

**Peace On Earth**  
**Luke 2:41-52**  
**“How to Find Peace in Trying Times”**

**Introduction**

**“Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don’t let your heart be troubled or fearful.”** **John 14:27**

Last week, as part of our Christmas series, we learned how to have JOY in difficult times. We, as believers, have a never-ending source of joy from Christ Himself. Nothing can rob us of the JOY that we have been given in Christ Jesus. We have joy, for we have been chosen. We have joy for our LORD is sovereign. And therefore, we **“rejoice with those who rejoice” (Romans 12:15).**

This week, I would like to continue along this same line of hopeful messages from God’s Word and discuss how we can not only have joy in difficult times, but PEACE, as well. When the angelic hosts announced the birth of the Christ Child to those chosen shepherds in Bethlehem, they shouted these words of praise into the night sky:

**“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to the people He favors!”**  
**Luke 2:14**

Just in case you didn’t know it this morning, if you are a child of The King, then you are one of those “favored” ones that the angels spoke of! Jesus has come to give you everlasting peace. No matter what happens all around us in this troubled world, the “favored ones” of The LORD can have peace. And just like the JOY that we all have found in Christ, nothing can rob us of the PEACE that we have in Him as well.

This week, as I studied Luke’s gospel to prepare this mornings message, I continued to read along in **Luke Chapter 2**. I went past all the familiar “Christmas verses” about the shepherds, angels and the babe in the manger, and I read about Jesus in the temple, when He was twelve years old. My first thought was to back up and choose something about that first Christmas to preach about. But after reading this beautiful story of the twelve year old Messiah, Who was “misplaced” by His parents for three days, I felt led to give the passage a second reading. And as I read, I became convinced that this was in fact the message for our congregation at this time.

As I continued to study, I began to notice things about this story that I had never noticed before. These few verses contain within them a powerful narrative indeed. For this was not to be the only time, that Christ would “disappear” for three days in Jerusalem during the time of Passover, and then reappear to the astonishment of those who loved Him! (Of course I’m referring to Easter.) This is a story of God’s wondrous plan. A plan that cannot and shall not be altered, and it is the reason that the angels proclaimed to those who were favored by God, that they would have everlasting peace. It is a peace that passes all understanding.

**Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.**  
**Philippians 4:6-7**

For you see, in Christ Jesus, we have been granted peace that this world cannot begin to comprehend. It is the peace that comes only to those who are the “favored of God”, those who believe in His Only Begotten Son. We have the **Peace** in His **Authority**, **Peace**, for our **Anxiety**, and the **Peace** of His **Acceptance**. Let us read this sweet, old, familiar passage once more and taste it again for the first time.

### **Peace In His Authority (vs. 41-47)**

It would be a mistake to read this story as a misadventure in the life of the boy, Jesus. This event neither occurred by accident, nor was it recorded in scripture by happenstance. For God willed it to happen, just as He wanted us to comprehend its message. This is in fact the only recorded event we have from Jesus' childhood. All we know, other than this passage, of His so called "formative years" is that He grew in wisdom and stature and favor with the people (**Luke 2:52**).

The Jews were required to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times every year to attend the feasts of Passover (*Pesach*), The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost or *Shavuot*), and The Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*). They would travel together in large groups of family and friends, for not only protection, but fellowship. As they made their way up the mountain toward the city, they would sing together the "songs of the ascents" (**Psalm 120-134**). It was a joyous time to prepare their hearts for worship. This is what it would have been like for Jesus, as he traveled with Mary and Joseph. His mind must have been filled with thoughts of the passover lamb, and how this wondrous celebration of Israel's deliverance would ultimately be fulfilled by His own death and resurrection. What a weighty matter this must have been for the mind of a twelve year old boy.

The events that occurred in and around Christ's twelfth birthday are significant for many reasons. For you see, as a young Jewish boy, from the ages of 5-10, The Hebrew Bible would have been His only text book. From it, He would learn to read and write and learn of His nation's history, as well as, learn the commandments of God. From age 10-15, He would have been exposed to the many "oral traditions" of the Jewish rabbis. Needless to say, His brilliant mind would have been able to sift through all these additional laws handed down by men and accurately critique those that did not align themselves with the heart of His Father.

At the age of thirteen, Jesus would have been ready for his Bar-mitzvah, which simply means "son of the commandments". This would have certified that He had indeed met the requirements that were given for a young man to pass from a child and into adulthood. Jesus was more than ready for any questions that the teachers of Israel would have for Him. In fact, He had some questions of His own for them as well. Questions that they would struggle mightily to answer. And it was in fact these questions that astounded the instructors. They were altogether amazed that this child from Nazareth, which was known for being a place of "nobodies" and "ne'er-do-wells", could have ever attained such knowledge. The answers to the very questions that eluded them are, in fact, very well known to those of us who believe. He was God incarnate. He didn't just "know the Word". He was "The Word made flesh" (**John 1:14**). His grasp of God's truth is superior to that of all men, for He... is The God of The Word.

Jesus was in the temple and absent from his earthly parents for those three days, because His Father had foreordained it. The fact that He was there during the feast of Passover was also not a coincidence. For, some thirty-one years later, He would return to this very place and demonstrate His authority over it, in The Spirit and power of Almighty God. He would be questioned by the priests and rejected in their blindness, then crucified after their mock trial. But this would not be the end of His story, for after three days in the grave He would rise from the dead and declare His victory over sin and death. And all who believe in Him, though they also be "nobodies" and "ne'er-do-wells", will be given everlasting life... and PEACE with The Father.

This may not be a common passage to be preached at the time of Christmas, but it is indeed a great passage to show us why He came in the first place. By the age of twelve, a separation from His earthly parents was beginning, and a transition to do the will of His Father in heaven was underway. Mary and Joseph had never fully understood exactly Who this Child was. They knew that He was the promised Messiah, but they could never have fully grasped the fact that they had been entrusted to have God Himself living in their midst!

The implications of such responsibility are in fact overwhelming to consider. But the truth of it is, God's plan would have been fulfilled regardless; regardless if Mary and Joseph fully understood it, regardless if the Jewish rabbis ever accepted it, regardless if Satan himself opposed it in all his fury. Jesus has been given all authority, and His will can never be overridden. And it is this truth that allows us

to have peace. ***Peace that passes all understanding!*** It is a peace that assures us that the Church, as well as its mission, will continue to the very end.

***Jesus came near and said to them saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of The Son and of The Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'*** ***Matthew 28:18-20***

He is still with us in authority and power today, as we follow His commands. And it is in this authority that we can have PEACE.

### **Peace For Our Anxiety (vs. 48-49)**

Can you imagine how frantic Joseph and Mary must have been for those three days? I remember once when our oldest son, Scotty, was just a toddler. We all went to the Smoky Mountains with my family. Sandi was taking care of Seth, our youngest, who was just a baby at the time, and I was walking around just enjoying the view of the mountains, when we looked around to see that our little man had disappeared. We began frantically searching for him. I was in absolute panic, and my mind was envisioning every possible horrific kidnapping scenario imaginable. I ran to the place where all the cars were parked and checked in every one to see if someone had stolen our child. He was nowhere to be found. The sickest feeling that I have ever had came over me as I began to believe that he had been lost to us forever. Sandi was equally as frantic. She started to cry.

It was just about then that we both looked up and saw our son toddling along, holding the hand of my younger brother, who had just "taken him out for a little stroll," he said most innocently. And THAT was the day that I almost murdered my younger brother! The whole episode lasted for approximately thirty minutes. I cannot begin to fathom all that Joseph and Mary felt after three whole days of searching. I imagine that they were beside themselves, with grief, anxiety, and maybe a bit of guilt, for not watching their son as closely as they should have. And I am also pretty sure, that when they found Him sitting comfortably in the Temple having a nice chat with all the Rabbis, there was quite a bit of anger! Wouldn't you agree?

Have you ever been anxious, or even angry, with God? Let's be honest here. Of course we have. You see, we don't always understand what God is up to. It's not like he has to check in with us before He does something, now is it? God has the right to do whatever He wants to, whenever He wants to do it. Jesus wasn't being disobedient to His parents by staying behind in The Temple. He is God, and as such, He had every right to do that. The fact that they didn't fully understand it... well, that was on them. Maybe if they had stayed a bit closer to Him, instead of assuming that everything was going according to their plan, then they wouldn't have been so "caught off their guard", as it were.

You see, God's plan is what will happen, whether we are ready for it or not. Joseph and Mary were anxious, because they didn't understand what was going on, but not for a single moment was God not in control of the situation! The same is true for us. Many times we do not understand what is going on around us. But God does. And ***if we belong to Him, then all things will work together for our good (Romans 8:28).***

The whole point of this story is that God is in complete control, and therefore, worry serves no purpose. And furthermore, for the record, Jesus didn't wander away from His folks. They wandered away from Him! And all of their anxiety was a consequence. ***We would have a lot less to worry about in this life, if we simply stayed close to Jesus at all times.*** He is our sure and steady anchor in times of trouble. Just stay close to Jesus, abide in Christ (***John 15***), and everything will be taken care of. I love what Jesus said to them, when they had their little "freak-out" moment."

***Didn't you know that it was necessary for Me to be in My Father's house?***

***Luke 2:49b***

In the Greek text, there is actually no mention of the word “house”. It has been added (incorrectly I believe) for clarification. What He actually said was, **“Did you not know that it was necessary for Me to be in the things of My Father?”** What was He saying exactly? That He was doing the will of His Father. That He was perfectly carrying out His Father’s plan for Him at the time. He asked them why they didn’t understand that. Even after He explained it, they still didn’t “get it” (**vs. 50**). But we should. God is always right on time, when He does the things that He does. Sometimes, we may be in the dark about it. Sometimes, we do not understand what He is doing or why, but we should never let that rob us of the peace we have in Christ. I certainly cannot understand what has been going on all this past year. **I don’t know exactly what God is up to, but I know that He is good, and that whatever He’s doing, it’s right on schedule.** So I can either worry, or rest, in the fact that He has got this. I can have peace, even in anxious times. For though I do not know what Jesus may be doing, I can rest assured that He does!

**“Therefore I tell you: Don’t worry about your life, what you will eat of what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing? Consider the birds of the sky: They don’t sow or reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth more than they? Can any of you add one moment to his life-span by worrying? And why do you worry about clothes? Observe how the wildflowers of the field grow: They don’t labor or spin thread. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his spender was adorned like one of these. If that’s how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won’t He do much more for you — you of little faith. So don’t worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ Or ‘What will we wear?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.”**

**Matthew 6:25-33**

So be at peace this morning... God’s got this!

### **Peace Of His Acceptance (vs. 50-52)**

The last portion of this passage simply fascinates me. Here, we see the very heart of The Son of God. At the age of twelve, His mind was light years above that of His earthly parents. They could never hope to understand all of His ways. He is the God of the ages. And yet, He submits Himself to them.

**Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them.**

**Luke 2:51**

Now this would be the kind of verse where all the “legalists” in the church would say, “He did this to be obedient to The Ten Commandments to honor His father and mother”. And to some degree, they would be correct. But I see much more than that here. I do not believe that The Son of God obeyed His earthly parents, simply because it was the right thing to do. **I believe He submitted Himself to them because He loved them, and He knew in His perfect heart that they loved Him as well!** After all, had they not just proven that fact by their frantic search?!

I almost quit the ministry quite a few years back. In fact, I even told God that I had had enough. You see, at that time I was on staff in a church filled with extremely legalistic people. It seemed that many (not all) were so enamored with their own sense of self worth, that the church had become a place where many would look down on the shortcomings of others, while pretending they had none of their own. There was no love, only condemnation. There was no joy, only self-righteous indignation. It was, to say the least, suffocating.

You see, I believe that the blood of Christ doesn't just "cover over" sin. ***I believe that the blood of Christ erases sin forever and completely.*** If this were not the case, then we would all be hopeless. I also believe that no church in this world has a single "perfect person" in it. Joseph and Mary certainly weren't perfect (no matter what the pope might say to the contrary). After all, they wandered away and left Christ at the church! But their imperfections didn't keep Him from loving them! And He was certain that they loved Him. And therefore, He went with them and did what they asked of Him.

Do you know how I know that Christ does what we ask of Him (answers prayer)? Because that is what He does for those who love Him! We are highly favored, not because we are good, but because He is good! If He refused to accept us until we were perfect, then no one would ever be accepted. Period. So don't let anyone tell you that He won't answer your prayers. Because if you love Him... He will.

***"If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you."*** **John 15:7**

And by the way, if you are staying close to Christ, then you will never ask for something that He doesn't want you to have in the first place. To love and know Him is to seek out and search His will before asking. And just like He was willing to do what his parents asked of Him, He is willing to do for you, if you love Him. Even if you aren't "perfect". You see, Christ lived a perfect life, and *"God treated Christ as if He had lived believers' sinful lives, so that God could treat believers as if they had lived Christ's perfectly righteous life."* (to quote from John MacArthur).

Now, I am not saying that we should not strive for holiness. We have been called to be set apart to bring glory to God. Of course we should not live as this world does. But even on our best days, we still fall short. *That means all of us.* But to be in Christ, is to love Christ. And to love Christ, is to be loved by Christ. The reason that we strive to obey Him is because of our love for Him. Joseph and Mary didn't have their little boy all figured out. They didn't really grasp half of the things that He said, but He loved them anyway. Don't let anyone tell you that He doesn't love you, that He won't listen to you. For He does, and He will, if you love Him.

***"The one who has My commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. And the one who loves me will be loved by My Father. I also will love him and will reveal Myself to him."*** **John 14:21**

Joseph and Mary were doing the very best that they could to be good parents to The Son of God. They didn't always do it right, but they sure wanted to. Why? Because they loved God, and they loved Jesus, their Son. And love, covers over a multitude of sins (***1 Peter 4:8***). We can have peace in the most trying of times, knowing that we love God, because He first loved us. We are "highly favored", which simply means that we have been accepted. We didn't earn this acceptance, nor could we ever have hoped to. But if you believe in Him, then know this... you are loved. So do your best to live like someone who belongs to God, and His Spirit will guide you along the way. ***Stay close to Jesus.*** Don't leave Him at the church as you go your own way. Make sure to stay by His side at all times. It is not His responsibility to follow you around wherever you choose to go. You have been called to follow HIM! Do this, and you will have peace in difficult times.

And all of God's accepted and favored said... **TRUTH!!!**