**Advent: The Church Welcomes Christ**

Finding Peace in Jesus . . . Or, Living Tranquilly Amid the Turmoil -- Luke 2:13-14

*Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,*

*“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”*

 No phrase is more associated with Christ’s birth than “Peace on Earth.” But two millennia have passed since Jesus came, and over the world, wars, conflicts, uncertainty, and instability continue unchecked. Murder and violence abound. Human hearts are often anxious, fearful, impatient, and hard. It doesn’t take a cynic to ask just what that angel meant. Where is the peace? Let’s explore the question.

**The Fountain of Peace:** Faith. The road to peace winds through the land of faith. And what is that? In a word, ***Faith is the practical application of God’s promises to the present situation.”*** So, how does faith work?

Faith hears God’s word, believes it, and then applies it. Most so called “faith” is not worthy of the name, since it is based upon what we want rather than what God said. Faith is not a mystical feeling we conjure in some “religious” mood, but it is the process (mental, emotional, spiritual work) whereby we discover what God has said that applies to our given circumstance. So, peace is not a free-floating spiritual mirage, nor a force that suddenly “zaps” our anxiety. Peace is a byproduct of our embracing and trusting a promise. The shepherds heard, followed instructions, saw the proof, rejoiced, and told others. Had they not believed God, their lives would not have changed. Faith enjoys peace by banqueting upon God’s promises.

**The Foe of Peace:** Sin. What short-circuits our peace?

Since peace is a gift from God, it is not compatible with rebellion against Him. It is pointless to wonder why we have no peace while at the same time we are ignorant of or antagonistic towards the One who gives it. The prodigal found peace when he was back home; his self-righteous older brother never did. Psalm 32:1-7; 66:16-20; Isaiah 57:14-21; 59:1-8

* Have I confessed honestly to God my past sins?
* Am I engaging in known and willful sin?
* Am I holding a grudge against anyone, refusing to reconcile?
* Am I living in fear because I choose not to trust God?
* Am I trusting fully in God’s grace, not my own works?

**The Foundation of Peace:** Promise. What has God said?

We can identify different ways God has promised “peace”. . .

1. Peace with God: Peace through full and free pardon. Romans 5:2

2. Peace of God: Peace through a prayerful choice. Philippians 4:4-7

3. Peace with others: Peace through peacemaking. Matt. 5:9; Jas. 3:13-18

4. Peace of Presence: Peace through intimacy with Jesus. John 14:15-27

***So what do we do to find peace in our lives?***

*1. Peace is a byproduct of right thinking.*

Confusion and conflict come from warped thinking; peace comes from truth. When we stop lying to ourselves, we enter the path of peace. 1 Corinthians 14:33

*2.* *Peace is a byproduct of righteous living.*

When we practice the presence of Jesus, we discover our behavior improved, our burdens, our resources infinite. The God of Creation is for us. Romans 8:31-39

*3. Peace is fruit of the Spirit.*

When we walk in the Spirit, He calms and reassures. Galatians 5:22, 23