

Sermon Title: “***Peace on Earth***”

Series: *Learn, Live, Lead*

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Text: Luke 2:14

Introduction

“Stand firm, and you will win life.” -Luke 21:19

We began this year with a look at what Kingdom endurance is. ***Standing Firm*** here means *Endurance* and is a very rich word embodying an ***upward, consistent, contagious, and outward*** motion that goes against the current. *It is swimming upstream after Jesus.* We saw this is the work the Spirit of God does in our lives, just as He did in Jesus’ - He leads us upward to higher ground and a higher life in Him.

We also looked at some of the outward challenges we face when going upward with the Spirit, including the spiritual forces of darkness which our on their way downward. As they are being cast out of God ’s Kingdom, we are being brought in. This is the nature of our Spiritual Battle. Unlike the generations that came before Jesus since His Ascension the Spirit has now come upon us to take the battle to where it truly is at.

What does this look like lived out in or lives? Following Jesus as His Disciples.



“Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.”

-Matthew 4:19

This series is set to be a journey answering this question- *what does it mean to follow Jesus?* How do we today answer His invitation and see this journey with Him unfold as it did for the first-generation followers of Jesus? Together we will discover anew what it means to follow Jesus- *to be a disciple making disciples culture that **learns, lives, and leads!***

I. Peace- It’s Arrival (Luke 2:8-14)

*“And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock mby night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, **‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.’** 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 among those with whom he is pleased!'" -[Luke 2:8-14](#)

Shepherds. *Why shepherds?* Bethlehem was very close to Jerusalem- about 6 miles south. The town of Bethlehem was surrounded by rich hills and lush vegetation making it prime ground for raising sheep. When you were a part of a Nation whose identity was with a God who demanded the sacrifice of animals to have peace with him, shepherding was an honorable profession. Most likely their herds were used in the rhythm of sacrifice in the Jewish Temple, celebrating the covering of their sin with God. Day and night these shepherds labored to keep their flocks safe.

Unbeknownst to them a man and woman arrived and gave birth to a child born in a manger similar to the places sheep would be brought into this world. However, unlike the animals they would help bring into the world, the ultimate sacrifice would be God Himself. If that sounds incredibly odd, you are not alone. Sacrifice is an idea that lends to an ancient sense of ritual or religious fanaticism. Yet for Christians, it is central to who we are with God, our Creator.

"The next day he (John the Baptist) saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'" -[John 1:29](#)

It is such an incredible moment as an entire host of angelic beings appear praising God. Imagine waking up to the sudden awareness of an entire militant force outside of your city- most likely threatening with their presence and strength. Yet this militant presence- the host of heaven- comes with words of peace. They are *praising* God, their song acknowledges their presence before God in the eyes of these shepherds. As Holy, Holy, Holy is cried out, this song bursts forth as God has come unlike never before, stepping into His very creation.

The key to this message is verse 14. ***Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace.*** This phrase captures the idea of two distinct places- *heaven* and *earth*. The abode of the Creator and the creation. This refers to the highest place of Heaven- beyond our sky and stars, the very abode of God Himself as well as the highest recognition and praise worthy unto Himself. The very clouds roll back to reveal this scene to these shepherds keeping watch over their flocks that night.

As Heaven is opened, peace descends upon the earth. We must understand that this is not peace granted among humanity as a whole, but a peace between Creator and creation offered through a bridge that must be passed upon. *Good will toward men* is how many translations have approached the Greek here and that is very misleading. While the ESV breaks the traditional way this verse flows, the translation is more faithful to the Greek meaning. ***Peace among those with whom he is pleased!*** It is not Goodwill in general bestowed upon Humanity, but a determination to show Goodwill to humanity through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God who would take away sin.

Later Jesus Himself would say,

“What king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.”

-Luke 14:31-32

In the words of the Prophet Isaiah,

“Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for he mouth of the Lord has spoken.” **-Isaiah 1:18-20**

II. Peace- It's Journey from Heaven to Earth (Genesis 15)

Remember from last week, a promise is only of value if it comes to pass. Until then, its integrity resides in the person making the promise. In this case we have God, the Creator who speaks and it comes to pass, and in Christ all of His promises to us are Yes and Amen! (See ->...)

a. Abraham's Faith

However, this particular promise of peace with God would be made around 1800 years, or 18 Centuries before Jesus arrived. To a man named Abraham, God made this promise,

“I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” **-Genesis 12:2-3**

That is a long time to hold on to a promise. Further, this promise was made to Abraham when he was 75 years old and had no children and married to Sarah who was 65 at the time. *Their first child would come when he was 100 and she 90!* So in a sense, we can understand Abraham's struggle to understand how this is all going to happen.

“But Abraham said, ‘O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’ **-Genesis 15:2**

“But he said, ‘O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?’ **-Genesis 15:8**

God meets Abraham not in his doubt, but in the baby steps of a newfound faith that was learning to walk. Picture a parent lovingly walking alongside their child, helping and celebrating their first steps. This is the Image of God here with Abraham. *Abraham's faith was learning to walk!*

“And he (God) brought him outside and said, ‘Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall you're your offspring be.’

-Genesis 5:6

With no more than a Word from God, *Abraham took his first steps*, for without faith it is impossible to please God (See -> [Hebrews 11:6](#)); it is impossible to walk with God.

“And he (Abraham) believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as Righteousness.”
-Genesis 15:6

b. God’s Direction

“And He (God) said to him, ‘Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half.’”

-Genesis 15:9-10

It is here we see how God would bridge Heaven and Earth, bringing His peace to not only Abraham but the Messiah who would come through him. Keep in mind, these directions came before God instituted offerings for sin through the Law and Moses. Jesus has always been God’s plan, and the sacrifices were all a shadow of the many ways Jesus would fully remove sin and present us clean to our Father.

Here is a brief look at how each of these animals selected shadow particular roles Jesus would fill and works He would accomplish on our behalf. *Why the age requirements?* Three of the five animals were required to be three years of age. This was because they would be:

- 1) Weened from their mother; independent and self-sufficient.
- 2) In the prime of their life; full of strength and value. This was the best of the flock. God gives us His Son, His Best.

The heifer represents the Purity of Jesus (without sin). In Numbers 19 God tells Israel,

“This is the statute of the law that the Lord has commanded: Tell the people of Israel to bring you a red heifer without defect, in which there is no blemish, and on which a yoke has never come. And you shall give it to Eleazar the priest, and it shall be taken outside the camp and slaughtered before him...and he shall take some of its blood with his finger, and sprinkle some of its blood toward the front of the tent of meeting seven times. And the heifer shall be burned in his sight.” **-Numbers 19:2-5**

This blood was to be applied in order for the people to be sanctified; able to come into God’s presence. If any neglect this,

“If the man who is unclean does not cleanse himself, that person shall be cut off from the midst of the assembly, since he has defiled the sanctuary of the Lord.” **-Numbers 19:20**

The female goat represents a sin offering to atone for sin; to remove/cleanse from defilement.

“Then shall he take two (male) goats and set them before the Lord at the entrance of the tent of meeting. And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other lot for Azazel. And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the Lord and use it as a sin

offering. But the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the Lord to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.”

-Leviticus 16:7-10

Keep in mind these animal sacrifices are shadows of what Christ alone could and would accomplish. The female goat for Abraham would represent the life source for the two males- for one goat cannot accomplish both atonement and removal so this one act of Christ on the cross was symbolized by two goats. *Azazel means scapegoat*; the removal of sins but also dubious (a picture only received by faith).

The ram represents the voluntary substitutional offering Christ became- covering sins that would hinder service to the Lord. The pursuit and willingness of Christ to continually cleanse His people from sin for service to Himself.

“You shall take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram, and you shall kill the ram and take part of its blood and put it on the tip of the right ear of Aaron and on the tips of the right ears of his sons, and on the thumbs of their right hands and on the great toes of their right feet, and throw the rest of the blood against the sides of the altar.” **-Exodus 29:19-20**

Because of the blood of the ram applied, the ear was sanctified to hear the word of God, the hand to do the work of God, and the foot to walk in the way of God. Christ lived in perfect obedience to the Will of the Father, and His blood applied cleanses us to hear, do, and go in Him!

The turtledove would represent the Spirit and *the pigeon* the newborn or newness of life. These two were for those who could not afford the expense of the larger animals so that no one was without excuse to come to God for His peace with them. These were also attached to other sacrifices as voluntary acts of expressing gratitude to God for His blessings upon their lives.

“But if he is poor and cannot afford so much, then he shall take one male lamb for a guilt offering (think of Christ- Lamb of God) to be waved, to make atonement for him, and a tenth of an epha of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, and a log of oil; also two turtledoves or two pigeons, whichever he can afford. The one for a sin offering the other for a burnt offering.” **-Leviticus 14:21-22**

Together, *the heifer* represents the purity and sanctifying power of Jesus' blood. *The goat* represents Jesus' atonement for our sin and the removal of it from us forever. *The ram* represents Jesus' commitment to sanctify us continually for His work. *The Turtledove* is His help to us through His Spirit, and *the pigeon* is the newness of life He brings to us!

c. God's Demonstration

Did Abraham have any idea what God was doing with these sacrifices? Did he have any idea that these animals were shadows of meaning that would one day be embodied and fulfilled

through His Son, one of Abraham's descendants? I don't think so. But he knew and trusted God.

*“As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abraham. And behold, a dreadful and great darkness fell upon him...(God affirms His promise to Abraham) When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham.” **-Genesis 15:12-21***

God Himself is not only speaking these promises to Abraham, but He is taking upon Himself the full responsibility in bringing them to pass. The only way peace could come between God in Heaven and humanity on Earth is by God through His Son taking away sin from us, conquering it and death on our behalf. This was a promise God made, and a promise God alone could and would fulfill.

III. Peace- It's Cost (Matthew 10:34-39)

*“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” **-Matthew 10:34-39***

While peace with God through Christ is great news and will ultimately lead us into eternity with Him, here and now, it can be anything but peaceful to follow Jesus. The immediate result of a commitment to Jesus can result in and become a strain on marriages, families, neighborhoods, and jobs. Giving Jesus our YES! does not only change us, it changes the world around us. But dear saint, understand this world is hostile toward you having peace with God through Jesus.

No matter what we will face, *and we will face opposition*, let us take comfort in Jesus' words,

*“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” **-John 6:33***

IV. Peace- It's Presence (Romans 5:1-5)

*“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” **-Romans 5:1-5***

I cannot close such a message without referencing these words from Paul to us today. They were true then, and they are still true today. Dear saint, this world will press against us and

there will be days, maybe seasons, where we find ourselves questioning God's faithfulness to us. Questioning if we truly are at peace with Him.

Remember Abraham and what little knowledge he had of God; it was baby steps in faith with Him. Now, for us today, we have volumes of the wisdom of what was shadowed and then fulfilled in Jesus for us today. It will continue to be baby steps in faith for us as well. Our faith is anchored in what God has said and done, regardless of if we hear Him speaking or see Him working in our lives at this moment.

This is how we can rejoice in our sufferings and raise our hallelujahs in our struggles. Because of the Holy Spirit, we are not defeated by them but transformed through them!

As we celebrate this Christmas Season, as we sing of God's Peace and goodwill, let us tell the story of Jesus.

Let us share how He is the perfect Lamb of God announced to the Shepherds on that night so long ago when a woman gave birth to a child in a manger in Bethlehem.

Let us share how God's peace came from Heaven to Earth in Jesus and is available for all who will humble themselves and come to Him for the forgiveness of sin and repentance toward the newness of life.

Let us share how God both made a promise to Abraham and fulfilled it in Christ for you and I today.

Let us celebrate the peace we share with God in a world starving and crying out for peace!

Saints, we demonstrate God's Peace on earth in Christ!