

**The Way of Peace**  
Luke 2:7-9  
*Halifax: 21 December 2003*

**Introduction:**

This is the time of year when many people's thoughts are turned to the birth of Christ.

- In many ways, we have been looking at that topic since June...
  - Matthew...
    - Theme: Christ came into the world to set up His righteous kingdom

But this morning,

- I am going to break from our series in Matthew to focus in even more on one aspect of the birth of Christ.

Last week we looked at how Jesus makes us peacemakers who are blessed in His kingdom...

- This week I want to consider the peace that Jesus brought to the world when He came.

In Luke 1:79, Zacharias says these wonderful words about what Jesus did when He visited us...

- (Zacharias speaks the way prophets often speak—as if Jesus had already come—but look at what He says...
  - that He came **“to guide our feet into the way of peace!”**

When someone guides your feet into something,

- he brings you into a new way of doing things, a new situation.
- Illustration>
  - Suppose you run a small restaurant and you are finding that your staff are not able to get things done as quickly as they need too...
    - You might call in an efficiency expert to come in “to guide the feet” of your employees into the way of efficiency.
    - I have been told that MacDonaldis actually has a patent on their kitchen lay out.
      - They have had experts come in and determine the best place for every piece of equipment, the ideal height and placement of every counter and every storage compartment.

- They guide the feet of the employees from a way of chaos into a way of order and efficiency.
- When Zacharias says that Jesus came to guide our feet into the way of peace, He is talking about a change that is far greater than efficiency...
  - He is talking about a total change in your circumstances...
    - Your situation in life is completely transformed and made new...
    - There is a new hope,
      - there is a new purpose,
      - there is a new way of doing things,
      - there is new help and new strength.
  - Everything is changed for you if you are a Christian because Jesus has come to guide you into the way of peace!
- When Zacharias uses the word **peace**,
  - You can be sure that he uses it in the sense that the Old Testament uses it!
    - 1) His whole prophecy is rooted in the Old Testament scriptures and uses Old Testament language...
      - He talks about God's promise to Abraham, he reflects on passages from Isaiah and Malachi...
      - And so when he speaks about peace, you can be sure that he is speaking about it in way it is used in the Old Testament—in the word **Shalom**.
    - 2) For us, **peace** refers to an absence of trouble, anxiety, conflict—all that...
      - Our word speaks primarily of this side so **Shalom**...
      - But **Shalom** is much more comprehensive than that.
        - It not only refers to an absence of conflict and anxiety,
          - but also of wholeness and completeness, a fullness in what is good and pleasant and satisfying!
- So you see then that Zacharias is telling us that Jesus Christ, by His coming, guides our feet into this most wonderful, most excellent completeness!
  - He puts us on a completely different road of life!
    - He brings us into an entirely new situation,
    - Everything is changed because Jesus has come!

Now there are two ways that you can look at this change...

1. You can look at it from the historical perspective...

- That before He came, His people had only shadows to show them God's redemptive mercies...
- And that after Jesus came, we have the real thing—
  - The Son of God has actually come into the world and made Himself an offering for our sins!
  - We no longer have to look at what He did through priests and mediators offering sacrifices in temples...
    - Now we have good news to proclaim!
    - And we have this gospel spreading into all the world—
      - before Jesus came it was restricted to one nation.
  - We could talk about Jesus changing everything from that perspective—
    - The difference in how it was after He came verses before He came.

TRANS> But there is also another way to look at how He changed everything...

- And this second way is the way I want to look at the change this morning...
2. This second way focuses more on the idea that what Jesus did when He was here is the source of all blessing for God's people.
- I might illustrate this by saying that when Jesus came, He baked a pie for us that would not have otherwise ever had...
    - He finished making the pie completely when He was here...
    - But He feeds it to us over time.
  - As soon as you are born again, He puts the pie in your hand and you start eating it.
    - But nobody will eat the last slice until the very last day—the day of the resurrection.
    - Now He is guiding our feet into the way of peace—
      - into a wholeness and fullness of life...
      - But we won't have everything that He prepared for us when He was here until the end.
  - I might add as well that Abraham and all the Old Testament believers...
    - were able to eat slices of this pie before Jesus even came.
    - God was able to pardon them because of what Jesus was going to do...
      - But their blessing was still dependent on Jesus doing it!
      - In other words, Jesus was the one who made the difference for them too.

- There blessing was based on what He was going to do when He came into the world,
  - just as ours was based on what He has done.
  - We all drink from the same fountain, and the fountain is Christ.
    - If He had not come, there would be no peace.
- Now I am saying this for two reasons:
  - First, so that you might not think believers who lived before He came had no peace...
    - They did not have the benefit of seeing what Jesus would do to purchase peace for them, and the greater assurance that comes from seeing...
    - But they did have many benefits that were only made possible because He was going to come... benefits like justification and sanctification.
  - Secondly, so that you might understand that just because you live after His coming, it doesn't mean that you have actually entered into all the peace that He has prepared for you!
    - There is a whole lot more to look forward to!
    - All the benefits of Jesus' work are still being applied to us!
    - The apostle Paul even went so far as to say that if we only hope in this life, then we are of all men most miserable!
- So today when I show you the wonderful peace that Jesus' coming brings to His elect,
  - I want you to understand that I will be talking about the peace that He fully purchased for us when He was here...
    - He did everything that needed to be done to bring us absolute peace...
    - But that it is also a peace that you have not experienced in its entirety.
- All along the way,
  - I will make the comparison between what we already have and what we are waiting to obtain of this peace...
    - You will also see that some believers have more of this peace than others...
    - But keep in mind that in the end,
      - every believer will fully obtain this peace that Jesus came to guide us into.

I want to look at the peace into which Jesus is guides us as it pertains to four relationships:

- Our relationship with God,

- Our relationship with ourselves (if you can call that a relationship),
- Our relationship with each other,
- Our relationship with nature.

## I. He guides us into peace with God.

### A. This peace with God is a declared peace.

1. God declares it in His Covenant with us.
  - a. He promises “Your sins and iniquities I will remember no more.”
    - God makes the promise to all who believe, and He keeps it!
    - Jesus is said to preach peace to His people.
  - b. The basis of this peace is Christ’s righteousness for us.
    - He fulfilled all that God’s law requires of sinners.
      - He did it for us...
      - So that God is said to justify the ungodly.
    - It is a perfect righteousness that you either have or you don’t have.
      - Justification is not something you have by degrees—
      - You either have it or you don’t.
2. Because it is declared,
  - a. There is no guesswork—
    - covenants make it yes and no
    - Ill> the marriage covenant
  - b. God restores the covenant in the same way that Adam broke it...
    - Adam broke covenant by **declaring** war,
    - God restores it by **declaring** peace.
  - c. You obtain this peace by faith.
    - God is said to justify the ungodly by faith...
      - You become righteous by relying on the perfect righteousness that Jesus attained for sinners.
3. This gives you grounds for comfort and assurance.
  - a. You don’t have to guess where we stand with God.
  - b. If we are in Christ, you are fully reconciled to God forever and ever.

B. But this peace with God is also more than an objective peace.

1. It is a peace in which God's anger is turned away from us, and ours from Him.

- What I mean is, it is not merely a truce, a legal arrangement...
- This is no cold war going on!

2. There is now a sense in which we are **for** God and He is **for** us.

- We are now friends who are out for each other's good.
- And what a difference that makes from our side of the relationship!

C. Brothers and sisters, peace with God is the foundation of all our well-being!

1. There is nothing worse than to be without this peace...

- but nothing better than to have it!
- If God is set upon blessing us,
  - we will most certainly be abundantly blessed!

2. Christ is now giving us this peace, this fullness of life!

- He Himself is the bread of life who feeds our souls.
- He gives us the water of life so that we thirst no more.
- We are rescued from the dominion to Satan and brought into service to Christ.

## **II. Jesus guides us into peace within ourselves.**

A. The human heart is so knotted and twisted up with care and anxiety!

1. I get a chuckle out of watching babies...

- They get so stressed out about the most trivial things!

2. But we are not much different when we get older...

- We get all worked up...
  - because we have so much to do!
  - because we have an exam!
  - because something is broken!
  - because of the bills!
  - because we lose our job!
  - because of something somebody said (or didn't say) to us!
  - because we are sick!

3. And then we have all those frustrating things like confusion or uncertainty...
  - We get all worked up because we don't know what to do...
    - we don't know how deal with a difficult neighbour...
    - or how to handle a problem with our children...
  - We get all worked up about the future...
    - What if I lose my job?
    - What if the economy collapses?
    - What if I have cancer?
  - Now I don't mean to make light of human suffering...
    - It is real and it is difficult...
    - But if you step for a minute and look at it in light of eternity,
      - we are like those little babies with the red face and the quivering lip.
      - So anxious, so worked up, so stressed....
        - about so little!

B. Jesus is the One who guides us into the way of peace within.

1. He comes to your troubled soul when the wind is blowing and the waves are churning and turning within and He says:
  - "Peace, be still..."
    - and there follows a great calm.
    - Have you not had that happen?
      - Everything was all out of perspective and then He opened your eyes to see things from His perspective and all the sudden, there was peace?
2. All your life, Christian, He teaches you that quietness of spirit.
  - a. He does it by putting you into situations that do stress you and then teaching you what living is really about...
    - Living is not about all the things that can be lost...
    - It's about the gaining life with God.
      - Its about enjoying Him and knowing Him and growing up into Jesus.
  - b. Why do you get all stressed out?
    - Is it because you are thinking about how Jesus is the Head over all things for the sake of the Church?

- So that everything that comes into your life comes to make you more like Him?
  - Is it because you see Him at the helm of your daily life and the helm of world history, working out His purposes for your good and for the good of the Church?
    - That good being to draw you nearer to God, to help you see the glory of God, and to give glory to God?
  - Of course not...
    - You get stressed out when you lose sight of these realities and see only the immediate trouble!
    - You see your little as a tiny ship in the midst of a randomly churning sea, and you have no rest!
3. But as you walk with Jesus through the years,
- He guides you into greater and greater peace.
  - He teaches you what our real purpose is
    - and reminds of the eternal inheritance that is promised to us.
  - If you know you have a huge cheque coming tomorrow, you don't wring your hands about today's bills...
    - You know that there is a solution!
    - You have peace from the God of peace who comforts us in all our affliction.
  - Jesus has been there before you—
    - It was His to bear the cross...
    - He knows the fightings and fears within, but He also rested in the purpose of God.
      - He is your merciful and faithful high priest who can minister to you in your infirmities.
      - He brings peace to the your soul.

### **III. Jesus guides us into peace with each other.**

A. Do you know what Jesus is going to do with us in this regard?

- He is going to bring us into a community of perfect love!
  - No don't worry, I'm not talking about a commune... I'm talking about Heaven.

1. When He is through with us...
  - a. There will be no trace of malice...
    - You know, that nasty spirit that rises in us and makes us want to get a dig in at our brother—
      - to give him a verbal punch (or an actual punch)
  - b. Nor will there be any trace of bitterness or sinful anger...
    - Bitterness is that cold anger that builds up when you keep repeating to yourself the wrongs that your brother has done to you...
      - When you won't let them go...
    - And then there is that shameful anger that flares up when you are provoked and lose control of yourself...
      - and start attacking your brother.
  - c. Nor will there be any more jealousy or envy of any kind.
    - You know that one-up-man-ship that you strive for...
    - or that resentment when your brother prospers more than you...
      - or seems more loved than you...
      - or succeeds where you have failed.

TRANS> All this will be gone...

2. Jesus will bring us into such peace with one another that all these will be gone in their place will be the opposite...
  - a. You will actually live to bless others—just as Jesus lives to do!
    - That same mind that was in Him when He went to the cross and gave Himself so sacrificially only that He might benefit us will be in you...
      - and it will be in every one of your brothers and sisters also...
        - and it will be there to perfection!
      - Heaven will be a world of perfect love for all eternity!
        - Constantly and continually we will be
          - serving one another,
          - delighting in one another,
          - rejoicing in each other's gifts and each other's blessings.
  - b. Because we are creatures,

- it seems to me that we will have real needs in heaven just as we do now...
- The only difference is that we will be surrounded with a loving community—
  - that will supply every one of those needs to perfection!
- And I am not just talking about **needs**, in terms of what is required for biological existence!
  - I am talking about the things that make for perfect happiness!
    - having the affection of others...
    - being useful to others
    - having unity with them in purpose.
- We will function together in perfection as a beautifully oiled machine that never misses a beat!
- Jesus is the One who guides us into this way of peace with one another.

B. Now I know when you look around, you may not see a lot of this love among Christ's people...

1. We see Christians fighting and quarreling...

- We see selfishness and division
- Not only do we see from one church to another, but even in the same local congregation...
  - And worse still, you know how far you come short even with your own husband or wife in experiencing that wonderful peace.

2. Yet, I want to encourage you that Jesus is at work in you!

a. Where would some of you couples be if it were not for the peace that Christ has given you—

- He has taught you to forgive one another by setting you such a fine example...
  - and then giving you the grace to follow that example!
- He has taught you to reach out to one another to help—
  - something you would not have done to nearly the same extent you do now that He has begun His work in you.
- I am reasonably sure that if it were not for the grace of Christ in me, I would be divorced today!

- b. And I am so thankful for the peace He has given us as a congregation...
  - It has been beautiful to see you growing in your love for each other.
    - To see real care for your brothers and sisters, a real bearing of one another's burdens.
      - We are learning to look at each other's problems as our problem instead of his or her problem.
      - This is good—we fulfil the law of Christ when we bear one another's burdens.
  - It has been beautiful to see your families growing in love, and you couples working out troubles in your relationships with each other.
    - Jesus has taught you to do these things!
      - He is guiding us into the way of peace!
- c. Yes yes yes...
  - 1) I know that we have a long way to go—
    - But the good news is,
      - Jesus will do it!
      - He will bring us from where we are now to where we need to be!
      - You will be made perfect in love my brothers and sisters!
  - 2) Let's pray for Him to do it!
    - Let's be diligent to obey His call to love one another as He has loved us and look for His Spirit to give us the grace to actually do it.
    - Jesus will guide us into this peace if we are His!
      - It is by union with Him that we are set free from our selfish ways to live for our brothers and sisters.

#### **IV. Jesus guides us into peace with nature.**

- A. As a result of the fall, God put enmity between the human race and nature.
  1. That is why your cars rust and break down...
    - why your dog does not come when you call...
    - why your garden produces weeds...
    - why your favourite shoes wear out...
    - why hurricanes blow through your city and cause destruction...
  2. This enmity with nature is also why you catch the flu...
    - why you cut your finger when you are working in the kitchen...
    - why you have back pain or heart trouble or cancer...
    - why you grow feeble when you get old.

3. But worst of all, this enmity with nature is the reason you finally return to ashes and dust.

B. But Christian, Jesus will guide your feet into the way of peace with the creation!

1. He Himself has been raised from the dead and He has put on immortality.
  - a. And He promises that He will raise us up also.
    - He showed us that He has power over nature and that it is His will to reverse the curse.
    - He showed us when He was here by the miracles He did.
  - b. Moreover, on the day of the resurrection, all of nature will be perfectly reconciled.
    - There will be no more enmity between us and nature from then on.
    - Everything in creation will be reconciled to us and we will live in perfect harmony with nature.
2. I mentioned before that this is the last slice of the pie for us...
  - a. But this particular aspect of peace (peace with nature) is the one that we least experience now—because we all die and rot in the grave...
    - But we do get some taste of it!
      - 1) We do get to eat the fruit of the ground and of the pasture—
        - We do get to enjoy labour of our hands...
          - preparing food, building homes, etc.
      - 2) There is the blessing of technology...
        - we have even been able to send men to the moon—
        - and we can talk to people on the other side of the world at the touch of a button.
      - 3) We have been able to tame animals and to enjoy their affection or service.
      - 4) We have beautiful music—
        - on Friday, our family was greatly blessed by going to see Handle's Messiah performed.
    - b. And I say all this because I want you see something of what the peace is like that Jesus will guide us into!
      - 1) Can you imagine what it will be like to be fully reconciled to nature!
        - to be reconciled with rubies and diamonds and gold

- so that we know how to use them to the glory of God!
- to have perfect health and vitality that we will use to serve one another!
- to be reconciled with music and art—
  - all in perfect harmony with God and with us...
- to be reconciled with wonderful food and drink
  - that we will enjoy to the glory of God!
- to have a perfect relationship with animals that will dwell in perfect harmony with us!
- to be reconciled with technology that does not break down or err, and that we use only for good and not for evil!
- to be at peace with wind and lightening and all the forces of nature—
  - all in our service.

2) We are not Gnostics who deny the goodness of the material world.

- These material bodies will be raised up and glorified in the same way that Jesus' body was!
  - They will eat and drink and work,
    - only, there will be no more curse to destroy our full enjoyment of these things!
- God has made all these things for us and they are good...
  - He will use them all for His glory...
  - He will reconcile them all with us in heaven.
- Jesus guides us into peace with these things now to a certain extent.
  - He teaches us how to live in harmony with good food and good drink...
    - You all know those who have been delivered from drug abuse or drunkenness.
  - He teaches us how to make music for His glory.
  - He teaches us how to show compassion to our animals.
  - He teaches us how to use telephones and computers for His glory rather than our own destruction.
    - Let us learn from Him!

**Conclusion!**

And so you see that peace...

- peace with God
- peace within ourselves
- peace with one another
- and peace with nature
  - is what Jesus came to guide us into!

I wouldn't have you leave here without this peace if I could help it.

- Abandon yourself to Jesus and He will guide you into it!
  - How can you harden yourself to this peace?
  - How can you go on resisting it?
  - It is a dreadful to think of missing it!
- Jesus calls you to come to Him...
  - Do you hear His voice?
  - All you have to do is come to Him, ruined and undone...
    - And He will guide you into this peace.
    - That is what He came to do!
    - Come to Him and He will do it!

Isa 9:6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of [Peace](#).

Isa 9:7 Of the increase of *His* government and [peace](#) *There will be* no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.