

**Glory to God, Peace to Humankind (Micah 5:1-4; Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 2:1-20)**

**Christmas Day-2017**

It would be great to have your Bibles opened and turned to Luke chapter 2 - starting from verse 1.

There's an outline in the bulletin to jot down some notes if you wish

Let me ask for God's help before we begin...

### **Intro**

The story of the birth of Jesus is the most amazing story

We heard the story in our children's talk earlier

So I'd like us to focus on the words of the heavenly host in Luke chapter 2 - verses 13 and 14

Let's remind ourselves of those verses:

[PowerPoint 1-Luke 2:13-14]

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."

*What's a great company of the heavenly host?*

It's a like an army of angels - God's army of angels in Heaven

Like those on the wall over there!

And they are praising God - basically thanking God

Why are they thanking God?

Because back in v11 - A Saviour - a rescuer has been born - He is the Messiah - which means God's anointed or chosen One - and this Saviour is God's Son - Jesus

So these angels are celebrating the birth of Jesus

And look what they say in v14

- *Glory to God in the highest Heaven*
- *And on Earth peace to those on whom His favour rests*

So there's 2 things I want us to focus on this morning

1. *Glory to God - and what that means*
2. *And on Earth peace to those on whom His favour rests*

### **Glory to God in the highest Heaven**

So let's look at Glory first

[PowerPoint 2-Glory]

The Greek word is **doxa**

It means the highest praise and honour that one can give - and that praise and honour is going to God

Why should God receive this highest praise and honour?

Here's why...

- Because God is in control of everything - He knows what's going to happen before it happens - and He had a plan to rescue humankind - by sending His Son
- We saw yesterday - that through His prophet Isaiah - that God foretold that a virgin called Mary would have a Son - and it's just happened as God said
- God has arranged for Joseph and Mary - to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem (a distance of 80 miles = 128KM)
- God arranged this by using the census that Caesar Augustus had issued - where everyone had to return to their own town to be registered (for tax purposes)
- And it just so happened that Mary's husband to-be, Joseph, is from Bethlehem - so they have to travel there
- And it just so happened that Bethlehem is the town - that the prophet Micah - says in our OT reading from Micah 5:2 - "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel"
- God has planned all this to happen - so He deserves glory and honour because His promises are always true and always kept
- But there's more...

- The angels appear to a bunch of shepherds - that's an amazing miracle itself
- The Shepherds who were quite likely the ones who prepare the lambs for sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem - because Bethlehem was historically where these lambs were prepared
- And here are the shepherds being told about a child - baby Jesus - who will be the sacrificial lamb of God one day - when He grows up
- Isn't it beautiful that these shepherds - who tend sheep - are the first people to see Jesus - the 'Good Shepherd' and also known as 'the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'
- Also shepherds were not the most popular people in the community - because they slept out in the fields with their sheep - so they were unable to keep the ceremonial laws of washing - and were seen as social outcasts
- But Jesus has come to offer ALL people hope - rich and poor, old and young, good and bad,
- Glory to God in the highest heaven
- But there's more...
- The angels mention a "sign" to the shepherds - they will find Jesus in a manger - an animal feeding trough!
- God's Son - the King of Heaven and Earth - to be born in an animal feeding trough - what a humble birth for the King of Kings!

- Which shows Jesus is a different King - who will mix with all his subjects - no matter how humble and poor they are - and a different king who will die for His subjects
- Glory to God in the highest Heaven

## Peace on Earth

Which brings us to the second thing I'd like to focus on

And that is peace on earth

[PowerPoint 3-Peace on Earth]

The peace that the angels are talking about

Is not the end of wars and fighting and terrorism that goes on in our world

It is peace between God and humankind - that Jesus brings

This peace happens because Jesus was born to fix the broken relationship between God and humankind - brought about by people's sin and rebellion against God

So Jesus came to fix the sin of the world - by dying on the cross - and taking the punishment of sin upon Himself

By doing this Jesus obeyed God the Father - and satisfied God's anger about people's sin - and so anyone believing in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour can have peace with God - and have a loving personal relationship with God

V14 - says '*on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests*'

Who are the people that God's favour rests on?

Well - it's those people who want to enter into a personal relationship with God and repent and believe in Jesus

God does not want anyone to perish in their sin - but He wants everyone to repent and believe in Jesus - and receive forgiveness and eternal life (2 Peter 3:19)

If everyone on this planet - believed in Jesus - then not only would there be peace between God and humankind - but there would be peace with each other

Because we wouldn't be warring and fighting with one another - we'd be modelling Jesus' love - and loving each other

### **Peace of Jesus (Isaiah 9:6-7a)**

Our OT reading from Isaiah 9:6-7 - expands more on what this peace that Jesus brings looks like

[PowerPoint 4-Isaiah 9:6-7a]

Isaiah 9:6 describes the child to be born

As firstly **a son to be given**

He is a gift of God - by God's grace - we didn't ask for the gift, we didn't earn the gift, we didn't deserve it because we sin - but God gave us the gift anyway

All we have to do is open the gift of Jesus which brings peace from God...

Next Isaiah says that the **government will be on his shoulders**. In the original Hebrew language this means that the rule and dominion of the whole world is on Jesus' shoulders - He is the one true ruler of the world. Forget about G20's and

G8's and the idea of a world government - we already have one ruler of the Earth  
 - He's King Jesus and He rules with Heavenly peace

Then we have some wonderful names for Jesus

Isaiah says Jesus will be called **Wonderful Counsellor** -

Some of you here this morning might have had counselling in your life - it may or may not have been helpful - and I'm not doubting the usefulness of counselling for some people

But Isaiah says Jesus is a wonderful counsellor -

The Hebrew here literally means - a wonder of a counsellor - it's the nearest word in Hebrew to 'supernatural' - so it means Jesus is a supernatural counsellor -

His wisdom is not like human wisdom - His wisdom is way higher than human wisdom

We only have to read the Gospels - to see how wise Jesus was -

He outsmarted the Pharisees and the teachers and experts of the Law -

He answered their questions - with his own questions -

He taught us to go the extra mile - to turn the other cheek - to forgive 70 x 7 times - to love your neighbour as yourself - to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you - he taught that there was no greater love than laying down your life for your friends - and went ahead and did it - to prove it!

The people marveled at his teaching -

Why? Because it was Heavenly teaching not earthly teaching - He said His kingdom was not of this world -

Where do we find this supernatural counselling of Jesus?

Simple - in His Word -

And supernaturally The Holy Spirit - makes God's Word come alive and have meaning in our lives?

What a wonderful counsellor Jesus is!

But how often do we rely on our own wisdom and experience instead of His?

All the time? Sometimes?

Relying on Jesus' wisdom and counsel - will bring us peace in our hearts - because we will know we're doing what's right in God's eyes

(pause)

The next name Isaiah gives Jesus is - **Mighty God** - Mighty can also mean strong and brave here - like any ruler should be - but no ruler or king that ever lived can really claim to be God (they might think they can) - but here Jesus is described as God -

This should put paid to any claims by people that Jesus was just a good bloke with great teaching - Here Isaiah states clearly Jesus is fully God - and His might and strength does not come as human's would expect by military power - but through the power of His Word -

God's Word changes hearts and minds - it changed the persecutor Saul to the apostle Paul - it changed the Roman Empire which persecuted Christians to the Roman Empire that made Christianity its religion of choice!

Jesus the *Mighty God* - uses His Word as a double edged sword - which penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; and it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Heb 4:12)

Jesus' Word brings peace in our hearts

The next name Isaiah gives Jesus is the name **Everlasting Father**

This gives us the encouragement to know that Jesus' rule of this Earth is not temporary - but permanent - everlasting - forever and ever - he's not going to be dethroned or succeeded -

And the term Father - speaks of his care and concern for His people. He cares for His people like any good father would care for his children

And Isaiah also calls Jesus - **the Prince of Peace** -

Prince makes him royalty - and Peace is the Hebrew word - Shalom - which gives the idea of completeness, wholeness, healthiness, wellbeing and contentment - It means much than our English word peace -

And ultimately we can only have all of this by being in a right relationship with God

Jesus achieves that peace between human beings and God - because

Jesus came - as the light of the world - **to call people out of the darkness of their sin** - into the light of His forgiveness of sin - by his death on the cross

He brings inner peace to all who believe in Him -

And Jesus promises that He will relieve people's burdens

Matthew 11:28-30 puts it this way - reading the MSG version - <sup>28-30</sup> "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

That's what this Prince of Peace gives us - a way of living freely side by side with Jesus as our guide, our teacher, our example...

And this government of Jesus brings a peace that has no end - it's a peace that goes on into eternity - leaving in peace with God in Heaven forever...

### **Our Response**

So how will we respond to the Prince of Peace - our Lord Jesus - on Christmas Day 2017?

[PowerPoint 5-Heading, Our Response]

Well there's 2 responses in our passage from Luke 2 - and both of them apply to us this morning

[PowerPoint 5a-Shepherds]

1. First - see v17 - and look at the response of the Shepherds - when they saw Jesus - they spread the word concerning what had been told about this child. What had they been told? That He was a Saviour, He was God's Messiah,

God's chosen one. Can we join the shepherds and spread the word about Jesus, the Saviour? This time of year is an ideal time to tell people what we are celebrating at church. Also - the shepherds in v20 - glorified and praised God - because everything they had been told was true. We can do the same - can't we? Praise God for His Truth. Praise God for sending Jesus! Thank Jesus our Saviour! Thank you Jesus! Thank You Jesus!

2. And our 2<sup>nd</sup> response. See v19 - and look at the response of Mary - she treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. Literally she kept in mind what the Shepherds had said about Jesus and brought all the facts together in her heart and mind. She's thinking about how the angel told her she would have a child from God, she's thinking about the virgin birth, and about what the shepherds told her about a heavenly host of angels - and she's connecting all the facts. That should be our response too - are we treasuring all these golden truths about Jesus - the Prince of Peace - are we seeing how important it is to have a personal relationship with Jesus - are we connecting God's Word in the OT with what happens in the NT - and seeing that it all checks out! Are we understanding - that God planned to send Jesus to bring peace between God and humankind

(pause)

Glory to God in the highest heaven

And on Earth peace on whom his favour rests...

Let's pray...