

Unexpected Peace

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Luke 2:1-20

Speaker: Joel Greenwood

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Tonight's Christmas Eve service message was just going to be a short one anyway. And you know, then we had to make the decision. Are we going to cancel service? Are we not going to cancel service? And I woke up this morning with just anxiety, about the decision that needed to be made, knowing that there were a lot of people that were waiting to know or are we going to? Are we not going to? Of course, the people that were going to be on the stage helping to perform and lead us in worship, as well as the many families that this is a tradition. They get together on Christmas Eve.

And my message was going to be a message about peace. An unexpected piece that Jesus brought into this world when he came, and this morning, I had anything but peace in my heart. As God was speaking to me, and I was thinking about everything that needed to happen and the decisions that needed to be made and then my son took a shower and my wife started doing dishes and the hot water heater broke this morning at my house.

And so again, no peace in my life and I go down there and I try to look at it and I don't know anything about hot water heaters and so I, you know, take a little bit apart and I put it back together and by God's grace, that started working again. But then I hear this loud clunking outside my house and I had heard it last night and I'm like, okay, I know I need to go out and check that out and I had forgotten to empty The Rain barrels that we have around our House. This fall.

I almost always turn them upside down and I had forgotten to do that and so of course they were full of water, which was now completely a solid thing of ice. So heavy I couldn't even move them and some of the drain work that I had going to them had water in them as well. And so I thought the wind was grabbing those and they were knocking into House. So I had to take those down. And then in the midst of all of that, I'm trying to be a husband and a dad because it's Christmas Eve, right? And so we're going to watch some Christmas movies and maybe play some games and eat and my mind is just filled with stress and we decide to cancel the service.

I know you didn't get to hear that. Those of you online because I didn't have my microphone on. But we canceled the service and so many of you are joining us online, which is great, but we also have people that decided to come anyway. And so here we are on Christmas Eve and I'm supposed to do a message about peace when the whole day I've had nothing but anxiety running through my blood and I feel like God was saying, Joel, this is exactly why you needed to do this message on peace. Because Jesus came into this world to give us peace.

He knew it was a broken world. He knows that we still live in a broken world. And it's not just broken physically. It's broken spiritually and mentally. And the world that Jesus stepped into 2000 years ago was a world that was filled with famine. It was filled with war and death and suffering, mental illness, spiritual darkness, fear, anxiety, the world was anything but peaceful. And so Jesus came as a baby to bring peace.

Now think about our world today. It's not much different. 2000 years later, we still live in a world where we see people that are going hungry. We see war and we see mental illness. We certainly see financial struggles

as we're constantly talking about the economy and we're in a recession and all of these other things. We certainly see and experience relational heartbreak, persecution, political strife in the world in which we live disease, not to mention relationships that are broken and strained.

And yet, Jesus comes into our life tonight on Christmas Eve, and he says, to me, and he says to you, I offer you my peace. I give you my peace. Now maybe you came to service tonight or you're watching online because it's a tradition. And so you said, you know what? It's just something. We always do as a family and so we are going to go to Christmas Eve service. Maybe you came tonight or you're watching online for your kids. And you thought to yourself, you know what? I'll just have to endure it.

But I love that I'm watching online 'cause I can play with my phone, right? And not have to worry about getting caught by the pastor. Maybe you came tonight or you're watching online because your mom or your dad made you. You didn't have a choice. And so here you are on Christmas Eve. Maybe you came tonight. Maybe you're here. Maybe you're watching online because this was your last hope. You are going to be alone for Christmas. And so you thought to yourself, you know what, at least I can be around others or I can feel a sense of community by joining others online. And so you have joined for that reason.

Maybe you're here tonight because it's your job and you had to because I did call some of the staff. I said, you have to come in. We have to do this. But I know them too well. I know that they are not here for that reason, but I do want to offer a special thanks to Sam and his brother Austin for leading us in worship, whether you're here or online. Michelle is running the slides in the back. Jake is running the soundboard and Malachi Compton is here and he was running the video and he's still doing that, switching between the cameras and Mark was here also leading us in worship.

And so I thank them for that. Maybe you came tonight to take a small break from running around the house. Maybe you have guests or family over. Maybe you're watching online and you've been doing nothing but cleaning and cooking and everything else because your house is the home where everybody comes. And so you just needed a break. But I am here to tell you that whether you're here tonight or watching online that you're here for a reason. And I think it's because you need to hear this. Jesus is saying, I love you.

I love you. I care for you. I would do anything for you. Now, some of you might be thinking, how can you say that, pastor Joel, you know, we're just here visiting, we just happened to drive by. And we saw cars, and so we came in, or maybe you're watching online with family, and I don't have any idea who you are. But how is it that I could be confident to say those words that Jesus loves you? You might be thinking, you have no idea what I've done pastor. There's no way that Jesus could love me. And you're correct.

I don't have any idea what you've done. I don't know what's in your past. I don't know the skeletons in your closet, but there's one thing I do know. And that's I know what Jesus did. I might not know what you have done, but I know what Jesus did. And I know that if you will submit your life to him, that he will pour your his spirit on you in a way that you've never experienced before. And I know that, because that's what he's done for me. I know that I can say with confidence that Jesus loves you. More than you will ever understand.

Because here we are on Christmas. If God didn't love you, he wouldn't have sent his son Jesus into the world to begin with. We wouldn't have a Christmas. We wouldn't be celebrating the arrival of a baby in a town of Bethlehem. If Jesus didn't love you, then he wouldn't have come. He wouldn't have given up this, a mansion, right? Living in heaven and all of his glory, everything that he ever could want or desire was there. He gave up that for this a manger. Think about that.

The fact that Jesus was willing to go from a mansion to a manger and eventually to a cross. Gives me great confidence to be able to say he loves you. More than we could ever know. And I also believe that God during this season wants you to find peace amid your chaos. I think he was trying to teach me that lesson as well.

This morning and throughout today and even this evening, that he wants me to have peace. He wants me to do more than just survive this life that he has given to me.

He wants me to thrive in this life. He wants me to enjoy it. He wants me to live it to the fullest because that's what Jesus said. In John chapter ten verse ten, Jesus said, the thief, the enemy of our soul. The enemy of your soul came in order to steal and kill and destroy. But Jesus said, I have come that you may have life and you may have it to the fullest. This is the God that I serve. A God that wants me to have peace, not just survive, but to thrive.

My wife went into my 12 year old son's room the other night to pray over him. This is something that we have gotten in the habit of doing right when he was born. We would go into our children's rooms. And we would pray for them at night. They're often asleep. And so we just put our hands on their head and just say a little prayer. But on this particular night, now that he's getting older, it was 10 o'clock. He was still up. And so my wife went into go and pray for him. And for some reason, at night, is when my son starts thinking about deeper issues, deeper things.

And so this particular night just, you know, he had a question that was on his mind. He is a very deep thinker. And so he looked at my wife, and this was the question that he asked. Why did God create us? Why did God create us in the first place? If he knew that Adam and Eve were going to sin, and we're going to have to live in this fallen world where there's a lot of anxiety and not a lot of peace. Why did God create us? Why didn't he just scrap the whole idea? That's a great question, isn't it? If I'm honest with you, I have asked that question.

He's not the first person that has asked, why would God do that? Here is a possible answer to that question. Why did Jesus come? Why did he decide to create us, even though he knew the mess we were going to make of things? I believe that Jesus gives us that answer in John chapter ten. He tells us he came that we may have life and have it to the fullest. He wants us to experience something amazing. A life that has lived with him in personal relationship with him and community with him.

Jesus created us. So that we could have a relationship and experience good things. If you're like me and you have trouble understanding this, I want you to think about being a parent tonight. If you're watching online and your kids are with you or you're here and you have kids back home, don't you look forward to giving gifts to your kids? Maybe it's your spouse, maybe it's your parents, maybe it's your grandparents, whatever it is. If you're like me, it's hard for me to keep the secret of the gifts that I've gotten for my kids or for my spouse. As soon as I get it, I want to share it.

To the point that a few years ago, when I had gotten my wife a specific piece of jewelry and I know it was coming from FedEx, and it was supposed to be delivered and it didn't get delivered. I actually started stopping at every FedEx truck that I saw on my way to work and saying like, hey, do you have that thing that's supposed to be delivered? And once you know it, God allowed me to find that FedEx driver. He probably thought I was crazy, right? Like, he pulled over and I stopped and I said, hey, do you have this? And he said, actually, I do. That's kind of weird. And so I showed him my driver's license, and he gave me that gift. And I could not wait to give it to my wife.

That's just my personality. I love it. When I have something that I know is going to make someone happy when it's going to bring joy to their face, I just can't wait to do that. And I know that many of you are the same way. You have the same joy that I have. Can't you see God in that same position? Think about it. He's the parent. And he has this amazing gift that he wants to give to us. He can't wait for us to experience it. He created us for this very specific purpose that he could give us the gift of his son.

So that he could laugh with us and have fun with us. And he was even willing to cry with us to go through our hard times. Can you imagine his disappointment when we don't open that gift? Can you imagine the disappointment? Think about being a parent. And the pain that you would have, if you had this amazing gift to give to your child or your spouse and you know that they're living in a stressful situation and life has just

beat them down and you have something that could lift them up and you give them that gift and they look at it and they just set it off to the side and they say no thanks.

I don't want it. Wouldn't you be heartbroken? I think that's what happens to God when we decide not to open the gift of his son. I imagine that it breaks his heart. And so this year I wanted to encourage all of us, don't throw away the gift that God has given us of Jesus. Here we celebrate on Christmas that Jesus is stepping into his creation as a baby, and that is the gift. It's the reason that we give gifts because God gave us the gift of his son, Jesus Christ.

And so I encourage us all to take time to open that gift to look at that gift to experience the gift of Jesus. I promise you that that gift is going to be much better than the socks or underwear you open, all right? It's going to be a lot better than the plastic toy that some of us are going to get and it's gotten probably break in a week. It's going to be better than the new Lexus that your spouse got you in the driveway. Who does that? Really? Do you guys see the same commercials? Some of you looked at your spouse. Like, really, you got me Alexis? No.

I don't know who does that. But the gift of Jesus is greater than even that vehicle that could be sitting in your driveway because that vehicle in 25 or 30 years is just going to rust out and it's going to break down. And in 25 or 30 years, no one is going to care about that. These gifts were not made to last forever, but there is a gift that was made to last for all of eternity. And that's our relationship with Jesus Christ. We get to take that now. We get to experience that now and we get to take it with us into eternity.

He offers you and he offers me the forgiveness of our sins. He tells us that if we will repent, if we will turn from our sins and our wicked ways that he will pour his spirit into our hearts and into our lives. He offers us life, and he offers us peace in a crazy world. So maybe you're here tonight or you're watching, and you don't have peace. I can only do what I can do, and I can share with you the gift that has been given to me. I can show you where to find it, but you have to decide whether you're going to open it.

I encourage you to invite Jesus into your heart. To invite him into your life and begin this amazing journey with him. If you've already opened that gift, as many of us probably have that are here. I mean, you drove in the snow in the minus degree temperatures to be here, right? Some of you have decided on Christmas Eve when you could be doing anything else to tune in to a church service. Many of us have received that gift. Can I just encourage you with me to enjoy it?

Receive his peace tonight, and tomorrow in the craziness of everything that goes on, would you receive that piece? I wanted to close this evening service by reading to you the story out of Luke chapter two. Versus one through 20. It's a story that we've all heard many times, but I think it would do our heart good to hear it again. Luke, chapter two, he shares with us the birth of Jesus Christ.

In those days, Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to his own town to register, so Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea to Bethlehem, the town of David, because he belonged to the house in line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in clothes and placed him in a manger because there was no room for them in the end. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the lord appeared to them, and the glory of the lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, do not be afraid.

I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people for today in the town of David, a savior has been born to you. He is Christ, the lord. This will be assigned to you. You will find a baby wrapped in a manger

wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger. 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.

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherd said to one another, let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the lord has told us about. So they hurried off and they found Mary and Joseph and the baby, who was lying in the manger. And when they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherd said to them. But Mary, treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. And so tonight, we join with those shepherds from 2000 years ago. Singing, praising, and glorifying God for all the things we have seen and heard. Let me pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for the opportunity to gather this evening, whether it's in person or with others.

And I just pray for a piece tonight. A piece that would surpass understanding. God, for those that are experiencing a difficult season right now, I also pray that you would give them hope. That you would give them life. For those that haven't experienced your son, Jesus, I pray that they would open their hearts and they would open that gift. And they would receive you. May we lift our voices and praise, thanking you for our savior that was born.

Jesus Christ, the messiah. It's in his name we pray. Amen.