**“Peaceful Focus”**

John 1:1-5, 9-14, Isaiah 9:2-7, Titus 2:11-14, Luke 2:1-20

 Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, 2021

“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!**’”

Grace to you and that peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

As you might imagine, a young couple **focused upon** **their travels and safety** **… and her health**. For the people occupying the little town of Bethlehem, **focus was upon accommodations and food … local businesses upon making money from the visitors**. For shepherds tending to flocks, night brought extra duties and the protection of their charge. They herded them all into a cave, lit a fire at the entrance to it, sat and guarded the cave entrance from predators. **Focus in the world (and each of these’s parts of it) were as they are now: mixed and dependent upon priorities, reacting (more than in some choreographed manner), “going through motions” overall**, but **dealing with these “motions” in ways particular dictated by expectations and then mood**.

**Spain (on that first Christmas night) was Spain**; knew nothing about what was happening. **The Middle East wasn’t much different**. Two adults, then a few more, became privy to something strange. None knew the **implications**. None **could (with perfect conciseness) KNOW FOR SURE** the **implications**. **Focus**, though, **God helped with**. And it was a **focus PEACEFUL** as is the **definition of** “**PEACE**”. Nothing perfect, of course, other than the **fact of it** and **Who it got gifted from**.

It’s **God’s desire** (Scripture says) that “all people” (**EVERYONE**) “**BE saved**”, which means that **ALL PEOPLE** would **BE AT PEACE AND IN-POSSESSION-OF A FOCUS THAT’S PEACEFUL / ALL PEOPLE BEING AMONG “THOSE WITH WHOM GOD IS PLEASED**”. The **“GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY THAT IS FOR ALL PEOPLE”** is that **WE CAN** **HAVE PEACE OF GOD (IN HIS PLEASURE)** **and then a PEACEFUL FOCUS** because “**unto US a child has been born: the Savior who is Christ the Lord**.”

And where **FOCUS** can be **a challenge**, **PEACE** is a gift from God. And His gift (**PEACE**) is **free to those who’d just simply receive it**. And God **helps His own favored people to have (beyond it) a PEACEFUL FOCUS** and **PLEASURE** by His “Good News” for the night we celebrate here as well as all nights (and days) that follow it. So angels sang:

**“GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST**

**AND ON EARTH PEACE” (WITH PEACEFUL FOCUS)**

**“AMONG THOSE WITH WHOM GOD IS PLEASED!”**

**I**

God had **gotten the attention, and then helped with the focus, of Mary and then Joseph**. An angel announced to each (early on) what the strange thing meant as the Holy Spirit impregnated the girl and her “betrothed” had to be OK with that (and its **reason why**). **Since their angel encounter**, you’d have to imagine that they **poured through the prophetic writings speaking of what this would be**. They wanted **reinforced** and **clarified** in everything that they’d heard. And **focus** (with that) wasn’t easy. Criticism, doubt, and mockery were their day-to-day distractions. Then there was the travel to the **census taking**. 70 miles of, sometimes, rough terrain walking or maybe riding with the birth imminent, they **had to go**. The occasion of the Roman edict of a registration of people only in the city of their ancestors meant “no leniency”. So man and “betrothed” had to **show up** and **be counted** in Bethlehem 5 days (on good days) travel from where they lived.

And, then, for **health’s sake**, they **waited until the last minute to leave for Bethlehem**. With no hospitals, home (with family) was the **safest place to birth a child** except for the forecast that **Bethlehem** was to be the place of the Messiah’s birth. **Imperfect and challenged youth pointed themselves toward a perfect and divine end**, **focus** had a **location**, with a 9-month **very-noticeable pregnancy displaying the inevitable**. Joseph and Mary **proceeded** to the little town **protecting the Son of God Who she carried**. The Father of Heaven **provided** **them** and **circumstance** to deliver Himself into the world … He provided the Means. The Godhead embodied would make His **grand entrance** among the animals of a barn since better accommodations **weren’t available** … nor (for Him) would better accommodations **fit the circumstances He planned**.

He did, though, **plan to let a few others know of that birth night**. Shepherds just outside of town were **interrupted by the News**. Maybe as much to **reinforce the focus of mom and earthly dad as to focus also them**, angels came to them that night (and only to them). What we get **passed, then, to us** is the **subtlety of their testimony with all else in prophecy and witness**. What we’re to **believe** is **the Word passed to us small and few in exposure, yet larger than the universe in effect**.

A **baby** so far and a **couple of people, then** **some more**, and **SALVATION and PEACE had come**. The Heavenly Hosts (or **multitude**) announced and praised it above a field. Men with, maybe, some younger men or boys, **heard it, then went to see it**: “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.’ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘**Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made know to us**.’ And they **went with haste** and f**ound Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger**. And when they **saw it**, they **made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child**. And **ALL WHO HEARD IT** wondered at what the shepherds told them. And the shepherds returned, **glorifying and praising God for** **all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them**.”

**II**

**I** **picture them all there (at the manger)**. Mary, Joseph, shepherds, even the animals also, **focused upon the Divine Creator, through Whom (with the Father and Holy Spirit) all things have been made, made a baby**. It was God’s pleasure to be **pleased with each of those gathered and looking upon God who’d become man**. Of **those** “with whom God is pleased” **PEACE ON EARTH** is gifted with then **focus provided in that baby laid in a manger**, with prophecy about forecast and announced and praised in the Heavens … yet very-much embedded (in the frailty of a baby in a feed trough) **on the** **EARTH so as to SAVE IT**.

If **you** are not certain of the “**pleasure that God has of you**” than “**go over to Bethlehem” in some manner or another and “see this thing that has happened” to you who are in this world. “Make haste” somehow “and find Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger” and hear what angels sang about Him, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth” (with Him) “peace among men with whom He is pleased!” “Unto you is born in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” Kneel before Him and you will never lack PEACE and a PEACEFUL FOCUS**. The baby came to **live the perfection you and I haven’t and then die, sacrificing Himself to the end result that we deserve**. The **GIFT, THEN**, is **giving us what we don’t deserve: THE FAVOR OF GOD WITH EVERY BENEFIT THAT COMES WITH IT**. **Merry** Christmas, **in +Jesus’ name**. Amen.