**“Announcing Peace”**

Luke 2:1-20

Christmas Eve

“And 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 peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

Soon, here, we will be holding lit candles, lights dimmed, and together singing of the peace brought to this earth on that “Silent of Nights”. “All is calm, and all is bright”. And, for a few moments, it may **feel** that way. Few nights match this one for its moment of “calm” like this, with family around us all doing together what we’re doing (cherishing the moment, and together … **feeling** it together). Christmas Eve is **here** … and we’ve been **here** before, and yet repeat its tradition and remembrance and, quite honestly, **announce (with our own voices) the same things angels once did**. “All **IS** calm, and (because of the Christmas baby) all **IS** bright”.

And yet we are (probably all of us) **realists**, and after we blow out the candles and climb back into our cars, we likely **remember** a world that’s hectic and noisy, traffic to contend with, and some tensions, maybe, at home or tight schedules to have to meet.

It's Christmas Eve, and yet business as usual in some manner or another. The activities and “**busyness**” may be different mostly (extended family around tonight, possibly, where it’s not usually), but even the “**different**” will soon return to the “**same**” … and “**sameness**” might not be as “**comfortable**” as what we’d like it all to be. Crimes will happen even tonight. Police officers will have to work, and roads may be busy even tonight. And homeless people may remain homeless **tonight** and soldiers in Ukraine still will be protecting their country from invasion. Even tonight we’ll choose to lock doors when we go to bed … and do so even tonight for very good reasons.

And yet **we sing and speak of “peace” tonight** **… just as angels did so that we could**.

**Text**

It was tax time **then**. A “**decree**” had gone out, and a “**registration**” put people on the roads to towns of lineage, and **demand** and **meeting schedules** and **inconvenience** and **(probably) bad tempers** and **crime** and **over-crowding** and **discomfort** found at least the documented family without a bed, nor an even decent-smelling place to find some rest. But, **there and then (in that context)**, **“the time came for Mary to give birth”** …

… and **angels announced it, yet only to a few laborers**. To them one angel spoke intimately and then the whole sky lit up with a “multitude from Heaven (the hosts)” singing of something called a “**peace on earth**” … **from** **Heaven** … and that kind of “peace” not known in any **real sense on this planet** since there was (for a time) a **good “peace” (man with God)** in a garden.

Men and women, though, corrupted the earth (and earthly life). Choosing **against** God rather than staying “for Him”, men / mankind (every last one of us, and even still) chose (and chooses) our own ways over and against (often) the divine way and we (as commercial’s encourage) “Have it our own way”, and think we “deserve a break today”, wanting and trying to “do it our way”, being proudly, often, “set in our own ways”. Even where that’s not a full out (all the time) war, it’s still (at best) a mundane existence eternally speaking. There **IS** too much noise and too much traffic without a perfect road system … and even roses that we might “stop to smell” we do just for moments (or on a vacation, or fool ourselves into thinking that “civility” is all the peace that’s available) … which we **complacently** **settle for**.

Or despair at, or at least wonder and worry and stress about, and medicate because of with entertainment or adult beverages or toys (designed for various age groups) … and, then, “**settle**” (and I don’t know how to more appropriately express that).

Work consumes us, and what we call “daily life” we allow to “keep us busy” (enough to not consider the difference between God’s “peace” and our somewhat “sanity”). We might lull ourselves to sleep, largely, about what we could be missing in a life full-time cared for by God, but the grind (work and duties) helps us do that … which maybe it did for shepherds who were, themselves, “on the clock” as accounted in our Christmas text. Our Christmas text actually tells us a lot about “daily life” then **intervened** in Bethlehem and beyond. Soldiers of Rome guarded streets and census counts so that taxation could be applied to people and enforced and the duties of innkeepers and manual laborers was their **norm (even that night)**. And the norm felt **normal** other than in **a couple of places (but still upon this earth)** … and announced by a vision and sound **presented to** **just a few, but EFFECTIVE (AT LEAST POTENTIALLY) UPON ALL**.

**Application**

I hope **you’re** **listening** **and reacting** **as if** **you’re** **one of those few** **… since you are (by the message passed to you) one of those few**. Through their testimony, **we** get that **gift announcing “peace” in Christ Jesus**. We’re (as a matter of fact) beyond where that gift extended itself. And that enlivens us more than it even did them then, so accentuates our remembering, tonight, of its **initial moments**. The **wonder** of **“such as that was” that intercepted a normal night (FOREVER)** has to make us consider **ALWAYS** what and when **other divine interceptions promised might strike**.

The “peace” **announced then arrived (to prepare for the completion)** of what was to **be** **SALVATION**. The divine baby didn’t come to “**accent**” **to an already decent inevitability** (it wasn’t for “**icing to an already pleasant cake**”). It was the birth of the only One who could **perfectly** **grow on behalf of the world** **where it can’t do that demanded thing**, **offer, then, His Holy and perfectly-lived flesh to sacrifice for our inability and unwillingness to be what God expects, dying for justice to the fact that the “wages of sin being death”**. “Peace” has, only far secondarily, been designed to be between **man and man**. It had to be, first, between **man and God** … which **WAS** the point … thus **the Gift begun that night**. “Unto you is born **this day** in the city of David a **SAVIOR**, **who is Christ the Lord**.”

….

There was a night in one of the bleakest, quote, “**normal days**” of our (not-too-far-past) history. On European fields during World War I, both sides of battle called a truce on the Eve and then Day of Christmas. For the brief moments of **just that time**, bombs didn’t explode and guns and bullets didn’t fire shots. Singing all-joined-into (together in various languages but with the same melodies) **music announcing Christmas and its gift of “peace” over-riding human warfare** filled the air. Gifts (it was said) were thrown from bunkers from each side to the other, expressing a “peace” that’s beyond where humans are able and, often, interested in sustaining … yet **“peace” with a common God (and knowing it) by the sacrifice of the Baby remembered born this night**.

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth **peace** **among those with whom God is pleased**”, and His pleasure God’s always attached to the **Means of His delivering it (that Baby and His sacrifice and ways God promises to bestow it so that we can know that we have it)**. **The Christ-child died eventually to redeem the sinful world by His own Holy bloodshed as payment**. But not all **apprehend that Baby**. By the **hearing of every Word He’d ever speak**, “faith” is promised to be built, so **we’re getting God’s pleasure in its announcement to you**. He **baptizes** so that our **connection to that Baby is established, so God’s pleasure IS as to His own Son**. He **feeds of the sacrifice of that Divine baby**, and people can be nourished by served it in churches like this one. God **promises “pleasure” (His “pleasure”)** and **“peace”** **among those with whom He is pleased”**, and we **can** **get it** in the undeserved (yet actually delivered) ways **He says**.

For the **Gift** begun upon this earth (and for you) this night, **enjoy** what **WE’VE** **been** **given**. “Unto **YOU is born**” the angel said to the few and then **to us through them**. “Mary” (for one) treasured up all these things that the shepherds “made known to her and Joseph that had been told them concerning this Child”, pondering them in **her heart**. **The shepherds** “**returned” to their fields and duties, “glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them**.”

May **WE** be **treasurers of these things**, **pondering them in our hearts also**, **glorifying** **and praising God** **(and telling)** **all we have heard** … since **WE “have been told”**.

A blessed Christmas to all of **YOU** … **in the name of the Christ-child, Jesus**. Amen.