

Sermon Discussion Guide  
Sunday, December 20, 2020  
The Peace of Christmas  
Matthew 1: 18-25

Sunday's sermon spoke of peace in two ways. The statement was made that, true Christmas peace is a Gospel peace. That is referring to the peace that is established between us and God through our salvation. But there were also references to inner peace, which is the peace we long for in our everyday experience of life.

In this time of pandemic our inner peace can be challenged by the circumstances around us. We have experienced isolation, the threat of illness and death, and those same threats to our loved ones. Some of you or, perhaps your family members, have experienced job disruptions or losses, and even the loss of loved ones. These are hard things, and they bring stress and grief upon us.

Joseph was experiencing similar challenges in his role in the Christmas story. When he learns of Mary's pregnancy, he is initially experiencing anger, loss, grief, and shame. He feels betrayed. He is hurt. Later, he will experience a difficult journey to Bethlehem, no room in the inn, a middle of the night escape to Egypt, and life in a foreign land. He had plenty of things that challenged his inner peace.

1. To understand why the true peace of Christmas is a Gospel peace, we need to see the arrival of Jesus in light of his mission. What is the mission of Jesus?
2. In Luke's Gospel, the angels declare to the shepherds, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men (people) on whom his favor rests." This statement is often misquoted. Can you remember the common misquote?
3. Why is, "Peace on earth, goodwill to men," such a significant misquote? What does that misquote imply about who this peace applies to?
4. This misquote is often used to speak about "world peace." However, that's not what the passage is referring to. How do we know that?
5. Why is our peace with God a higher priority for God than world peace?
6. The Greek word translated favor is "charis." Charis can also be translated "grace." How does the grace of God come to rest upon us?
7. World peace is a great aspiration. Do you think it will ever be attained before the return of Christ? Explain why or why not.
8. How do we enter into a state of peace with God?
9. Does that peace with God mean we are always going to feel peaceful on the inside?
10. Do you think Joseph felt peaceful when warned about Herod's intentions?
11. What is it that enables us to feel peace when life gets crazy, like in the crazy year of 2020?
12. Faith does not make us immune to stress and grief, but it certainly helps us in our times of stress and grief. Read Proverbs 3:5-6. The writer gives us three prescriptions that can help us to work through life's challenges with faith. What are they?
13. What does it mean to "lean not on your own understanding"? Whose understanding are we supposed to lean on? How do we get God's perspective?