



## Christmas Peace

*Luke 2:14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests."*

And so this is Christmas  
For weak and for strong  
For rich and the poor ones  
The world is so wrong  
And so happy Christmas  
For black and for white  
For yellow and red ones  
Let's stop all the fight  
A very merry Christmas  
And a happy New Year  
Let's hope it's a good one  
Without any fear

These were the words of John Lennon back in the 1970s in a famous Christmas record which was re-done by the *Pop Idol* people this year. It's a famous song in that reflects the verse we just read because we associate Christmas with peace. But it's never peace at Christmas is it?

You probably already know that out of all times of the year, people find Christmas most stressful. It's having to see all those relatives. It's about being up to our ears in debt. It's about all that shopping in heaving shops - or worse - in pouring rain at Swaffham market. And we get home to dry out and despair about the credit card bill and turn on the news. More people dying in Iraq, this person or that person mugged or murdered. Peace on earth? I don't think so.

Listen to the words of this rather cynical song about Christmas by Greg Lake which really reflects what many people think about Christmas.

They said there'd be snow at Christmas,  
They said there'd be peace on earth,  
Hallelujah! Noel!, be it Heaven or Hell,  
The Christmas we get, we deserve.

Try having Christmas without Christ and without understanding the angel's message and you come out with verses like that.

So what is the angel's message all about. The easiest way to describe it was a greeting for a new king. Let me read you another verse you've heard before:

*Luke 19: 38 "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"*

That isn't what the angels said but what the people said when Jesus made His entry into Jerusalem. But that still doesn't help us because in His coming into Bethlehem or

His coming into Jerusalem, we didn't see a peaceful world. In fact, in the past 1000 years, more people have been killed in conflicts than in all the previous centuries. But then look at these words of the angel again and you'll find that he wasn't talking about world peace:

*Luke 2:14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests."*

So what sort of peace did Jesus bring. Peace with God. *On earth peace to men on whom his favour rests.* The peace wasn't to the world but to whom His favour rests. And who's that: you and me. God shows His love, mercy and grace to all men and women and He desires to bring us into relationship with Him. The trouble is that people are separated from God. Let me read a verse to you from Paul's letter to the Colossians:

*Col 1: 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

Jesus didn't come to bring peace on Earth, but to make it possible for people to be reconciled to God - remember Jesus is God, the eternal Son. *And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

That is the issue there. God wants to be part of your life - to make you part of His family. That is the remarkable thing about the Christian message. God wants us to be part of His life. An Jesus death on the cross opened a way by which those things that separate us from God (our sins) can be dealt with.

The death of Jesus on the cross has allowed God to no longer hold sin against us - the Bible calls it justification. However, to come into the benefit of that forgiveness and to enter into a relationship with God, we need to accept His gift of forgiveness and eternal life by faith. It doesn't become ours until we have accepted it. The we can say this:

*5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.*

Do you know who God is? Are you at peace with Him - or are you going your own way and have little to do with God most of the time. God wants to know you. That's why Jesus came - to open the way by which He can have relationship with you. The decision is now yours.

Are you going to accept Him? Here's a prayer you can pray:

**Father God**  
**I want to know you.**  
**I need you.**  
**Thank you that you have always loved me.**  
**Thank you for sending Jesus for dying on the cross for me**  
**Please forgive me for all the sins I have committed.**  
**I accept Your gift of eternal life**  
**I turn from all the things that displease you**  
**And to desire to follow You in newness of life.**  
**In Jesus' name**  
**Amen**



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