to the poor** – who is that?
 - 1). Certainly to the homeless we are reaching out to – there is a God who cares
 - 2). But it is to you too – it is to everybody in these multimillion dollar homes in OC
 - Mt 5:3 (ESV)** “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
 - a). Who is the poor in spirit – those who see how sinful they are
 - Those who see they can never earn heaven on their own
 - 1a). Those who have an accurate self-assessment of how they stand before God
- B. He has come to proclaim **liberty to the captives**
 - 1). Captives to sin – this would include the unsaved elder in a church
 - The high-class CEO of a Fortune 500 company driving his Lamborghini
 - And the drug addict who lives for the next fix
 - a). They are all on level ground – guilty before a holy God – eternally lost
 - b). They must all come in the same way – bowing to Christ as their king
 - Admitting they can't save themselves
- C. He was sent for the **recovery of sight to the blind**
 - 1). He did heal the blind – but this is more than physical – this is spiritual sight
 - a). He came to proclaim truth that would open eyes to their true condition and real need
 - 2). If I ask you what your greatest need today is – I'd get a few answers

- a). From a teenager it might be an X-box. Ps-4. Iphone X
- b). From really smart people – another Golden Retriever
- 3). Ask God – he would say it is forgiveness – you need to be saved
 - a). God wants to rescue you – from what? Sin? Hell?
 - b). God wants to rescue you from Himself!
 - 1a). Because he is holy and just he must judge you – he can't let your sin go unnoticed
 - 2a). He is reaching out and offering you safety in Christ from himself
He is pleading with you to find shelter from his own wrath in His Son
 - c). God finds no delight in judging anybody

Eze 18:30–31 (ESV) (The warning) “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord GOD. **(The plea)** Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. ⁽³¹⁾ Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel?”

D. *To set at liberty those who are oppressed*

- 1). That is the message – the hope - we have for the girls we minister to on Friday night
 - a). They are slaves and oppressed
- 2). But this is speaking to everybody who doesn't know God
 - a). If you've rejected the offer of salvation in his son
 - b). You are oppressed by sin – you are captive to its stranglehold on your life
 - 1a). You are slave to the flesh and its desires

Transition: All of this is not your biggest problem – it is evidence of it

- A. You are spiritually poor – blind and oppressed because you are not right with your creator
 - 1). You have set yourself against him

OBJECTION: No I haven't – I'm just neutral – I have nothing against God – Agnostic

Mt 12:30 (ESV) Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

- A. God doesn't accept agnosticism - he doesn't accept a lukewarm pat on the back
 - 1). He demands you take sides – that you choose

Rev 3:15-16 (NKJV) "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. (16) "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, ***I will vomit you out of My mouth.***

 - a). That lukewarm state – not hot or cold – not for him BUT not against him sickens him
 - b). He is not looking for half-hearted fans – with nice thoughts about him
Those who will be in glory with him will be those who follow him
 - 2). If you're not for him – If you're not living for him – If you're not living according to the ways he has set forth in his word – you ARE against him
- B. That brings us to the next point of this Christmas proclamation

II. PEACE ON EARTH AMONGST THOSE GOD IS PLEASED WITH

Lk 2:14 (ESV) “Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth...”

1. What kind of peace?

- A. Not a complete cessation of hostilities among man – we certainly don't see that
 - 1). We will one day when Christ returns and ascends to the throne
 - a). All who live for sin – all who have rejected him will be cast away
 - b). And righteousness – peace – love will reign

- 2). But we don't see that now – this world is falling apart
 - a). Globally – there are so many hotspots – so many wars and threat of wars
 - 1a). One of the signs of the end times isn't it

Mat 24:6-8 (NIV) You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. (7) Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. (8) *All these are the beginning of birth pains.*
 - b). Nationally – we are a nation more divided than ever
 - 1a). Hatred seems to be simmering below the surface – ready to explode

Thought: One day our King is going to return and put an end to this foolishness

- 1). But that obviously hasn't happened yet

Question: What is the peace these angels are speaking of? What peace on earth?

2. This is peace between God and man

A. Sinful man is an enemy of God – Romans 5

Sinful man is hostile towards God – Romans 8

- 1). They are those who think of God and say *“He will not RULE over me”*
I will do what I want – when I want – and how I want
- 2). They deceive themselves – even though they have rejected the Gospel invitation
 - a). Somehow they are convinced they will be alright when they stand before God

B. We all know the most famous verse in the Bible

Jn 3:16 (ESV) “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

- 1). Great! There is the invitation – place your faith in him and you will have eternal life
- 2). But do you know what it says in the next two verses – why there is an urgency about that

Jn 3:17–18 (ESV) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ⁽¹⁸⁾ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, *but whoever does not believe is condemned already*, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

- a). God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world – Why?
Wasn't necessary - the unbelieving world is condemned already – Why?
 - 1a). They've rejected the gracious offer of God to be saved
To become a part of his family
 - 2a). They have rejected God's offer of peace
- 3). Please listen – there will be no peace for those who refuse to follow God

Is 48:22 (ESV) “There is no peace,” says the LORD, “for the wicked.”

 - a). The wicked are those who don't follow God – who choose their own way

3. There is a condition here for who will enjoy this peace

Lk 2:14 (ESV) “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace *among those with whom he is pleased!*”

A. Who would that be? Those who take up his gracious offer of salvation

- 1). Those who see they are a sinner and not right with God
And turn from those sins to embrace Christ by faith

Ac 3:19 (ESV) Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out,

B. What happens when you do that? The war with God ends and you have peace with him

Ro 5:1 (ESV) Therefore, since we have been *justified by faith, we have peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thought: I know this might not be the lovely Christmas message you imagined I'd preach

You know the one that just says “Peace on earth to all men. God bless you!”

- A. I could tell you that! But I care too much about you to lie! That is NOT the Christmas message
 - 1). That is rebellious man’s twisting of it!
- B. The Christmas message is God came to earth – was born miraculously as a baby (virgin birth)
 - Took on the form of a man to tell the rebels that God must judge their sin
 - But that judgment need not take place on them – He was willing to die in their place
 - 1). The Christmas baby in that manger was a missionary – set upon a course to the cross
 - He came to die for the rebel so the rebel could live with God forever

4. Let me paint a picture out of the scriptures (Ps. 7)

This passage has an incredible urgency about it

But when mingled with the thought of Christmas there is an amazing beauty about it

- A. Psalm 7 says that God is angry with the sinner every day
 - 1). He is not OK with your sin – He doesn’t overlook it – it is mutiny in his creation
- B. But it gets worse – Ps 7 tells us the sinner lives in incredible danger every moment
 - 1). It paints the picture of God stringing his bow
 - Putting the arrow tipped in wrath onto that string and taking aim
 - At any moment he can let it fly and that deadly weapon will strike the offending sinner
 - And they will be taken out of this life and sent into hell
 - a). Scripture tells us we have offended the one who holds our very breath in his hand
 - at any moment he can say – that is the last one!
- C. But fortunately for us - God is not only holy and just – he is loving
 - 1). He offers a way to escape that – to remove that danger – The Christmas message
 - 2). We’ve already seen that is by turning from your sin and embracing Christ by faith
 - a). You repent – turn around – you were living for sin now you live for Christ
- D. Here is the amazing thing – what do you think happens to that bow and arrow when you do that?
 - 1). Does God just set his bow down – along with that arrow tipped with wrath?
 - 2). No! What he does is re-aims that arrow – filled with his wrath because of your sin
 - a). He lets it fly and it strikes Jesus with full force instead of you

Isa 53:4-5 (NIV) Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. (5) But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Point: You have sinned – we all have – we have all lied, stolen something, gotten angry without cause...

- A. Those sins must be judged – God cannot overlook them
 - 1). Those sins deserve his wrath -
 - 2). That wrath will be exercised in one of two places
 - a). Either on you or on Christ on the cross – that is a no brainer

Transition: If you’re one like those in Acts who cry out “What must I do to be saved?”

Receiving the Lord as Savior

1. This is nothing you can earn – don’t try to clean up your act first

- A. I’m not asking you to become more religious – to be nicer – to stop swearing so much
 - 1). Hell will be filled with nice - religious – cultured people
 - 2). Hell will be filled with church goers – Matt 7:23
 - a). Jesus is speaking with a multitude of people who plead their case

“Don’t you remember all the things we did for you?” = Church goers – elders – deacons – worship leaders – Pastors – Sunday school teachers...

- b). Jesus says “Depart from me for I never knew you”
 - 1a). They had never gone to Him – turned from sin – to follow him
They had never bowed – *never entered into a relationship with him*
 - 2a). They knew about him – they didn’t know him

2. Here is what you must do

- A. You must see your true spiritual condition – you have sinned before a holy God
Ro 3:23 (ESV) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
 - 1). Sin is going against the commandments of God – you have sinned 1000’s of times
 - B. You must see what that sin has brought into your life
Ro 6:23 (ESV) For the wages of sin is death...
 - 1). You are under the wrath of God – the arrow is pulled back – aimed at you
God says his patience will not always continue on – don’t count on it
“Today is the day of salvation”
 - 2). God is a just God who will judge every one of your sins
 - C. But I want you to see that God is also love and offers an escape – the Christmas message
Ro 6:23 (ESV) For the wages of sin is death, (OH but thank God it continues) *but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
 - 1). Here is love! Here is the offer from God telling you that he has a rescue plan
You don’t have to perish – you don’t have to be eternally damned
He has done something – He has sent his son to do everything necessary to rescue you
 - D. How do I receive that free gift? FAITH
 - 1). Go to him and admit you’ve sinned against him – confess it
Admit you realize you can’t save yourself and need to rely on his saving work
 - a). Then ask him to save you
 - b). Scripture promises if you mean that you will be accepted – you will be saved
 - E. I am praying if you don’t know him this will be the day you do!
- Thought:** Probably not the Christmas message you thought you’d hear today
- A. But if you will receive it and respond – if you meet the Savior
Then this is the greatest present I could have given to you

Question: Did this work of Christ bring peace all over the world – YES!

Rev 7:9-10 (NIV) After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from *every nation, tribe, people and language*, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. (10) And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

- A. You want to be a part of that crowd don’t you

3. Final thought for the believer

- A. I pray God will use this to remind you what you’ve been rescued from
 - 1). May this ignite praise and worship in you
- B. AND I pray God will use you to extend this gracious offer to others
 - 1). So there will be those standing around that throne because of your loving work
 - 2). We are his ambassadors sent to proclaim his message to the lost