Series: Away in a Manger

Message: 04 Shepherd Luke 2\_4-20

Text: Luke 2:4-20

Theme: Joy

Hymn: O Holy Night

Date: December 22, 2019

Location: Christ Community EFC

**If you would, please turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 2, (page 857).**

June 6th of this year marked the 75th Anniversary of D-Day. D-Day was the single most pivotal day in World War II.

This historic day began in the early hours of June 6, 1944, as allied forces launched the greatest combination of sea, land and air power in history and headed for Normandy.

The invasion that morning would eventually lead to end of war in Europe and the Paris Peace Conference that ended with the signing of peace treaties on 10 February 1947

Another invasion, which would lead to ever lasting peace took place some 2,000 years earlier on a holy night when the Christ child was born.

This invasion happened at this historic moment because a war had been waged that is traced back to the beginning of time.

Heavenly peace on earth had been disrupted and devastated since the great thud from the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

The original two people, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God’s inspired peace plan and fell for a lie leading to a war instigated by the satanic serpent.

That initial peace shattering shot was heard around the world as the first bites were taken of the forbidden fruit.

Like the thief that he is, the serpent had come to steal, kill, and destroy the peace God had designed for Adam and Eve to enjoy with their Creator.

The first couple’s choice to sin ultimately launched a war that eventually ended their lives as they originally experienced it with God.

Now, only God could make a way to rescue humanity from their war-torn existence and restore peace through a Savior.

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, there are some 400 direct references to peace, not to mention a ton of indirect allusions.

While there are various words in the original languages of the Bible that refer to peace, the deepest roots stem back to a significant word known as shalom.

Shalom, at its core, means “to be whole” or “complete.”

While “shalom” is a common greeting among Jews around the world to this day, the full meaning of that word of peace is thick with substance that goes well beyond a mere feeling of calmness.

Shalom literally means: “God’s highest and most complete good be upon you and all associated with you.”

The peace of God goes well beyond merely a cozy feeling or even the absence of war; it includes a relational harmony that seeks a deep commitment to the work of justice in truth and righteousness.

The peace of God is a full, satisfying, rich, and juicy fruit of His Spirit to His people and creation.

The shalom of God is intended for relational goodness and harmony.

Peace is the original order of creation and remains in the heart of God for all His creation.

The Bible opens with peace as God creates the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1-2 and closes with peace as God sets the tone for eternity in Revelation 21-22.

However, the great war leading back to restored peace plays out between the first two and final two chapters in the Bible.

While divine plans for peace were in the works since Genesis 3, the moment for heaven to launch the long-awaited mission of the Messiah to ultimately and finally to deal with sin and restore peace with God was launched on one holy night in Bethlehem.

Luke describes the appointed time when the young virgin girl named Mary gave birth to the incarnate battle plan named Jesus.

A bewildered husband known as a just man named Joseph was nearby among the beasts in the barn to help as best he could.

The birth announcement was blared out in the fields by heavenly warriors to lowly shepherds.

These social outcasts among the sheep soon would be ready to sound the trumpet that victory was swaddled and sleeping in a trough of feed.

Only God would devise such an arrangement to restore peace to His people and His creation.

The unfolding of the peculiar peace plan is recorded in Luke 2.

Luke 2:4 “**And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. 6 And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.**

**8 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. 10 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!”**

**15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” 16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. 17 And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.**

**18 And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.**

The reason a Savior was born on that day in the City of David was that something or someone needed saving.

The earth and humanity were the ones who needed saving and deliverance due to shalom being in disarray from sin and Satan’s schemes.

What happened in Bethlehem in the stable was a strategic initiative that was well within the scope and sequence of God’s plans, which would lead back to peace…shalom: God’s highest and most complete good that was intended for all people and those with whom they associated.

The apostle John writes in clear terms why Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of the world, came into the world at this time to put right what the devil had continued to mar with wrong since the beginning.

1 John 3:5-8 states: “**You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.**

**6 No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.**

**7 Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.**

**8 Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning.**

Now, don’t miss this, the end of verse 8: **The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil**.

It does not take a person long to identify the works of the devil that impact all our lives.

The works of the devil are seen in:

* Addictions that lead to the breakup of families
* Hatred that fuels tensions among people of different worldviews
* Racism that leads to isolation, mistrust, discrimination, and injustice
* Violence that escalates to everything from mass shootings to suicide
* Greed that leads to lies that leads to crime that leads to corruption and attempted cover-up
* Abuse that leaves people with external and internal scars
* Sickness and disease leading to death that was never part of the original creation of God
* Fear, shame and darkness that snuff out any light leading to peace

These works of the devil and many other examples that could be listed are why Jesus came from heaven to earth.

Jesus was born on purpose for a purpose.

The purpose of Christmas was to lead to Easter where the perfect Son of God would wage a holy war on the devil and destroy all of his evil works that rob people of peace with one another and peace with God.

Sin is the source of every conflict on earth. Jesus came to deal with sin once and for all and to shine the light on the path to peace.

This was part of the prophesied plan of God since before the Holy Night when Christ was born.

Remember what Isaiah the prophet proclaimed 700 years before the invasion of the incarnation happened when peace would begin to be restored to the people of God who had been living in exiled darkness from the effects of sin for a long time.

Isaiah 9:2 “**The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.**

Isaiah 9:6-7 “**For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end…**”

This figure of the Prince of Peace is One who is a bringer of justice.

The Prince of Peace is the One who brings vindication to those who have been living in exile from a peace they were created to know and experience within a right relationship with God and each other.

Isaiah goes on to talk about the restoration of peace to people who have been targets of the devil for centuries and how this Prince of Peace can restore it through His own choice to suffer as a servant of God on behalf of His people.

Notice the descriptive words that foreshadow the cross where the ultimate war for peace was settled by Jesus.

We are told in Isaiah 53:5 “**But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.**”

The cross is where our Savior made a way for peace to be experienced in the most complete and whole sense of the word.

The Prince of Shalom is closely associated with the meaning of the New Testament word for Savior who was born in Bethlehem that first Christmas.

The New Testament word for Savior can be translated “deliverer” or “preserver.”

These words are descriptors of what Jesus the Savior came to do on His invasion at the incarnation.

He came to deliver people from the works of the devil and restore the peace of God to the people of God so that the Kingdom of God might be experienced on earth as it is in heaven.

The Prince of Peace came to show and walk the path to peace.

It is interesting to notice how there is a mention of this path that leads to peace as the works of the devil are being destroyed.

Just before the birth of Jesus, his uncle, Zechariah, prophesied about how his own son named John starting in Luke 1:67.

Zechariah prophesied that his son John who would help point people to the path of peace, that this coming Prince of Peace would produce.

Listen to Luke 1:76 “**And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, 77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, 78 because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high 79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.**”

Often when we do not experience peace in our lives, it is when we find ourselves on paths that Jesus never intended for us to be traveling in our life.

We find ourselves not at peace when we are on:

* Paths that lead to deeper and deeper debt instead of financial freedom
* Paths that lead to reading and posting negative words instead of building others up
* Paths that lead to the destruction of relationships instead of strengthening relationships
* Paths that lead to secrecy instead of transparency
* Paths that lead to shading the truth instead of telling the whole truth
* Paths that lead to taking and hoarding instead of giving and sharing

**If** we are not experiencing peace in our lives, it may be because of the paths we are choosing to walk on today.

It is possible that the path some people wander onto is a subtle work of the devil that has led them down a way they never really intended to walk in the first place.

Jesus came to destroy those subtle works of the devil just as much as the more overt works that are more easily recognizable in our world.

Ultimately, the way of peace leads from the manger in Bethlehem to the cross at Calvary.

Jesus lived a perfect and sinless life in order to fire the final shot that would destroy all the works of the devil as He became the perfect and sinless sacrifice.

The Apostle Paul writes about how this purpose in the life of our Prince of Peace would yield peace that we could experience in a new relationship with a holy God.

Ephesians 2:13 “**But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**

**14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.**

**17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near**.

What Jesus did on the cross was fulfill the purpose of why He was born in the first place.

He came to restore peace and make a path to peace for us to walk down as we follow Him.

In fact, Jesus said the people who bring peace to all areas of life on earth are blessed in God’s eyes.

When Jesus said in Matthew 5:9, “**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God**,” He had in mind people who were pursuing right relationships with the people around them in ways that led to justice, truth and righteousness for all.

Peacemaking goes way beyond just calling a truce in the middle of a fight.

Peacemaking pursues the help of God in making something that has gone wrong along the way into a place where it is healed and made right.

This is that concept of wholeness that stems back to shalom once again.

Calling a truce is a step in the right direction. But, if all we do is stop shooting at one another, it may not solve the issue at hand that leads to true and complete peace.

A ceasefire may just lead to a cold war that drives the issues underground because they never really get dealt with in an open and honest way, in a way that moves to reconciliation, forgiveness where needed, and wholeness in the relationship.

The true peacemakers Jesus had in mind were the people who were seeking God’s highest good on the lives of all those with whom they met in life.

Jesus did what He did on the cross as He offered up His sinless life to make clear the path of peace because He wanted God’s highest good to be possible for all people of all times.

The night Jesus was arrested, Peter pulled out a sword and cut off an ear of one of the guards who came to arrest Jesus.

Jesus tells Peter to put his sword away and in then in Matthew 26:53 Jesus said to Peter “**Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels**?”

Jesus did not call on the twelve legions of angels to rescue Him from the path to the cross because He was forging the path to peace with God as he waged the final war against sin, death, Satan, and hell so that peace could be restored once again and for all time.

Perhaps these twelve legions of angels Jesus mentioned on the way to the cross were some of the same angels that were singing of the “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased” when the heavenly host broke forth in song on that oh so holy night when Christ was born.

This gathering of heavenly angels were more than mere singers; they were angelic warriors at the beck and call of the Prince of Peace who had come to bring the advent of peace to a people in need of being put back on the path to peace.

Years ago there was a book, Peace Child by Don Richardson that was required reading for anyone considering going into missions.

Richardson was a missionary to a cannibalistic, headhunting tribe in Indonesia known as the Sawi.

The long and difficult work among these people continued to prove trying when it came to finding a way to convey the gospel message in terms they could understand in their culture.

The significance of the cross and Christ’s atoning death especially was challenging to translate into language and concepts the Sawi people could grasp with understanding in their culture.

Sawi villages were constantly fighting among themselves, and because treachery, revenge, and murder were highly honored, there seemed no hope of peace.

The tribe, however, had a legendary custom that if one village gave a baby boy to another village, peace would prevail between the two villages as long as the child lived. The baby was called a ‘peace child.’

The missionary seized on that story as an analogy of the reconciling work of Christ.

Christ, he said, is God’s divine Peace Child that he has offered to man, **and** because Christ lives eternally, His peace will never end.

That analogy was the key that unlocked the gospel for the Sawi.

In a miraculous working of the Holy Spirit many of them believed in Christ, and a strong church soon developed – and peace came to the Sawi.

May you enjoy the peace of Christ this Christmas and be called blessed by Him as you seek to be peacemakers in your world.

For once, God has worked peace in us, God then can work peace through us.

The result is the kind of shalom that God desires to reign in the lives of people as His Kingdom comes, and His will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

**Benediction “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.” (Num. 6:24-26)**