

Activate Advent
Activate Peace
Luke 2:14, John 14:27, John 16:33, John 20:26

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Text Introduction: This year at Christmas we are on a journey to Activate Advent. Thank you for joining us. We began with the word “hope.” Today, we are pursuing the idea of “peace.” Peace has always been associated with Christmas. Such was the case on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day of 1914. The German troops and the Allied troops participated in a Christmas Truce in the middle of World War I. Though versions of exactly what happened are sketchy, the common thread in most accounts is that peace, albeit short-lived, happened in the name of Christmas. German and Allied troops sang carols together, exchanged gifts, and more than one account suggests that they had a friendly game of soccer.

Christmas songs long for peace in the midst of war. “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day” is from a poem by William Wadsworth Longfellow in the Days of America’s Civil War. “Do You Hear What I Hear” was written during the days of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

We long for peace—peace with our past, peace with others, and ultimately with God. Isaiah prophesied the Messiah to be the Prince of Peace. The angels sang of peace. Jesus declared that “in Him” was peace. Jesus offered a greeting of peace to the one history has called “Doubting Thomas.” Paul counseled to let the peace of God rule in our hearts. Best of all, Jesus wants to bring peace in our lives now.

The Announcement About Jesus at His Birth

Luke 2:8-14 ⁸ In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: ¹¹ Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David. ¹² This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in cloth and lying in a feeding trough.”

¹³ Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:

¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and peace on earth to people He favors!

Notice that this introductory announcement of peace is tied to the coming of Messiah into the world. With this announcement comes the encouragement to not be afraid and the response of joy.

Peace is connected to His glory and His grace.

The more we behold His glory, the more we will be at peace. The reception of His grace (favor) is the requirement to be at peace. This announcement is tantamount to the saying, Know Jesus; Know peace. No Jesus; no peace.

But, please understand, though peace is a Christmas message, peace is not just a Christmas message.

The Affirmation of Jesus Concerning Peace

John 14:27 ²⁷ "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Your heart must not be troubled or fearful.

John 16:33 I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world." I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world."

His peace is contrasted to the problems we will face in this world.

Notice in this passage, which comes near the end of Jesus' life as He prepares the disciples for his death, that Jesus communicates several things:

1. He is leaving His peace with them, so that even though they will no longer see Him, He intends for them to have His peace.
2. The peace that He is offering is His peace. The same peace that accompanies Jesus in these final agonizing moments of His life is the peace He is leaving.
3. The peace that was to come was "in Jesus." He is the source of the peace.
4. He acknowledged that there would be unpleasant events that would attempt to disrupt their peace.
5. He distinguishes this peace that He is leaving with the peace that might come from the world.
6. And, just as the announcement from the angels at His birth, this statement of His peace comes with the accompanying encouragement to not be troubled or fearful.

The Assurance of Jesus after His Resurrection

John 20:19, 21, and 26 Peace to you

Peace is connected to the invitation to follow Jesus.

Peace—we all want what is communicated in that elusive five letter word. I imagine there is somebody here today who just says, "I want peace." I want peace from my past. I want the security of peace for my tomorrow. I want peace in my home. I want peace with God.

Good news—Peace was the announcement of Jesus on that night of his birth and it was the promise of Jesus before His death. And to the one called Doubting Thomas, peace was the promise of Jesus even after His death and resurrection.

If we were to attempt to summarize these New Testament texts about peace, I think here is the way we could say it.

Peace is not in the absence of pain.

Jesus had pain. He knew the pain of rejection. He knew the pain of the cross and death. He knew the pain of anticipating death. He anticipated the pain of the disciples. And you know what? He knows your pain. When Jesus says that “in Him” we have peace, He is not saying that we will not experience pain. In fact, He gives us this encouragement, because He knows we will have pain.

Peace is not in the absence of problems.

Jesus foreshadows the problems. He announces the problems.

Peace is a person.

This idea of peace comes about in John 14-16 in several ways. First, in John 14:6, Jesus declared about Himself, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” This is a reference about the way to Heaven. Peace with God and eternity in Heaven is through Him. I am convinced that we will never arrive at peace about this life until we have peace about the life to come in eternity. This is the starting place to real peace.

Second, this idea is communicated in the role of the Comforter throughout John 14-16. He wanted the disciples to be comforted to know that He is always with them, and the Holy Spirit would provide this. If peace is in Him and He is here, we can have peace in a relationship with Him. That leads us to the third communication of peace being in a person.

John 15 tells us about how to remain in relationship with the one who gives us peace. We are “to abide” or “remain” in Him. Again, the relationship brings the peace.

Here’s the bottom line. You can search for peace in a lot of things—relationships, money, hobbies, or the absence of problems, but only one thing brings peace. Real peace is in a person.

So What? How do we activate peace in our lives?

We must trust in Him for everything including our eternal destiny.

We find our peace in His peace, not our peace.

We must talk to Him about everything.

Philippians 4:6-7 says:

Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Ultimately,

We must turn to Him.

Let's end where we started with the announcement from the angels.

¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and peace on earth to people He favors!

I think about the hymn, "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus."

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.