



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V26 N50 December 15, 2024

CHRISTMAS PLAYLIST

“The Angel's Song: Peace on Earth”

Luke 2:8-15

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Peace

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6-7



When will we see “peace on earth”?



The familiar Christmas carol “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day” was written on Christmas Day, 1863 by American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Henry had heard the bells of a nearby church ringing on that holiday, causing him to ruminate upon the message of peace delivered by angels on the first Christmas. Longfellow lived during America’s bitter Civil War and had learned earlier that December that his own son, Second Lieutenant Charles Longfellow of the Union Army, had been severely injured in fierce fighting. Longfellow penned his lyrics about “peace on earth” in the presence of debilitating war. One of his stanzas, tinged with melancholy, stated:

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!”

The message of “Peace on Earth” is considered by many to be wishful thinking. The Christian message can easily be dismissed by many as ineffectual because of the presence of worldwide conflict. The lack of current peace does not cancel the expectation of future peace. We believe that “peace on earth” will ultimately come when the “Prince of Peace” (Is 9:6) returns to establish his reign upon the earth in his second coming. Peace, until then, can be realized personally and partially, providing a foretaste of a coming peace that is to be permanent. Longfellow resolved his carol’s tension by observing:

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
“God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail, The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men.”

A biblical treatment of “peace” is helpful as we grapple with this tension of “peace” in a world of conflict. Talbert observes: “In the Jewish culture from which Christianity came,

peace (*shalom* in Hebrew; *eirene* in Greek) meant basically wholeness, the normal state of life that corresponds to the will of God. Such wholeness would characterize the basic relations of life: (a) the relation of persons and God, (b) the relation of persons with one another, (c) the relation of persons with the natural world, and (d) one’s relation with oneself. This wholeness meant well-being in contrast to evil in any form. It was the gift of God. Given human sin, however, this wholeness was lost. Peace, then, became an eschatological hope (Zech 9:9-10) and the messianic figure the prince of peace (Isa 9:6).

“In the NT, peace reflects these Jewish roots. It refers, therefore, both to the normal state of life in line with God’s will and to the eschatological salvation. As such it involves wholeness in the relation with God (e.g., Rom 5:1; Col 1:20; Eph 2:14, 17), wholeness in the relation of people with one another (e.g., Mark 9:50; 1 Cor 7:15; Eph 2:14-17; 4:3), wholeness in the relation to the physical world (e.g., Mark 5:34), and wholeness in one’s relation with oneself (Rom 8:6; 15:13; Gal 5:22; Phil 4:7; Col 3:15; John 14:27).

“... The messianic salvation is described as the way of peace (1:79). Jesus Christ is said to have preached the good news of peace (Acts 10:36). This peace associated with God’s acts in Jesus involves recovered wholeness in the relation of a person with God (Luke 7:50), wholeness in the relation with the physical world (8:48), and wholeness in the relations among persons (Acts 9:31). ... This good news, moreover, is for ‘all the people’ (v. 10), outcast as well as in-group. ... The messianic Lord is the friend of sinners (5:29-32; 7:36-50; 10:30-37; 15:1-2; 17:11-19; 19:1-10). It is to sinners Jesus promises good news (18:9-14; 15:11-32). The news that Jesus’ birth signals the benefit of peace is intended for all the people” (C.H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel*, 35).

Read Luke 2:8-15

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

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

14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle each mention of "angel" in this passage.
- Above the word "them" (v.9), write the reference "see v. 8."
- Draw a line connecting the words "glory" in this passage.
- Double underline the word "terrified" in v. 9.
- Draw a box around the contrastive word in v. 10.
- Underline what the angel brings in v. 10.
- Double underline the phrase showing the effect of what angel brought (v.10).
- Triple underline the word "Today" in v. 11.
- Double circle each specific detail of the angel's message in v. 11.
- Draw an arrow from the word "sign" in v. 12 to the phrase that makes up that sign.
- Draw a box around the word "Suddenly" in v. 13.
- Underline what the "heavenly host" are doing in v. 13.
- Draw a line connecting "heavenly" (v.13) and "heaven" (v.14).
- Draw a line from "earth" (v. 14) and "all people" (v. 10).

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. How does “glory” (vv. 9, 13) influence the story of Luke 2:9-14?
2. How does the message of the angel speak to the fear of the shepherds?
3. What is included in the “good news” that the angel brought to the shepherds?
4. Who benefits from the message of “good news” brought by the angel?
5. Unpack the significance of the details of v. 11.
6. How is v. 12 a sign?
7. Why do you think “a great company of the heavenly host” suddenly appeared (v. 13)?
8. What is contrasted in v. 14? What does this contrast suggest?
9. How do “peace” and “favor” (v. 14) relate to each other?
10. Angels play a large role in the Christmas story (Mt 1:20; 2:13,19; Lk 1:11, 26; 2:9). What does the angel’s message (Lk 2:9-14) contribute to your understanding of Christmas?

As Luke tells the story of Jesus' birth, he incorporates a number of poetic expressions that celebrate the coming of the promised Messiah. These poems are "song-like" and express joy, a common theme in the book. "Luke's Gospel is a singing Gospel. It resounds with the music of praise to God. Early on we find the *Magnificat* (1:46-55), the *Benedictus* (1:68-79), the *Nunc Dimittis* (2:29-32), and the *Gloria* (2:14). The verb rejoice is found in Luke more than in any other book in the New Testament. Likewise joy occurs regularly. There is joy in Zacchaeus' receiving Jesus. There is joy on earth in the finding of the lost sheep and the lost coin, and there is joy in Heaven when lost sinners are found. The Gospel ends just as it began – with rejoicing. Luke the historian will make you certain about the Gospel. Luke the theologian will touch you with God's love and grace. Luke the physician will help you to love people. Luke the musician will set your heart to singing" (R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, 17-18).

The appearance of angels or heavenly messengers is also a regular feature in the birth narrative of Jesus. Luke records three appearances of angels. The third and final appearance of angels in the opening chapters of Luke is unique in that it records the lyrical communication of the angels' worship expressed by themselves. In the other two angel stories in Luke, the message of the angel incites a human expression of praise. When the Messiah is actually born, the angels cannot contain themselves and burst out with their own worship and praise. The *Gloria* of the angels (Lk 2:13-14) acts as a climactic crescendo for the good news that has come. When heaven sings, the spectacular has happened!

The contrast of dark night (Lk 2:8) and the brightness of God's glory (Lk 2:9) set the stage for a spectacular exchange between heaven and earth. The lowliness of a stable and manger (Lk 2:7, 12) and the presence of outdoor shepherds (Lk 2:8) is starkly contrasted with the highest of heavens and the appearance of the multitudes of heavenly hosts (Lk 2:9-14). So shocking is the appearance of the angels in this scene that the lowly shepherds are described as "terrified," or more literally "fearing a great fear" (Lk 2:9). The angel of the Lord calms the quaking shepherds with the encouragement to "not be afraid" but rather receive the "good news" heralded by the messenger from heaven.

The message of this "good news" (Lk 2:11) is succinct, but loaded with meaning. The impact of the message is immediate ("Today"). The focus of the message is personal and direct ("to you"). The location of the direction is specific and significant ("town of David"). The content of the message is saturated with theology. A "Savior-Messiah-Lord" was born. Perhaps the shepherds are more overwhelmed by this weight of this message than even the glorious nature of its delivery.

After a sign or proof of this message is given (Lk 2:12), "suddenly" (Lk 2:13) the angel of the Lord, already shrouded with God's glory, is surrounded with a "great company of the heavenly host." An army of an-

gels then begins to praise God. The shepherds are most likely overwhelmed with the vast number of these heavenly witnesses and the loud volume of their praise. The chorus of this multitude of angels is Glory and Peace. God is to be praised with the highest of all praise for all he has done in the sending of this Savior. The earth is to experience peace as a result of the Savior's arrival. Ironically, an army of heaven proclaims peace upon earth. So great is this achievement of this birth of the Savior that it rivals even the great accomplishments of Caesar. "What is good news about Jesus' birth? Why should it be regarded as a great joy? Two items of background information serve as a bridge to our answers. (1) In the Mediterranean world the birthday of a ruler was sometimes celebrated with a proclamation of the benefits of his birth. An inscription found at *Priene*, celebrating the birthday of Augustus in 9 BC, reads in part, 'Providence ... has brought into the world Augustus and filled him with a hero's soul for the benefit of mankind. A Savior for us and our descendents, he will make wars to cease and order all things well. The epiphany of Caesar has brought to fulfillment past hopes and dreams' (Danker, 24). Here Augustus fulfills ancient hopes and brings peace. These benefits are proclaimed on his birthday. (2) In biblical literature heavenly choirs sometimes celebrate future events as though they were already fact (e.g., Rev 5:9-10; 11:17-18; 18:2-3; 19:1-2, 6-8); their song proclaims the benefits that are to ensue: 2:13-14 employs such a heavenly choir. A multitude of heavenly host sing, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased' (v. 14; 1QH 4.32-33; 11.9). The one who has fulfilled the ancient hopes expressed in the prophecies of Scripture is acclaimed as one whose birth will bring glory to God and peace to people on earth. Like Augustus, Jesus has on his birthday a proclamation of the benefits of his birth" (Talbert, 34).

The peace that comes to the earth as a result of the coming of this Savior-Messiah-Lord is said to come to those "on whom his favor rests" (Lk 2:14 NIV). This message of peace impacts all people (Lk 2:10), but comes through or rests upon those who find favor with God. This favor is not due to the accomplishments of the favored. Rather favor comes from the Giver of favor. The good news of the Savior must be embraced by faith to experience the full effect of its resulting peace. Peace on earth only comes to those who have "made peace with God" (Rm 5:1). To "make peace with God" is to accept the offer of his salvation through the Savior that has been born as both Messiah and Lord. The shepherds do not question or object to the message of the angels. They hurriedly go to Bethlehem to see what had happened (Lk 2:15-16) and begin to share the good news they had embraced with all around them (Lk 2:17-18). Recipients of peace share that peace with the world. Peace on earth comes through those who have embraced the Prince of Peace (Is 9:6) who is the child born for us in the town of David, a Savior, Christ the Lord.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 9 **angel** “The ‘angel of the Lord’ (2:9) is probably a reference to the personal servant of God already known to us, Gabriel (1:11, 19, 26), but here he is joined by ‘a multitude of the heavenly host’ (2:13). Given the respect assigned earlier to the Jerusalem temple and particularly to its sanctuary as the axis mundi – the meeting place between the heavenly and the earthly, the divine and the human – this appearance of the divine glory is remarkable. God’s glory, normally associated with the temple, is now manifest on a farm! At the birth of his son, God has compromised (in a proleptic way) the socio-religious importance of the temple as the culture center of the world of Israel” (Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, 131).

v. 9 **glory** “With the angel of the Lord appears ‘the glory of the Lord’ (v. 9). The Hebrew word for ‘glory,’ *kabod*, means ‘weight,’ that which is heavy and substantial, whereas the Greek word for ‘glory,’ *doxa*, is nonmaterial, meaning ‘splendor’ or ‘brightness.’ Despite the different connotations of *kabod* and *doxa*, both are associated with radiant light. Luke describes the flash of light at Paul’s conversion (Acts 26:13) with the same word for the radiance of the Lord here. The antiphony between light and darkness may reflect Isa 9:2, for Luke artfully contrasts human darkness in v. 8 and divine light in v. 9” (James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, Pillar New Testament Commentary, 75).

v. 10 **good news** “The good news is that of the ‘evangel,’ the gospel. See also 1:19; 3:18; 4:18, 43; 7:22; 8:1; 9:6; 16:16; 20:1. Though the verb to bring good news was used first in the general sense of bringing good news of any kind, it was later going to be used especially to indicate the bringing of the good news of salvation through Christ” (William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, vol. 11, New Testament Commentary, 152).

v. 11 **Today** “Appears at least eleven times out of Luke’s twenty uses with a force that points to special acts of God in the program. The theme begins with the announcement of Jesus’ birth (Luke 2:11) as a Savior born in the city of David ‘today.’ In Jesus’ synagogue speech, in which the Galilean outlines his mission, he speaks of Isa 61:1–2a and 58:6 as being fulfilled ‘today’ (Luke 4:21). ... This emphasis on ‘today,’ besides underscoring fulfillment, also highlights the immediacy and availability of that blessing. Right now God makes available such blessings and promises” (Darrell L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts: Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, Biblical Theology of the NT, 135).

v. 11 **Christ** “The word ‘Christ’ is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word ‘messiah.’ Both words mean ‘anointed.’ To be anointed means to be recognized and consecrated in some special capacity, usually as king, and usually as God’s agent. This word, of course, was

the common title applied to the person whom God would someday raise up as Israel’s deliverer. Therefore, to announce that the Messiah was born would be to announce the arrival of the day of Israel’s deliverance. Such ‘deliverance’ was normally understood in a military sense. ... Luke’s readers must wait in suspense, wondering (as does Mary in 2:19) what all these things mean” (Craig A. Evans, *Luke*, Understanding the Bible Commentary, 37).

v. 11 **Lord** “The use of *κύριος* for Jesus has occurred so far only in 1:43, where it indicates that Elizabeth realizes that Jesus is a more significant figure than John the Baptist. Otherwise, the term in the infancy material (e.g., 1:16, 46, 68, 76) is used of God as sovereign deity, which fits its predominant OT usage. For Luke this title will become the key christological term to describe Jesus (Luke 20:41–44; Acts 2:33–36), and these later texts will define what *κύριος* means. For now, Luke is content merely to present the term from the angelic announcement and not explain it. Thus, it here serves a literary foretaste of what is to come. The term will clearly come to refer to the absolute sovereignty and divine relationship that Jesus possesses as the one who brings salvation” (Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 1:1–9:50*, vol. 1, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 218).

v. 11 **town** “‘In David’s city’ is vastly more significant to the shepherds than ‘in Bethlehem’ would have been, for the king’s name and his ancient home recall all the Messianic promises made to David. While it modifies the emphatic verb [‘is born’] at the head of the sentence, the phrase, which is placed entirely at the end [‘in Greek’], is equally emphatic. Born is the Savior, Christ, and Lord in David’s city” (R.C.H. Lenski, *St. Luke’s Gospel*, Lenski’s Commentary on the New Testament, 132).

v. 12 **sign** “The combination of a newborn baby’s wrappings and the use of the manger for a crib would be a distinctive ‘sign.’ ... If one moves further in the Lukan narrative, this ‘sign’ may also point to the burial scene of Jesus, in which linen becomes yet another ‘sign’” (Walter L. Liefeld and David W. Pao, “Luke,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Luke–Acts*, vol. 10, 79).

v. 13 **host** “‘host’ (*στρατιᾶς*) is a military term applied to God’s attendants. This heavenly army does not come to wreak desolation and terror but to announce good tidings and peace and to give glory to God (Ps 148)” (D.E. Garland, *Luke*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the NT, 123).

v. 14 **favor** “A technical phrase in first-century Judaism for God’s elect, those on whom God has poured out his favor. In this context, God’s elect would be the God-fearers mentioned in the *Magnificat* (1:50–53), those who will respond to Jesus’ coming. ... In summary, the angelic praise contains two basic ideas: (1) the heavens rejoice and praise God for salvation’s outworking and (2) the people to whom God draws near through Jesus will experience the harmony and benefits that God bestows on his own” (Bock, 220).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Glorify God and embrace his gift of peace who is Jesus, the one born as Savior, Christ and Lord.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



PARENT CONNECTION

The Christmas season should be a time when we settle down, enjoy the company of our friends and family and celebrate the birth of our risen Savior. Uh-oh. Looks like the Christmas train has jumped the tracks and we've completely derailed. The calendar is overfull, there's no money in the budget for gifts, and please explain why so many people decided to wake up and choose grumpy?! You might be thinking you just need a little peace and quiet, but what you're really wanting is the absence of strife and chaos. You might be thinking you need to hit the pressure release button, but without a safe release, you're likely to explode. The reality of peace doesn't hinge on our circumstances. It's trusting the Lord through these circumstances, even if they are six and eight years old, have endless energy and wreck your home like a spring tornado all while fighting over the most ridiculous things like who sits in the special chair in the living room. Maybe you do need to pare down the holiday events or brush off the pressure to buy gifts that amaze; it certainly won't hurt. But give yourself permission to shift your focus to something greater, like the birth of our Savior. I imagine the circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth were far crazier and more chaotic than we could ever imagine, but out of that chaos came the peace that surpasses all understanding. Take some time this week to read through the Christmas story from Luke. Imagine the angels' song of praise. Give God glory today for sending us His Son and giving us the gift of peace.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Luke 2:9-14

1. Who appeared to the shepherds?
2. What did the angels bring?
3. What did the angels sing?

What Do You Think?

Why is Jesus' birth something that offers peace?

What Do You Do?

When we worship God, we focus on His goodness. With your family, create a holiday worship playlist and enjoy singing songs together.

CORE COMPETENCY: Peace

I live without worry because things are good between God, myself and others.

MEMORY VERSE: Isaiah 9:6

"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."

KidPIXCOUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week's verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.