

ON EARTH PEACE, GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN

TEXT: LUKE 2:8-20

INTRODUCTION:

1. My brother called me the other day to tell me his daughter was on the television show "Saturday Night Live," and then afterwards, the "Today" show, and some other shows.
2. She is part of a choir called the "New York City Children's Chorus," and they were asked to sing "Silent Night" on "SNL."
3. This performance was very unusual for a worldly comedy show but the producers did it because of the horrible massacre in CT, which took place the day before.
4. Isn't it sad that it is only after terrible school shootings, or the September 11 terrorist attacks, that worldlings decide it is okay to pray or read the Bible or sing hymns?
5. Mike Huckabee said, "We've created an atmosphere in this country where the only time you want to invoke God's name is after the tragedy." He is right about that!
6. A few years ago, a Wisconsin elementary school put on their annual "winter program" (it used to be called a "Christmas program"), and they changed the words to "Silent Night." They called their new revised song called, "Cold in the Night."
*Cold in the night,
no one in sight.
Winter winds, whirl and bite.
How I wish I were happy and warm,
safe with my family out of the storm....*
6. Nauseating indeed! This was the new, secularized "Silent Night." For the school's "winter program," there could be no mention of "Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia! Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!" Those words might offend some God-hater!
7. Vulgar, filthy curse words are now acceptable, but Jesus Christ is not allowed. Taking God's name in vain is allowed, but singing "Silent Night" is not.
8. By the way, the Bible says, "for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Ex. 20:7).
9. Luke 2:13 and 14 says, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

10. These words have troubled people -- "and on earth peace, good will toward men." These words seem strange when we think of the awful condition our world is in. When some maniac kills his own mother, and then walks into an elementary school and kills twenty innocent children and six adults, people ask, "Peace on earth, good will toward men"?

11. The great poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote the famous Christmas hymn, "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." He wrote:

And in despair I bowed my head:

"There is no peace on earth" I said,

For hate is strong, and mocks the song

Of peace on earth, good will to men.

12. But the angel said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). Therefore, it must be true.

13. This is the answer to this perplexing question: peace on earth is impossible without "the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6, 7).

14. But since most people have refused the Prince of Peace, and have rejected Him, the world remains in its unhappy condition.

15. Again, I will quote Mike Huckabee: "We've escorted [God] right out of our culture and marched him off the public square. And then we express our surprise that a culture without him actually reflects what it has become."

I. THERE CAN BE NO PEACE FOR THE WICKED (ISA. 48:22; 57:20, 21).

1. Sinners hate God, and because they hate God there can be no peace.
2. Psalm 81:15 says, "The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him." They should, but they won't.
3. Our Lord said in Luke 19:14, "But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us."
4. Today, rebellious sinners are shaking their fists at God and saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us." They refuse to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. Psalm 2 says, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Psalm 2:1-3).

6. This attack on Christmas is a frontal assault on the Lord Jesus Christ. God-haters hate Christmas because it reminds them of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.
7. They do not want to be reminded that He was born to a virgin.
8. They do not want to be reminded that His birth fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies (cf. Isaiah 7:14).
9. They do not want to be reminded that He came into this world to die on the cross for our sins.
10. In Romans Chapter 1, the apostle Paul describes man's sinful condition -- Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God..." (Rom. 1:29, 30).
11. There will be no peace on earth as long as these "haters of God" pursue their war with God (cf. Isa. 59:7, 8).

II. SINFUL MEN NEED A SAVIOUR (LUKE 2:10, 11).

1. This is "good tidings of great joy" (Luke 2:10), i.e., the Gospel, the "good news" that Jesus died for our sins and rose victoriously from the grave.
2. John 3:17 says, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."
3. In John 12:47, Jesus said, "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."
4. Men have a choice -- they can repent and believe in Jesus, or they can refuse to believe in Him. John 3:18 says, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."
5. John 3:36 says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."
6. The wrath of God abideth on each and every person who does not have Christ. This is why there is no peace on earth at this time.
7. There will be peace on earth when the Prince of Peace returns to earth. The first time He came to die on the cross for our sins. The second time He will come in judgment (cf. II Thess. 1:7-9). Now is the time to get right with God!
8. Many years ago, the great statesman William Jennings Bryan said, "I am glad that He, who is called the Prince of Peace, can bring peace

to every troubled heart and whose teachings, exemplified in life, will bring peace between man and man, between community and community, between State and State, between nation and nation throughout the world."

III. MAN HAS TO FIRST MAKE PEACE WITH GOD BEFORE HE CAN EXPERIENCE THE PEACE OF GOD.

1. The Bible says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). Have you experienced this peace? Have you been justified by faith?
2. This peace with God can only come "by faith" (Rom. 5:1, 2).
3. Our faith must be based upon the substitutionary death of Christ (Rom. 5:6-9).
4. Have you been "saved from wrath through Him" (Rom. 5:9)? If not, you can never experience peace with God. In fact, the Bible says: "There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked" (Isa. 48:22; cf. 57:20, 21).
5. The Bible says man is a rebel at war with God. The Bible says that before our conversion "we were enemies" with God (Rom. 5:10).
6. According to the Bible, all those without Christ are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). That is why Jesus said we must be born again.
7. Romans 3:23 says: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."
8. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
9. Only after a sinner is born again, only after he repents of his sin, and receives the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour – only then is he able to make peace with God.
10. Then he can truly understand the words of the heavenly host: "And on earth peace, good will toward men."
11. Then, and only then, can he be reconciled to God. Romans 5:10 says, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."
12. To be reconciled means to bring into harmony. The great hymn writer, Charles Wesley, put it this way: "Peace on earth, and mercy mild: God and sinners reconciled."

CONCLUSION:

1. Let us turn back to our text (Luke 2:14, 15).
2. The shepherds said, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem..." The name Bethlehem is precious to every Christian. It is the birthplace of our Saviour.
3. Way back in 1247 a hospital was opened in London, England named "Bethlehem Hospital." Two centuries later it was turned into a mental hospital for the insane.
4. Back in those days, mental patients were chained and they could be heard for miles around screaming and crying. Bethlehem Hospital became known for noise and confusion, and later the name was corrupted into "Bedlam Hospital."
5. Eventually the word *bedlam* became synonymous with wild uproar and chaos, disorder and confusion, turmoil and pandemonium.
6. How sad that a beautiful place like Bethlehem, a name associated with the birth of our Lord, could degenerate into a horrible place of bedlam!
7. But that is the way the world is – they take something good and beautiful and peaceful, and ruin it and defile it and eventually destroy it.
8. Last week, a young maniac turned a quiet and peaceful elementary school into a killing field.
9. This Christmas I hope you have your eyes on Jesus and not on the bedlam of this world. Then you can experience "peace, good will toward men."