

THE PRINCE OF PEACE**Luke 2:8-15****(Read Luke 2:8-15)**

Intro: You might remember in old westerns how as two mean hombres face each other down on the dirt street of any given frontier town and one would growl, “This town aint big enough for the two of us.” And all this time there was a solution.

But truthfully, manmade solutions, like architecture, will never bring real or lasting peace.

As I was researching this talk this week, I found this from country singer Travis Tritt, who worked the bar and club circuit for many years until he finally made it big in the music industry. He recounts that many of the bars he played in were dangerous places, with drunken fans starting fights over the smallest matters. The problem is drunken fans can easily become uncontrollable mobs. But Travis, who grew up in a Pentecostal home, found the perfect way to keep the peace when a crowd started getting out of control. He says: “*Silent Night proved to be my all-time lifesaver. Just when a bar fight started getting out of hand, when bikers were reaching for their pool cues and rednecks were heading for the gun rack, I'd start playing Silent Night. It could be the middle of July—I didn't care. Sometimes they'd even start crying, standing there watching me sweat and play Christmas carols.*”

There is something about the Prince of Peace that calms raging souls. Jesus commanded a turbulent sea to be calm with “*Peace! Be still!*” (Mark 4:39). And he promises to bring peace to you and to me.

When the angels sang that there would be “*peace on earth*” which is more accurately rendered in the NIV as “*peace to those on whom his favor rests.*”, it’s important to realize what that peace is that comes from the Prince of Peace. I’ll do that, but first, I want to quickly tell you what it is not.

It was not a political peace

- In the Micah 5 text that we heard earlier, the prophet is not talking about to a present reality. Instead he was looking toward an eventuality. This was because there was no peace when Micah wrote it. The area we now know as Palestine, or even better, Israel, was a crossroads for any conquering army whether it was the Babylonians, Greeks, Egyptians, or as it was as the time Jesus was born, the Romans. There was no political peace – everyone wanted Palestine. It was too strategic. It still is.
- Likewise, there was no peace when the angels said there would be peace on earth – but there would be *peace for those on whom his favor rests*. It’s a promise that the people of God can count on. It’s an already, but not yet. There would be peace, but it would not be peaceful in the governments of humanity.
- It’s still true. The more “enlightened” we become, the more savage and sub-human our politics seem to sink. Politics is not the source of peace in our time. No matter if your party is in power or not, PEACE WILL NOT COME THROUGH A POLITICAL SOLUTION. It will only come from the Prince of Peace.
- And let me go on and point out that . . .

Peace is not an absence of strife

- When Micah makes the prophecy that “he will be our peace” in Micah 5:5, he is using the word Shalom. Let me point out that shalom is more than the absence of warfare. Richard Donovan points out that the concept of Hebrew shalom “*involves the kind of tranquility that comes from knowing who you are and where you come from. It involves the kind of prosperity that arises, not from an accumulation of material possessions, but from a thankful spirit. It involves the kind of security that comes from faith that God loves you and will provide for your needs.*” Notice that it does not involve any promise of deliverance from earthly strife that comes from a fallen world.
- John Gill comments on Micah 5:5 saying, “*...so Jesus the true Messiah is called ‘our peace’ in Ephesians 2:14; (which we’re going to look at in a bit) and is the cause and author of peace, not only between Jew and Gentile, but between God and men, which he has made by the blood of his cross, and speaks and gives peace to men, and he is the author of peace in his churches, whose kingdom is a kingdom of peace, of which there will be an abundance in the latter day....*” So the promise is peace between God and humanity through the Prince of Peace, and peace between his children. But Shalom does not promise the absence of strife. It’s actually more than that.

- We begin to see a solution in the angels' song in Luke 2:14 where they sing about glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests. The elusive peace promised by the Roman Empire (referred to in Latin as Pax Romana) was fool's dream. True peace is never humanly possible. But what was coming through the Child in a manger in Bethlehem was now being offered through Jesus to all people on earth. Again, this peace has its roots in the Jewish idea of shalom, which means wholeness. To be whole means that one is in right relationship with God, with other persons, and with oneself. In this sense, in our relationship with God, peace is another term for salvation from sin.
- But does this work with Jesus when he says, later in his ministry, *Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division* Luke 12:51? Yes it does. Peace is certainly offered through Jesus, but it depends on how people respond to God's offer. Truly his desire is for peace for humanity. A tender account is when Jesus had just made his Palm Sunday triumphal entry into Jerusalem and Luke tells he wept over the city and said, *If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.* Luke 19:42.
- As I just said, peace depends on our response to the offer. The angels pointed out that it is offered to all on whom God's favor rests. And let me point out that God's favor isn't on just a select few, but all. The old song says, "*Whosoever will may come*" and that's exactly it. The birth of Jesus brought the favor of God upon all humanity but a decision must be made to accept it or reject it.
- That's why he's the . . .

Prince of Peace

- Let me read you another helpful passage. Listen,

For to us a child is born,

to us a son is given,

and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the greatness of his government and peace

there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne

and over his kingdom,

establishing and upholding it

with justice and righteousness

from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty

will accomplish this. Isaiah 9:6-7

- Notice how he is a King of peace and not chaos. Lately it's been almost stylish, even in Christian circles, and certainly in the non-Christian world to paint God as anything but peaceful. They are quick to draw our attention to certain portions of the Old Testament and use them out of context to make him seem, hateful, vengeful, spiteful, and even fickle. This is NOT our good, good father God. He is a God of peace and order. All you need to do is look at what we studied two weeks ago in the fruit of the Spirit; *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control* are to be exhibited in our lives, because they are the attributes of a God of peace and order. That is how Paul could say, *For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.* 1 Corinthians 14:33.
- Our God of peace sent his son on a mission to bring peace to humanity. And that mission included his death and resurrection, which was required to transform our chaotic and hateful world into a world filled with His peace and love. This could only be accomplished by the Prince of Peace. That is why . . .

Apart from Him, there is no peace

- This is obvious, but we need to be constantly reminded. Prior to Jesus, the world was far from peaceful. The truth is, we still don't necessarily have peace. But we have the promise of peace and we have what we talked about last week, which is a hope that will be fulfilled. And it will be. The Isaiah 9 passage refers to

Jesus' ever-increasing kingdom. God's love and His peace are spreading throughout the entire world. Light is reaching into dark places. And we get to participate in that plan – it's called the Great Commission.

- We get to spread the Good News. We get to share how . . .

Conclusion: We can know an all-encompassing peace because Jesus became our peace through His sacrifice on the Cross

- Micah 5 talked about the one who would come would be our peace. Paul expands on that in his letter to the Ephesians. Listen, *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.* Ephesians 2:14-18.
- Not only does the Prince of Peace bring us eternal life and peace with God, but notice how Paul shows how it filters out from us and begins to permeate our homes, our workplaces, and our relationships.
- Through the Baby in a manger, announced by the angels, God has entrusted us with a peace to pass on. He said it himself, *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.* John 14:27.
- Don't fear, we have the Prince of Peace. Amen.