



Advent **(Week 2/4) Peace: The Prince of Peace**

Small Group Discussion Questions

Connect *How can waiting for Jesus' return be a way to train you more-and-more in hope?*

Warm-Up

1. What aspects of Christmas do you find stressful? What about Christmas (if any) brings you peace?
2. How peaceful do you think the night Jesus was born was? Why?

Read Luke 2:8-11

3. Who gives a message to the shepherds? Why do you think the shepherds were terrified and afraid? Are there any other examples of an angel of the Lord from the Old Testament you can think of?
4. What is the message of good news? What important titles does the angel give the baby?
5. What does a "saviour" do? Why were the people of God waiting for a saviour?
6. What type of peace did the people of God long for? What were the current clues that peace *had not yet* come (hint: see verse 1-3)?
7. What is *shalom*? How is this peace different from political peace? Who is this type of peace between?
8. Why did the people know they needed rescuing *and* that they could not rescue themselves?
9. Do you think you need rescuing? What do you need rescuing from?
10. Do you ever try to rescue yourself? Why do you think you people tend to rely on themselves?
11. What can we do to mend our relationship with God?

Read Luke 2:11-14

12. Who does the angel say this baby is? What does "Messiah" mean? What does "the Lord" mean?
13. What difference does it make that this Messiah is not just *from* the Lord, but *is* the Lord?
14. Who were the people of God expecting to come and save them? How is this Messiah different to who they are expecting? What are the clues at his birth?
15. How does Jesus bring peace? How is this different from how most kings bring peace?
16. Who is this peace for?
17. Who does God's favour rest on? How do you know you have God's favour?
18. Why is it important that peace is *from God* and not from us?
19. How does faith in Jesus as your Saviour shape your experience of peace? In what way is peace with God certain? In what ways can our experience of peace still change?
20. What helps anchor you to the peace Jesus brings, when you are in the midst of challenges and darkness?

Apply *What helps remind you of the ultimate peace that Jesus brings?*

Pray *Gracious Father, thank you for not giving up on our sin and rebellion, but sending us your very Son to bring us peace with you. Help us turn to and depend on the Prince of Peace, and his death for us. Amen.*

GOING DEEPER

Advent **(Week 2/4) Peace: The Prince of Peace**

Small Group Discussion Questions

On Your Front Line this Week

Invite someone along to join you for Carols by Glowstick, this Tuesday & Wednesday night.

For Families

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: stbartskids.org

Listen, Watch, and Read

- *Listen (sermon):* “Christmas Peace” by Tim Keller:
<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/christmas-peace/>
- *Listen (sermon):* “Heaven Comes to Earth” by Tim Sheppard:
<https://www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/58761/>
- *Listen (sermon):* “The Gift of Peace” by Johnny Dyer:
https://www.allsouls.org/Groups/206375/H009_Christmas_Peace.aspx?show_media=99601&show_file=109304
- *Listen (sermon):* “Peace on Earth” by Glenn Nesbitt:
<https://stebbes.org/sermons/peace-on-earth/#sermons>
- *Watch (video):* “Shalom - Peace” by the Bible Project:
<https://bibleproject.com/videos/shalom-peace/>

Series Resources

- *Read:* “Advent (Fullness of Time Series)” by Tish Harrison Warren. 📖
- *Devotional:* “Sing in Exultation” by Jonathan Landry Cruse. 📖
- *Devotional:* “The One True Gift” by Tim Chester. 📖
- *Devotional:* “Advent for Everyone: Luke” by Tom Wright. 📖
- *Read:* “What Christians Ought to Believe” by Michael Bird. 📖
- *Read:* “Is Christmas Unbelievable” by Rebecca McLaughlin. 📖
- *Read:* “The God who Became Human” by Graham Cole. <https://bit.ly/3g68RBj>
- *Read:* “On the Incarnation” by Athanasius. <https://bit.ly/3E5gLmB>
- *Watch:* “The Incarnation (Spoken Word)” by Humble Word. <https://bit.ly/3OhgPUP>
- *Listen:* A Carols Playlist (curated by the St Bart’s staff team): <https://spoti.fi/3OaIsTK>

For sermons and additional resources, visit stbarts.com.au

st bart's

ADVENT

*Week 2/4 "Peace: The Prince of Peace"
by Amy Norman (7/12/2025)*

평화: 평화의 왕자 | DÖÖR: Du Miöc dë Döör | 和平: 和平之君 |
சமாதானம்: சமாதான பிரபு

Bible Passage: Luke 2:8-14

*Gracious Father, please by your Spirit prepare our hearts
to receive and welcome the Prince of Peace. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

Preparing for Christmas can seem like the very opposite of peace.

- Endless to-do lists, being bombarded with sales, planning meals and celebrations, end year deadlines, and school concerts.
- And aside from the *increased activity*, Christmas can expose the lack of peace in our relationships. It can expose where relationships are missing, where they have been broken, or where they are just so far from perfect.
- When we look at the nativity scene, with Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus in the manger - it looks so peaceful in comparison!
- As we sing in carols, this silent and calm night seems idyllic.
It might be easy to assume that *if only* we had a stripped back version of Christmas *like this*, *then* would we find *peace*.
- But we shouldn't be fooled by the peaceful scenes on Christmas cards and nativity sets. It was an amazing night, but probably not the serene scene we might expect.
There were unexpected visitors.
Fear-invoking angels.
The uncertainty of where the baby would be born.
And all set on a bigger backdrop of Roman rule and occupation.
- *Peace* - even on that first Christmas night was needed.
And peace arrived, not because Mary and Joseph got their preparations right.

But because the *baby born* will bring peace.

- But not just for a time, or one place,
but an ultimate peace extending to every people, across every age,
to reconcile us in the greatest way.
- The very reason we associate peace with Christmas, is that the *Prince of Peace* has come.
- In Luke chapter 2, we see:
**peace proclaimed, peace comes through a baby, and
peace to those on whom his favour rests.**

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PEACE IS PROCLAIMED | VERSES 8-11

평화가 선포되다 | Döör ayä Luëël | 和平宣告 | சமாதானம் அறிவிக்கப்பட்டது

First, **peace is proclaimed.** *Luke chapter 2, verse 8 ...*

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. *Luke 2:8-11*

- The shepherds are out in the fields,
keeping the night shift, when out of nowhere an angel of the Lord appears to them!
- They are more than just *surprised*,
they are *terrified and afraid* of who is before them.
- Throughout the Old Testament, angels of the Lord are commonly described as warriors,
bringing the Lord’s judgement, often with a sword in hand.
- But this angel doesn’t announce judgement to the shepherds, but *good news*.
Good news was normally an announcement of military victory or about the birth of a king.
Both would be potential promises of peace.
- The good news of peace is not just proclaimed by *one angel of the Lord*,
but later joined with a great company of the heavenly host.

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This is not a choir of angels, but military unit of the armies of heaven,
proclaiming glory to God and peace on earth!

- But what *type of peace* is this heavenly army proclaiming to the shepherds?
- The peace proclaimed is about salvation — that's why it *requires a saviour*. Verse 11 ...

"Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you." verse 11a

- The people of God (including the shepherds) had been waiting hundreds of years for God to send someone to rescue them.
They knew that the *type of peace* they longed for *needed* a saviour.
- Because they had rebelled against God, the people God had set apart had been conquered, exiled, and oppressed. That was not just their history, it was their present experience.
(We see that in the census being taken by Caesar Augustus. The ruler of Rome, Caesar, has such power, that he can order the movement of ordinary people from over 2000km away!)
- The people of God *knew* (with lived experience) that *on their own* they were helpless to bring peace.
- And they not only longed for release from their oppressors, but they longed for *shalom*, a comprehensive peace promised by God that would extend between God and his people.
This peace was not simply absence of war, but wholeness and blessing.

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Their darkness largely a result of their rebellion against God, but prophet Isaiah foreshadowed a time where the relationship between the people and the Lord *would be* restored.

- We know that the people longed for a rescuer to *bring this type of peace*, for the cry in the psalms repeated again and again is "Deliver us Lord from our enemies!"
- The people of God were painfully aware *not only* that they *needed* rescuing, but that they *could not* rescue themselves.
- It's strange to our modern ears, because often we just don't think that we need rescuing, *and if we did*, then we'd just rescue ourselves.
- We can completely overestimate *our ability* to bring peace with ourselves, peace with others, or peace with God.
We can and we should strive to make peace with others, but we also experience that our best efforts are *never quite enough*.
- And on a bigger, on the ultimate scale, we can't mend the rift caused by sin between us and God.
There's no new habit we can adopt,
no new boundaries to put in place,
no list of things that we can do on our own to overcome our sin,
and to fix our relationship with God (on our own).

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- The people of God were painfully aware that their rebellion against God was the cause of their distress and their distance from God.
They knew that *peace* with God, and *peace* from their enemies, could only be brought about by God sending a rescuer.
- We are in the same boat.
We need a rescuer *to bring peace*, and we can't bring peace ourselves.
- The good news is that peace *is from God*, and he has sent us a rescuer, to bring us the peace we need.

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PEACE COMES THROUGH A BABY | VERSE 11-12

평화가 아이를 통해 오다 | Döör ëë bën nē mēth | 和平藉嬰孩而來 | சமாதானம் ஒரு பாலகன் வழியாக வந்தது

Second - **peace comes through a baby**. The angel of the Lord proclaims in *verse 11*...

Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." *Verses 11-12*

- It might seem fitting that a warrior-like angel is announcing the arrival of a saviour. But just to add to the surprise of the night, the angel announces *not that the saviour is imminently arriving with an army to defeat the Roman Empire*, but that the saviour has arrived as a baby!
- But this is not just *any baby*, he is the long-awaited Messiah. The title of Messiah and Lord is bound up right in the angel's announcement! The Messiah is not just *from God*, but this baby *is the Lord*. He is the Messiah, the Lord.
- Those six short words: "He is the Messiah, the Lord" are some of the most profound in the history of salvation. God has come to rescue his people, but this time not through plagues or parting the sea, not through armies, but God the Son being born to us.
- This is what theologians call the incarnation, where God became man.

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- The people of God were expecting a king, in the line of David, to come and liberate them. And the angel of the Lord announces *he is here!*
- But the humble nature of his arrival - being born in a manger not a palace, being welcomed by shepherds not dignitaries - gives a hint that *the way* he will bring peace, will also be surprising.
- One reason it was expected that only a *king* would bring peace, is that you need to be able to marshal power to defeat enemies.
- Kings could bring people peace *for a time* when they were successful against their enemies. Peace was secured when they were strong enough to defend or deter any threats.
- And for *ultimate* peace to prevail *forever*, then you need the type of power to overcome the greatest enemy who will ever appear. Peace *forever* requires the very worst enemy to be overcome, decisively and once-and-for all.
- And that is what this baby will do. He will face the worst enemy, the power sin and death, and he will overcome it forever by laying down his own life.
- Jesus' victory is so certain, that at his birth the coming peace is proclaimed. However, the path of peace won't be through a mighty army. It won't be by force, but through taking on the full force of the enemy;

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executed by the Romans and dying for the weight *of our* sin and rebellion.
The path of peace is through the cross.

- The peace that restores relationship between the people and God, the power that can overcome the worst enemy, is only *through him*.
- Jesus *is the focus of peace*.
He is the bringer of peace - sent by God to us.
He is our Saviour - the one who has overcome the worst enemy.

PEACE TO THOSE ON WHOM HIS FAVOUR RESTS | VERSES 13-14

그의 은혜가 머무는 자들에게 평화가 있다 | Döör ee nöj Köc Nhieër lèn kë piöu yum | 平安臨到蒙他恩寵之人
| சமாதானம் தயவுள்ளவர்கள் மேல் தங்கும்

Finally, we see *who* will receive this peace. ***Peace to those on whom his favour rests.*** verse 13...

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.” verses 13-14

- Already we’ve seen the *type* of peace the angels are proclaiming.
Not simply military victory over enemies, but comprehensive peace with God,
with one another, and with the world.
- And *the way* this peace will be brought is focused on the Saviour God has sent,
this baby who will bring peace through his own life laid down. //
- *And this peace is being made available to all.*
- We might be so used to this story, that the fact that the good news was announced first to
the shepherds might not seem that radical or surprising. But this is a big deal.
Shepherds would not be the first pick to receive the news of world peace,
for they were considered pretty unimportant.
- They were despised and mostly excluded from society and from worship.

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And yet the announcement from heaven is not discriminating,
but the shepherds are entrusted as witnesses to the good news that the Saviour has arrived!
This good news is *truly* for all.

- In fact the whole story of Jesus’ birth is full of surprising accounts where God comes to
and uses people who would have been ignored and seen as unimportant:
a barren woman, an unmarried girl, and now shepherds in the field.
- It doesn’t matter your background or your education,
God’s good news is not just for some, it is for *everyone* and *it is for you*.
- When we read or hear that this peace is *to those on whom his favour rests*, it begs the
questions, well *to whom* does God’s favour rest?
- It is primarily a peace that *comes from* God.
It is not about God having favourites, but God finding favour and pleasure in us.
And the only way that is possible, is by trusting in the one God is truly pleased - his Son!
- To whom does God's favour rest? *Those who put their trust in his Son.*
- How can you *know* the favour of God?
You can trust the one who pleases God.
Rather than turning to yourself to bring about peace in your life,

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you can turn to the Saviour sent by God.

- Knowing the favour of God is not meant to be complicated.
Listen to what the angels announce: *that this baby is the Saviour*.
Look at his life and the type of enemies he overcomes,
the type of enemy that we all face - our sin and death.
Trust his victory, trust his way of peace in laying down his life,
in dying for our sin, in defeating death on the cross,
and rising to new resurrection life.
- If you trust in Jesus *as your Saviour*, then you already know the favour of God.
And if you don't yet trust in Jesus, then see that his welcome is for everyone,
and it is for you.
To know God's favour, all you need is to respond to his gift,
to accept Jesus as your Saviour.
- The type of peace Jesus brings is *certain, completed, and one day will come in fullness*,
but that doesn't mean the moment we put our faith in Jesus our lives will be sorted out,
or there won't be difficulties that arise that seem to attack our peace.
- The peace Jesus brings is *ultimate*, for it reconciles us with God.
But the peace Jesus brings is also a *resource*,
that can equip us for the ability to endure suffering, and even in the face of suffering.

13

- In Ephesians, we are told to *be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power*.
Part of that includes putting on the *readiness that comes from the gospel of peace*.
- In Philippians, we are given the promise that the peace of God will guard our hearts and
minds in Christ Jesus, a type of peace that will transcend understanding.
- And after Jesus was resurrected and appears to the disciples,
again and again he reminded them of the peace he brings.
- There may be times, maybe right now, when you just don't *experience* the peace of God as
you would like to.
Life might seem too complicated, full of too much grief, or pain.
But the good news is - that even amidst and in that thick of that -
we can have an anchor of peace, *for peace is not an emotion but a person*.
And no matter how hopeless, messy, or dark life might be right now, *Jesus is with you*.
- He didn't wait until we got our lives together, but endured and suffered on the cross,
to bring us peace that *will change* our eternity, even if we can't feel it now.

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CONCLUSION

- In Sunday School a few years ago a three year old came to me looking so sad. She had a question: “Did baby Jesus die on the cross?”
- I could see now why she looked so sad and confused. I could share that he wasn’t killed as a baby. But Jesus grew up, pointed that the way to God was through him, showed through his life that God welcomed all, and when the right time came, decided to lay his life down.
- The baby born on Christmas Day was destined for death. Her hunch that the events of Christmas and Easter are connected was correct! Peace that was proclaimed at Jesus’ birth - pointed ahead to the cross, the very way of peace.
- We can rejoice at Christmas, for this child *has* brought peace, a peace that is for everyone who comes to him.

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*Heavenly Father, thank you for the ultimate peace you have brought to us in your Son Jesus.
Please Lord, may your Spirit continue to point us to and deepen our desire for the peace Jesus brings.
By your Spirit, help us to wait faithfully for the fullness of peace that will come when Jesus returns.
In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.*

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