

PEACE? WHAT PEACE?

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: Luke 2:1-20.

Angels are not naïve. They are beings of great power and great intelligence. God is not naïve either. He has wisdom and foreknowledge. If He sends angels to say that there is to be 'peace', He knows what He is saying. He is not lacking in credibility. So what does He mean when He (through the angels) says it?

1. What peace?

'Peace' is not a description of the world today. Neither was it a description of the world existing when first announced. The world then was full of violence, greed, corruption, conquest and slavery. There was a high incidence of child mortality and the practice of infanticide. There was relative calm under the Emperor Augustus, but this period of rule had emerged from battles and rivalries. The people in Judah were not enjoying a time of peace. They were a troubled people, enduring occupation, their hopes of progress dashed.

Neither is there peace now. There are wars in parts of the world such as Tigray in Ethiopia. There are fears that there might be a war in Ukraine. There is violent Islamism in many parts of the world with many people dying or living in fear or having loved ones kidnapped. In our own country, the bitter harvest of lockdowns has begun to emerge with court cases now reaching the public arena disclosing horrendous child abuse. There are the corrosive effects of lying by those in high office.

In the light of all this, people might wonder what the angels are saying.

2. A statement of intent.

God is speaking 'peace' to a fallen and violent world. He is announcing what will be. He is bringing into the strife the blessings of peace.

For all the difficulties between people and nations are a sign of a deeper strife – our battle against our Maker. This is a war we are waging but cannot win. There is no competition, but we are emboldened to continue it by the patience of God, refraining from bringing the judgments He might against such brazen wickedness. We are showing our contempt for God when we fail to pray; or believe His warnings and His promises; or think it is worth finding out the will of God in the Bible. The Scriptures show us what the

intention and plan of God is for the future. We should be disturbed to find that we are on the wrong side of history.

Yet the Lord is declaring to us that He will change all this. He will create the peace that is missing. He will do it by removing the obstacle that stands between us and our holy Judge - our sin. He will personally remove our guilt and pay out His wrath against our sin on His Son. He will hold His Son to account for our behaviour and attitudes, both toward Himself and each other.

Through His Son's work on our behalf, He will give us new hearts to obey and love Him. We will delight to do the will of God. His Son's death, resurrection and reign will accomplish this.

The Son performs a transformative work on us. He paves the way for the work of the Holy Spirit in us. We now enjoy the favour of God. Peace has been established by the Lord Himself. He can announce peace because that is what He intends to create.

3. See the results!

This Christmas gift will still have value in a year's time. It is still giving peace to this very day. People who become Christians become less violent and more peaceful. Drunkards become sober. Selfish people become more caring and more involved in the lives of others. Lazy people become more hard-working. Driven people slow down and learn to be more thoughtful. Husbands gain wives and wives gain husbands. Enemies become friends. Peace is what the Lord announces will come and peace is what is produced in human relationships.