God brings Peace

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Date: 10 December 2017

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[0:00] Chapter 2, we come to our fourth message on Advent, as we've been looking at this, the promise and the period of this time.

So, Luke chapter 2. If I could just set the background before I read, the promise of John the Baptist is the one who will be the forerunner to Jesus.
He will sort of pave the way, a bit like a human signpost to say, don't look at me, but look at the one who is to come. So, John the Baptist is promised, and that's important for a number of reasons, which we will see.
And now the birth of Christ has happened, and we're going to read a couple of verses. So, verse 8 through to 14 to begin with, chapter 2.
Now hear God's word. And in the same region there were shepherds in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear.
[1:22] And the angel said to them, fear not, for behold, I bring good news of great joy that will be for all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

And this will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.
And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly hosts, praising God and saying, glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace among those whom he is pleased.
If you would like to skip over to verse 22, this is where Mary and Joseph are taking their child according to the law.
And it says, And when the time came for the purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him, that's Jesus, up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord.
Every male who is first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord, and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons.
[2:33] Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was a righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel. And the Holy Spirit was upon him, and it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word.
Lord, for my eyes have seen your salvation, that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples a light for the revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.
And his father and mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed.
And a sword will pierce through your own soul also, so that the thoughts from many hearts may be revealed. Well, may God bless his word to us this morning, both the reading and the explanation of it.
[4:04] So this is the fourth message on Advent, and it might be worth by beginning with the fact that Advent is the end of silence.

We don't tend to think of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ as ending silence. The birth of John the Baptist, you could perhaps argue, ends silence more so, because he precedes Jesus to point people to Jesus.

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John the Baptist was born into this world, and God raised him up to be a prophet. And the reason why that's important is because John the Baptist would have the role of speaking to God's people on God's behalf after 400 years of silence.
It's been 400 years since God last did that in this account here. And perhaps you sit here this morning and go, do you know what, it's had a long time for me also.
But it shouldn't, because it's impossible for God to be silent for the Christian. God can no longer be silent. The Christian can no longer experience.
[5:19] You can feel periods of silence with God, but there's really no reason for it. The Bible overcomes it and overcomes it in many ways, and God the Holy Spirit given, is the assurance that God has overcome any period of silence.

But here it was real, definite silence. For 400 years, God had not communicated with his people. And strange things happen when silence occurs.
You begin to worry. You begin to doubt. You begin to wonder whether or not you heard correctly. And you phone the person up.
I mean, some people are so caught up in this, that when they send text messages and they don't get a reply, they send another text message saying, did you get my text message?
Now that, though it doesn't seem like a serious issue, actually indicates the type of person that you are when it comes to silence.
[6:25] The type of person that you are when it comes to not hearing and not being in contact. So imagine it with God, that God has made all these promises and then for 400 years he goes absolutely silent.

What do you do? Well, you can either be the type of person that holds on to the promises of God, or you can be the type of person that is thrown into doubt. And doubt is the very opposite of faith. And all doubt is caused by sin, the Bible says. Doubt is actually a spiritual issue. It's not an issue due to a lack of information. It's not an issue due to long periods of silence.
Doubt is caused by sin and Jesus has come to forgive us and remove sin from us. So there is no reason at this period of year, there is no reason if you are a believer, if you have come to the Lord Jesus Christ, to ever experience silence from God again.
Now you may feel it, but you shouldn't feel it. And perhaps that's another sermon. But in terms of everything that God has said, you are able to know.
[7:39] You can stop yourself from knowing, but God doesn't stop you from knowing. Here in Advent, God breaks the silence.

He brings John the Baptist into the world with a purpose to point people towards the Lord Jesus Christ and he brings Jesus Christ into the world for the very simple reason of bringing people to himself.
Now I've met quite a lot of people and I have quite a few friends who believe that they have too much intelligence to believe in God. That they have too much intelligence to believe in the God of the Bible or that God came into this world, into the person of Jesus.
But I'm quick to point out to them that it's really not intelligence that leads you to that conclusion. It's doubt. You doubt that God exists. You doubt that Jesus comes into the world.
You can intelligently prove that God didn't do it. And they will say to me, well, you can't intelligently prove that he did. And I said, no, because I live by faith, not by having to prove everything.
[8:42] Faith is like anything when you hear something a long time ago and then you're caught into this period of silence where there's nothing to prove what was said was true. You can either continue to believe it or you can just doubt it.

And that period of that call to believe what someone has told you. Now, of course, it depends on who's told you. But I'm pretty sure that if God makes a promise, then God is the sort of person that you ought to be able to believe.
Now, some other people might say something and you take their words with a pinch of salt because of their character. And so God reveals his character throughout the whole of Scripture. And one of the reasons that he does that is so that you know the person who's making the promises.
Your faith is then in the character of a person, not just in the words of the promise itself. And so when Jesus Christ comes, Jesus Christ comes and produces the kind of faith in us as we read it in his word.

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You asked me to explain why I believe this. I do. And I believe it because I believe that God through his word and through his spirit has caused me to believe it.
[9:58] And I think most of you sat here this morning will realize that if you analyze your faith just for a moment, that all fears are cast out, all fears are cast out in faith in God's word.

Now, that is as much a supernatural phenomenon event as the virgin birth, or sorry, the virgin conception as that.
And so what we have here is God breaking 400 years of silence with supernatural events. Now, I can't point to the star that led the wise men because it's not in the sky anymore.
I can't point to the angels that came down to the shepherds and started singing in front of them. Why? Because it only happened once. I can't take you to Mary because she's been and gone. She's now with the Lord. But I can't take you to her and say, look, here's a virgin that conceived. I can't do that. But I can call you to believe that God has invaded this world in such a way where it disrupts you just enough to put that stone in your shoe.
[11:10] And many of us, before we come to faith, know what that feels like. It's that little stone in their shoe that we try and shake out every now and then, or at least into a comfortable position, so that we're not bothered by it.

But soon enough, as we continue to walk, there it is again. It's bothering us all over again. And God, being God, tends to deal with us in that way. You know, we seem to have periods where God seems to leave us alone.
Perhaps we can call it a period of silence. But that's just because we've shaken it into a comfortable place within our shoe. And then all of a sudden, there it is again, bringing us, convicting us, challenging us to believe the claims that are presented here.
To put all of this really simply, given all the supernatural, given all the silence, given all the spectacular events, at the end of the day, to put this into a simple statement, it would be this. That God changes the world through one person, Jesus Christ. In the same way God changes you, God is going to change the world through Jesus.
[12:12] The advent of Christ is not just about doing something for you. The advent of Jesus Christ is about doing something for the world. And we tend to forget that.

We tend to personalize everything. That Jesus Christ came to take me to heaven. But God made me for earth. And the Bible explains that fairly clearly.
So we're going to look at this under two headings. The first is peace. What is peace? And the second is how is peace achieved? And the reason we pick on these two is because the angels, in their declaration, in their singing to the shepherds back in verse 14, are singing glory to God in the highest and on earth peace.
Peace. Now, they've not localized this peace. On earth, peace. Well, peace in my life? Okay. Peace in my neighborhood? Right. Okay. Peace in the nation?
Yeah. In the country? Okay. No. On earth, peace. We live in a world where we think, well, it doesn't look like God is a God of peace. It doesn't look like a lot of peace has come.
[13:21] Well, can we all agree that God hasn't finished yet? Right? We're not at the stage of the new heavens and the new earth yet. And so, everything's a work in progress.

We can appreciate that. Secondly, the peace is achieved. And this is crucially important to realize. So, firstly, what is peace?
And secondly, peace has to be achieved. If we pick up with Simeon, Simeon explains that the peace he has, he only has when he sees Lord Jesus Christ.
In verse 29, he says, Lord, now you're letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word. In other words, he describes Jesus Christ as the source of personal peace.
And then he goes on to describe, in verse 32, that Jesus Christ is the sort of peace for all groups of people, with Jews, Gentiles, for the nation, for everything.
[14:21] So, let's begin with the first one then. What is peace? Well, peace has to be brought. It has to be brought in from the outside.

It cannot just naturally grow. It has to be brought like a gift into the world. And therefore, peace is best understood in the context of reconciliation.
That peace, I have peace with God through what Jesus Christ has done. And I also have peace with you through what Jesus Christ has done. Peace is a person. And that person is Jesus.

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The only reason why anybody can get along in the new heavens and the new earth, the only reason we're not going to fall out there like we do down here, is because there is the perfect peace.
is because there is Jesus. I mean, you would never imagine all of us, perhaps, ever being together. Okay? But we are. And we are because of one person, the Lord Jesus Christ.
[15:21] Peace is not only vertical, as in between us and God, peace is horizontal between each other. And so when Paul describes peace in the terms of what Jesus does, he says God makes peace with the world God makes peace with you by giving his son who will make that peace at the cross.

The cross is the end to all hostile environments, all hostile circumstances between people and God. If there is to be peace on earth between people, as there is peace on earth between people and God, then that means that other people need to be able to come to God themselves.
I'm going to try and explain this in a slightly different, in a slightly different way. Christmas is a period of blessing, of peace, and argument.
Okay? I mean, we can't, we can't tend to avoid this, you know. We have Merry Christmas, everyone, hanging in the living room while the auntie is falling out with her nephew, or whoever it may be.
[16:36] Every blessing, everyone, don't sit me next to her. Right? Now, this is not unusual. This is not unusual because peace, we recognize peace doesn't just happen, and peace is a bit like trust.

It takes 10 years to build and one conversation to break. Okay? 10 years to build and one conversation to break. Peace is almost in the same way, it takes a lot, a lot to bring it.
I mean, the Lord Jesus Christ brings peace in his life, death, and resurrection. It takes a lot to achieve peace, but it doesn't seem to be able to take much to disrupt peace.
So, let's take for a moment, you're sat at home on Christmas, this time of blessing and joy and wonder, and you and your family member or a friend or a relative, suddenly, there it goes.
Okay? Now, we don't drink in our household, but I can imagine if you add alcohol into the mix that this goes from naught to 100 fairly quickly. Now, if you took those two people and you put them into another room all of a sudden, by going into another room, do you immediately walk into a period of peace?
[17:49] No. Why? Because you recognize that it's not the environment as such, but rather the people in the environment. So, here you are falling out with your friend or your mother or whoever it may, I can't believe you bought me that.

Do you not know who I am? You know, we've been married for 15 years, you have no idea what I like? You know, that doesn't happen, that was an illustration only. That happens after the first couple years of marriage where you're still trying to figure out whether or not you're single or married and then you buy your first Christmas present for your wife or a birthday present and they look at you as to say, do you not know who you've married?
You have no idea. But we bypass all of that and here you are. Does walking into another room immediately cause you to enter into a period of peace? No.
And you know it doesn't. Peace has to be brought. The scripture says don't let sun go down on an argument and only the ignorant thinks that this means you ought to stay up all night and argue until you have a winner.
Now there are people like that. Okay? They quote the Bible verse, we shouldn't let sun go down on an argument and then they say, we need to stay up and fight this one out. That's not what it means.
[19:04] It means, don't go to sleep until you've got to reconciliation. Don't go to sleep. Why? Because waking up the next morning doesn't cure it.

Just like going into another room doesn't mean that you can enter into peace in that way. And waking up the next day when you've gone to sleep in an argument doesn't mean that the argument has gone to sleep and failed to wake up the following day.
Peace is not achieved simply by the passing of time. what that happened is that it often gets buried under the carpet and then used as ammunition in a later argument.
But peace, true and lasting peace, is an act of reconciliation. It's an act of let's sort it out here. So imagine if God took the approach we took.
Who would win? Right? But he doesn't. God initiates peace. God recognizes that peace must be brought.

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[20:09] Peace is the act of reconciliation. It is about recognizing that this argument cannot continue without further detriment.

That this argument cannot continue to a point where we end up in a peaceful reconciliation. There are points where you have to stand back and recognize this is only going one way and it's going one way really fast.
And this is why saying sorry, I've said this before, you need to forget about saying sorry to each other. Because when it's sin you need to ask for forgiveness. I've often, this has come as great conviction to me and my family and we don't encourage anybody in our family now to say sorry. Sorry for things that aren't sins of course, sorry for spilling the milk or whatever it may be. But in terms when it's a sin, it's easy to say sorry as though you're paying your own debt.
But all sin is a debt that the sinner cannot pay. And so when a husband says to his wife, I'm sorry, he's simply trying to pay his own debt.
[21:17] And we all do that. We think that sorry is the quick road to reconciliation. It's not. Forgiveness is the road to reconciliation, not sorry.

sorry is like sin, let's just leave it there. Sorry is like sin, we'll bury it under the carpet, we won't talk about it, we'll just leave it there. That's not the road to reconciliation, that's a dead end.
Forgiveness, forgiveness that God explains in his word is the only road to reconciliation. It is the only road to true peace. People who say sorry are trying to pay their own debt.
People who ask forgiveness recognize that they cannot be made right without this person forgiving them. That's true reconciliation.
True reconciliation happens in forgiveness and only in forgiveness. How then is the peace achieved? You think, well, haven't we covered that?
[22:15] No, we haven't and here's why. Simeon verse 30 describes quite clearly that when he looks at the Lord Jesus Christ, he sees salvation.

For my eyes have seen your salvation, verse 31, that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples. My eyes have seen your salvation, he says.
It's important to understand here that true and lasting peace is only found in the Lord Jesus Christ. It cannot be found anywhere else.
And Simeon understands this. Now, he only understands it, of course, because God gave him the understanding. God gave him the Holy Spirit by which he could understand this. But he understands that now he can depart, now he can die in peace because he's seen the peace.
Now he can die knowing that salvation is taken care of because as he looks at Jesus Christ, he sees the source of all peace is the same as the source of all salvation, Jesus Christ.
[23:20] But then he adds this, verse 34, that Jesus Christ will be opposed. He will be appointed for the rise and fall of many.

And what that means is this, that you well know that in the face of Jesus Christ, some respond and others reject. some love and others turn their backs.
And Jesus will always be, and never anything else, either your greatest making or your biggest downfall.
So think about that. Jesus will either be your making or your downfall. And then he explains in verse 35 that Mary will experience the pain that only a mother can experience.
That as she sees her son, the sword that will pierce through his soul and hers also is the pain that she feels with her son being rejected. I spoke a couple of weeks ago that we can't even begin to imagine what might have went through Mary's mind.
[24:37] Can't even begin to imagine, but here Simon is preparing this new mother that she's going to experience great pain on behalf of her son, because her son, the God the son, is going to be rejected by others.

And that rejection leads to the cross, and that cross leads to death, of course it leads to the resurrection, but she will experience the pain that only a mother can experience when she sees the rejection of her son.
Now the lesson here is a fairly important one so I'll keep it short. Aristotle was a philosopher, a Greek philosopher. Now he said something that God said first, but he said it in such a way that people tend to think, oh that's interesting.
Aristotle believed that relationships could only work in a particular way and he spoke of this thing called the transcendent third. The transcendent third is super important and here's why.

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He says that only when two people fall in love with the same thing that is beyond them as individuals can their relationship last. That only when two people fall in love with something other than themselves and not each other.
[25:53] We tend to think that the making of a perfect relationship is if I love my wife and my wife loves me. That's not even close to being the start of a relationship.

Yet many relationships start in that way. Well I love her and she loves me, what's the problem? Well there's a big problem. It's a recipe for disaster. It's not a recipe for long-term relationship.
Now Aristotle understood this, the Bible understood it from day one. God taught this recipe from day one that all relationship is triune. All relationships are triune.
We belong to a triune God of scripture, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. And we tend to think in our ignorance that we can make relationships work outside of that trinity.
We think that relationships can work between two people. They can't. Okay? Because one of the reasons is I could love a person and that person could love me but over time they could stop loving me.
[26:53] So what brings two people together and keeps them together? Well Aristotle and God got there first saying you have to have a transcendent third. and this is what it looks like.

Imagine it this way. Two friends who together love their country. Two friends who together love goodness. Two friends who together love the same things.
Two friends who together love Jesus. That by their love for God and all that God has said their love for each other becomes automatic.
You cannot help but get to horizontal love because you've already got the vertical love. And what this means is that if I keep a close and clean life with God and I love God and I make sure that I do things God's way and my wife is exactly the same.
That her love for God is greater than her love for me which is exactly what it should be. It should be the very thing that I should encourage. You better love God more than you love me and I'm going to do everything I can to encourage that.
[28:00] Why does that safeguard my position? Well it safeguard my position for the simple reason that if she loves God and loves God's ways she's going to stick to them which means that in turn she will love her husband as God says to love her husband.

And the same applies to me. That horizontal relationship can only work out of a close and clean with a vertical relationship.
But we try and make relationships work on earth. It don't include that. They don't. If we claim that they do we're arguing for the very reason against the very reason for why God sent Jesus into this world.
The reason that he is the rise and the falling of many is because that if everybody loved Jesus and followed Jesus there would be peace on earth.
But there isn't peace on earth completely because not everybody loves God. So suddenly we see that in a relationship where God is the creator of the world then peace can only be achieved in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.
[29:11] So I want you to think about that. You want a lasting relationship with God. You want a lasting relationship with the people around you who belong to God. The only way to get there is to stay close to you.

It's like the man in Psalm 1. Okay? He is like a tree who bears fruit in its season. But trees don't eat their own fruit. The people around the trees eat their fruit.
As you stay close to God other people benefit from your close and clean life with God. And what Jesus Christ has come to do is to enter into the world to bring us close to him in order so that we can then be close to others.
That's the only way you can achieve peace on earth. There is no other way. Unless you completely deny that God is the creator of the world and he has nothing to do with it and let's make a go of it ourselves.
But seeing that God cannot be excluded and seeing that God is the creator of the world and seeing that Christ holds all things together we have to include him. And that means we have to include him in the issue of peace.
[30:15] In order for there to be true peace true and lasting peace it will be determined and your heart will be revealed by your response to Jesus Christ.

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That's it. Jesus is the revealer of hearts. Simeon then closes or he says this as he closes and we'll use this as the conclusion that in verse 32 that Jesus Christ is a light for some and a glory for others.
And what that means is this that in Simeon's day he knows that this news is new news. peace. And he also knows that for others they've been waiting for Jesus for a very long time.
They have been waiting for God to do something for a very long time. And the same is true in the world today. For us here this may not be new news. We know who God is.
But for others in the world they may not have any idea of what God has done to bring about peace and that Jesus is the source of peace because he is the source of salvation.
[31:21] salvation is God making peace with this world. So there is a time to respond and the time is now.

Jesus is the revealer of your heart. And so Jesus will either be the making of you or he will be your downfall. But he will be one.
He will be one. Either your making or your downfall. will be determined by your response to Jesus. Your whole life, not just with God, but with people in this world, will be determined by your response to Jesus. So come, come to Jesus.
Amen.

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