

## Christmas: A Taste of Heaven Here and Now

### Part 2: How to Experience Real Peace

John 14:27 and Philippians 4:6-7

**Summary:** The peace Jesus offers can transform your life this Christmas and every day of the year.

#### **Main Ideas:**

If Jesus' birth was supposed to bring peace on earth... why didn't it work?

The chaos in our lives far outweighs the peace

The peace we long for at Christmas is available to each of us every day of the year.

Peace is a gift from Jesus.

The peace of God is experiencing wholeness and enjoying life as it was meant to be

Jesus came to make us whole.

Prayer opens the gift of peace.

Jesus gives us peace so we can reflect his peace to the world.

The peace of God is the real gift that keeps on giving... the whole year.

#### **Invitation:**

Try praying honestly and thankfully at least once a day for a week.

- Thank him
- Ask him for peace
- Ask him for an opportunity to bring peace to someone else... and then take it.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What stood out, bothered, or inspired you in the message?
2. What does the word "PEACE" mean to you? What do you think a life of peace would look like?
3. Read Philippians 4:6-7. What's one area of your life where you need God's peace? How can you invite Him into that situation?
4. What are practical ways you can reflect God's peace to others, especially during the Christmas season?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

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#### **Transcript:**

#### **IN: Luke 2:8-14**

*8 That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. 9 Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, 10 but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. 11 The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! 12 And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."*

*13 Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."*

**WE:** Sweet story. We can picture the cute chubby cheeks of those underage shepherds w/ their snuggly sheep.

Maybe making it a sweet little kid's story keeps us from asking that uncomfortable question...

- If Jesus' birth was supposed to bring peace on earth... why didn't it work?

It's been 2000 yrs and there hasn't been a lot of peace in the world...

- Wars/Genocides/Human trafficking
- Broken relationships
- Homes full of anger/bickering/resentment

The chaos in our lives far outweighs the peace

But at xmas we catch glimpses of what peace on earth could be like... we feel like it just might be within our grasp...

- Maybe someday we will get to live a wonderful life
- Maybe someday the scrooges will see the error of their ways
- Maybe this year the boss will give us a great Xmas bonus instead of a membership to the Jelly of the Month Club....
  - I know, I know... it's the gift that keeps on giving... the whole year.

At Xmas, we get a taste of the peace we all want...

- But Xmas comes and goes and things don't stay very peaceful.

But listen... It is possible to experience real peace in our real lives... all year long.

It might seem too good to be true... but it's something millions of people have experienced for 2000 years...

- Even though I'm still working on it... it's something I've personally experienced.

It's something **you** can experience today, tomorrow, and every day...

The peace we long for at Xmas is available to each of us every day of the year.

"How?" you might ask. Let me show you...

After the angels announced peace on earth... Jesus grew up... and before he was executed he had a long conversation with his disciples and in this conversation, he gave them a gift...

**GOD: John 14:27 (NIV)**

*27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid*

Peace is a gift from Jesus.

It's not something we magically find... not something we can educate or buy our way to...

It's a peace that can only be given by Jesus... a gift he wants to give everyone.

If so, then it's fair to ask...

"Then why didn't he give it to me and my family?"

"Why hasn't he given it to the people in Ukraine or Syria?"

"Why is there so much struggle and turmoil and pain?"

Here's the thing... When we hear the word "PEACE" we think of the absence of things like war, pain, conflict, turmoil, and arguing.

But that's not the peace Jesus is talking about...

At the time of Jesus, Rome claimed to bring peace to roughly 33% of the world's population

- What they called the *Pax Romana... the peace of Rome*

This 'peace' was enforced by military power and fear, ensuring order and prosperity for many.

But it came at a cost: oppression and violence for those who resisted.

It was a fragile peace, dependent on the sword, not the heart.

Jesus is talking about giving a different and better peace.

- Not a peace the world tries to give from the edge of a sword or the barrel of a gun.

When Jesus used the word "peace," when the angels announced baby Jesus would bring "peace" on earth...

- They were talking about something much deeper than the absence of conflict.
- They were talking about something that can end conflict at the root
- Something that doesn't have to be maintained by fear and overwhelming force

The word recorded for us when the angels announce peace on earth, when Jesus promises his peace...

- Is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word... Shalom.

Shalom means so much more than the absence of conflict or political stability...

- It means wholeness/completeness/things the way they should be...
- **The peace of God is experiencing wholeness and enjoying life as it was meant to be.**

And it is this peace/this wholeness Jesus came to bring to the world...

We all know there is a life/a world we want to live in... there's a way "things are supposed to be"

And as we said last time... Xmas is a taste of this life.

But... the world we live in is a fuzzy/hazy image of what "is supposed to be."

We, personally, are far from what we are supposed to be...

- We were made to reflect the image of our creator... the God of love
- But we have become broken dirty mirrors of that image.

And what Jesus is saying is... “I am here to fix that brokenness to restore you. To make you and the world whole again... the way it is supposed to be.”

### Jesus came to make us whole.

And that *will* look like the absence of war and conflict... but that absence will be a by-product of humans being made whole/experiencing true Shalom again.

Rome’s peace came with a sword; Jesus’ peace comes through love and restoration.

Unlike worldly peace built on power, Jesus’ shalom is a gift—one that transforms us from the inside out.

It doesn't come from conquering and asserting dominance over other images of God...

- It is a gift.

Which is great. And nice to think about... but how do we experience it in our real lives now...

- How do we open Jesus’ gift of perfect shalom?

Interestingly, about 30 yrs after Jesus promised peace, the Apostle Paul—who endured hardship after hardship—shared how we can experience this peace in any situation.

His instructions to Jf’s in the ancient city of Philippi can still guide us today...

### **Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)**

*6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

### Prayer opens the gift of peace.

This kind of prayer though isn’t just asking for stuff... or begging God not to smite us...

This kind of prayer is about enjoying a relationship with our Heavenly Father...

- Knowing and trusting that he sees, knows, loves, and cares for/about us.
- Knowing and trusting that b/c of Jesus’ death and resurrection we have a whole/complete/perfect relationship with God
- A relationship where we can be open and honest about our needs/fears/worries
- And where we remember and thank our Heavenly Father for all the times/ways he has shown up for us.

It’s enjoying being a child of God as he begins replacing the broken pieces of our mirror, polishing up the hazy spots...

- As we are more and more made whole and complete in him.
- Are restored to the image we were created to reflect.

But if we are created to reflect the image of God... the more complete we become, the more like him we become...

- The more we will join him in bringing perfect peace/wholeness/shalom to those around us...

Jesus gives us peace so we can reflect his peace to the world.

We become messengers and creators of Shalom...

- **Matt 5:9 (NIV)** *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

Imagine if we were all working toward peace/shalom with our family/friends/neighbors... enemies?

Not just looking out for ourselves, and our wants/needs... but as individuals/communities/even countries, we accepted the peace of God, allowed God to transform us through his peace, and then worked for the peace/wholeness of others...

Not the peace the world has tried before but the peace Jesus promises all of us... the reason he came in the first place.

You know what that would do?

- That would end wars
- It would end the arguing/bickering/resentment in our homes,
- It would create healthy work environments.

This xmas **you** can experience real peace/shalom on earth... **you** can bring that wholeness, the way things are supposed to be to those around you

**YOU:** It starts with accepting peace with God

Your Heavenly Father isn't mad at you... he wants you to enjoy him while he enjoys you.

Jesus' death and resurrection removed any barrier we might have with God...

- He was God coming to us to offer forgiveness and new life.
- To restore the image of God in us and remove any stains smearing that image.

Jesus wants you to give you peace in every part of your life.

- All you have to do is accept his love and pledge allegiance to him as your king.

You've experienced the chaos of life without peace.

- Don't let this Xmas pass without tasting the peace Jesus offers.

Right now, as you sit here, you can ask Him to bring His peace into your life.

It's not just a seasonal feeling—it's a gift He offers every day. Will you take that step today?

And then when you're ready to experience the ongoing peace of God...

Try praying honestly and thankfully at least once a day for a week.

- **Thank him** for what he has done for you and given you.
- **Ask him for peace** in a specific area of your life that is challenging right now
- **Ask him for an opportunity to bring peace to someone else... and then take it.**
  - Whether it's helping fix a broken relationship
  - Offering Encouragement
  - Helping someone with a physical need
  - Or just letting someone know they are seen.

**WE:** Imagine if just this small group did this? Imagine if just 25% of our city did this?

Imagine waking up every day, not overwhelmed by stress, but centered in God's peace.

Imagine your home filled with love instead of tension.

Imagine being a part of a community where peace spills over into every relationship.

That's the life Jesus offers us, starting right now.

It can happen... but someone has to go first... Why not us?

Let's be the ones who say, 'Yes, Jesus, I want your peace, and I want to bring it to others.'

This Xmas, let's start building a world that reflects His perfect shalom.

As you hear the songs, enjoy the lights, go to the recitals, and wrap the presents

Remember... Xmas is a taste of the life Jesus offers to give us every day.

And **the peace of God is the real gift that keeps on giving... the whole year.**