



CALVARY
TUSCALOOSA

TEACHING PLAN
DECEMBER 6, 2020



PEACE

LUKE 2:8-38

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TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying Luke 2:8-38. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: Luke carefully recounted the first days of Jesus' earthly life, taking us through three movements: the pasture, the manger, and the temple.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: In this passage, we encounter the themes of hope, peace, and joy, all of which are tied to the glory of God expressed in the coming of the Messiah.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: It is only through Jesus that we have real peace.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

- 1 Have you ever found yourself in a scary situation where you feared for your safety? What happened? What was your response?
- 2 How is it possible for Christians to have peace, even in very hard or scary times?

The Advent season is a time to reflect upon the coming of the Savior, Jesus Christ. It is also a time to remember that He will come again and to look forward to His return with anticipation. We rejoice at Christ's first coming because it brought us peace. Through Christ we have peace with God, and because of this we can have peace in our hearts no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in.

Even in the face of terror, persecution, chaos, and tragedy Christians can be at peace and settled. This is true because their peace is based on their relationship with God, not temporal circumstances or feelings. Christians can have peace no matter what is happening around them or to them.

The Advent season is a time to remember and re-center our hearts on Christ and His finished work. As we do that we will arm ourselves with a peace that passes all understanding.

ALTERNATE INTRODUCTION

What is an example of a healthy practice that impacts more than one area of your life?

How can neglecting healthy practices likewise have adverse affects on many areas of life?

Brushing your teeth not only cleanses your mouth, but it makes your breath more pleasant to those with whom you interact. Paying your electric bill not only keeps the debt-collectors away, but also means you get to enjoy electricity for another month. Changing the oil in your vehicle not only makes it last longer, but it gets rid of that annoying "check engine" light.

When we are diligent to practice spiritual disciplines, we also find that there are positive side effects. One of those is a peaceful, rested heart before the Lord. We Christians worship and obey God, He blesses us with His presence and grace, and these also produce peace in us. One of the key themes of the Advent season is peace, as we will see in our study of Luke 2 today.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

Advent is a season of expectation and longing. It is a time to recall the longing of the people of God as they awaited the promised Messiah. We remember that many did not see and experience what Christians today know and cling to. We also remember that Jesus promised that He would come again. We look forward with hopeful anticipation to the fulfillment of that promise. Our anticipation is mixed with hope, peace, and joy.

Luke recorded for us the circumstances surrounding the arrival of the Messiah, God the Son. The passage that we are studying today describes three events that immediately followed Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. The common theme that connects all three is peace. The peace of God that can only be found in Christ was present from the very beginning of Jesus' earthly life. Let's look carefully at this passage.

> Have a volunteer read Luke 2:8-20.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." ¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." ¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷

When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child,¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

NOTES:

Each year it seems like radio stations start to play Christmas music earlier and earlier. This is what often ushers us into the Christmas season, even if we aren't quite ready. Sometimes this is a well-meant effort to get started as soon as possible on the "most wonderful time of the year." Other times, it is a ploy to get folks spending money. An interesting thing about Christmas music in the West is that it is one of the few remaining vestiges of a biblical Christianity that is accepted by the population at large. It isn't uncommon to hear songs like "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing" in a setting where you would be shocked to hear phrases like, "Christ, the everlasting Lord."

This song also contains a phrase from our text today that we will focus on:

*Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King!
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled."*

In verse 14 of the text, we find Luke's account of what the heavenly host said:

*Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.*

The shepherds who were tending their sheep in the fields that night must have been terribly surprised when an angel of the Lord and the heavenly host appeared to them to announce the birth of Christ. The event must have been something they would always remember.

- What did the angels mean when they said, “on earth peace”? How does the peace of Christ differ from how some may define peace?

Notes:

The choir of angels did not mean to announce a peace accord between the nations of the earth. “On earth peace to those on whom his favor rests” signified the work that Jesus would accomplish on the cross to reconcile people to God the Father. Jesus brought about spiritual peace between people and God through His atoning sacrifice on the cross for sins. Those who are in Christ are no longer enemies of God, but are loved as His sons and daughters. Jesus’ work made it possible for people to return to the peace that our first parents had experienced in the garden before creation fell under the curse of sin.

- What caused the loss of that peace in the first place? Why did the peace of the garden of Eden disappear?

The enemy of God, Satan, deceived Eve, who then gave the forbidden fruit to Adam. They believed the word of Satan and trusted in their own wisdom. When Adam rebelled against the law of God, peace was replaced with chaos and fear. They hid themselves from God and attempted to cover their nakedness and shame. When confronted by God, Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent.

Adam’s rebellion against God destroyed the peace they had once enjoyed with God because sin separates people from Him—the source of peace—and makes them His enemies. Romans 5:10 says, “When we were God’s enemies,” pointing to the fact that those who are stained with sin are in a hostile posture toward God. There can be no real peace until reconciliation is achieved between God and people.

- What did Jesus' arrival on earth have to do with a restoration of the peace between man and God that was lost?

Notes:

Jesus' shed blood on the cross made it possible to have peace between the one true and living God and mankind. Paul wrote, "He himself is our peace" (Eph. 2:14). God established this peace with people through the sacrifice of Christ Jesus, removing the hostility between God and man. The guilt of man is covered. God's wrath is satisfied. There is no other way to have peace with God.

Paul wrote, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5) No other mediator exists apart from Jesus Christ who can reconcile sinful man with a holy God. Jesus Himself said that no one can come to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). Christ is the only provision that has been made for the salvation of mankind, in the same way that the ark was the only provision made for salvation in Noah's day. It didn't matter if the people believed in the coming judgment. It didn't matter if they liked the ark or not. When the judgment of God came there were only two kinds of people: those who were on the ark and those who were not. Nothing else mattered once the waters rose.

Ezekiel 18:4 explains that God, because of His holy nature, demands that sin be punished. Jesus' holy and righteous life qualified Him to suffer the punishment of sinners. Only a completely holy and righteous being could adequately pay for the sins of another. Because Jesus pleased God the Father in every way, His substitutionary sacrifice was accepted by God and satisfied God's justice.

> Have a volunteer read Luke 2:21-35.

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.²² When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”),²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required,²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:²⁹ “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace.³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all people,³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”³³ The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him.³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against,³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

NOTES:

When the angels announced that the birth of Christ meant there would be peace on earth, they meant that Jesus would reconcile sinful man with a holy God. For those who have it, that peace is an unshakable, unalterable reality. For those who are in Christ, peace with God is theirs forever.

The next section of Luke, however, describes an old man named Simeon who experienced a different kind of peace that is also available to Christians. Simeon said, “You now dismiss your servant in peace.” Simeon wasn’t describing a fixed reality, but a feeling of well

being or wholeness. This is generally what we think of when we think about peace.

Everyone wants to feel peaceful in their hearts. It is an unpleasant, exhausting thing to be filled with chaotic uncertainty and rampant anxiety. This kind of peace is different than the fixed reality of a reconciled state that is true no matter how a person feels.

Notes:

- What is the relationship between a daily feeling of peace and the fixed reality of peace with God?

- How have you experienced this in your life? Where do you long for this?

While peace with God doesn't mean that Christians will always feel peaceful, they will experience more and more peace in their everyday lives as they grow in faith. The finished work of Christ on behalf of sinners not only saves their souls from eternal punishment, but it makes it possible for them to walk in a new way upon the earth. Christians are free to set aside anxiety and bitterness. Christians are enabled by the power of the Spirit to walk in confidence and peace, even when they must pass through the valley of the shadow of death.

Peace with God through Christ makes it possible for Christians to continually experience peace in their hearts. It is important to remember, however, that the objective peace that we have with God because of Christ's merits is a settled fact. The subjective peace, on the other hand, is a matter of sanctification and daily dying to self. Peace in our hearts is there for the taking, but it won't be forced upon us.

> Have a volunteer read Luke 2:36-38.

There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,³⁷ and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.³⁸ Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

NOTES:

When Jesus showed Himself to the disciples after His resurrection, He said to them, “Peace be with you” (John 20:19). Based on our study this far, we may wonder whether Jesus was speaking of reconciliation with God or a feeling of well being and wholeness. In fact, Jesus was offering them both. The peace that a Christian can experience in his or her heart today is rooted in the peace that the Christian has with God through Jesus’ sacrifice.

When a person experiences the peace of God, something inevitably follows.

- How did Anna respond to encountering Jesus as a child? How did she display the peace of God in her response?

Simeon wasn’t the only person who rejoiced to see the Messiah that day. Anna was there also. Luke explained that Anna was a widow and a prophet. She “never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.” Anna saw the child and may have even heard Simeon’s words about Him. Luke reported that Anna “gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem” (v. 38).

Anna told others about the Christ. Of course, she didn’t have all of the information about Him. She

didn't know about the miracles He would perform or the teachings He would give. She didn't know He would be betrayed, crucified, and raised again. But she knew that He would be the "redemption of Israel," and the joy and peace she experienced compelled her to tell others about Him.

Notes:

It is natural to want to tell others when we are affected deeply by something or someone. You may remember the Samaritan woman at the well who encountered Christ in John 4. After Jesus spoke with her about her spiritual need, she went and told the whole town about Him. When the demoniac was delivered from his affliction in Mark 5, he went into the region of the Decapolis to proclaim how much Jesus had done for him.

- How might the Advent season be a season of evangelism for Christians? How does experiencing the peace of Christ point us toward this?

Followers of Christ ought to always be about the business of making disciples among all sorts of people (Matt. 28:18-20). The Advent season, however, provides unique opportunities to share with others the reason for peace in our hearts. Many Christmas traditions may be used to open the door to spiritual conversations with people who are lost in their sins and in desperate need of a Savior.

One simple way to share with people is to ask them if they have ever heard the origin of the Christmas story. Oftentimes people are interested in knowing the backstory behind traditions. Consider inviting a group of friends over one evening in December to sing Christmas songs and then read the account of the birth of Christ from the Book of Luke. This would also be an excellent time to share the gospel. You may also gift all of your guests with a Bible or a book that explains more fully the meaning of Christmas.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

- 1 What are some ways that you can remind yourself of the reconciliation that you enjoy because of the sacrifice of Christ?
- 2 What are you tempted to look to in order to settle your restless heart? Have you replaced God with some idol in your life that you are hoping will bring you peace? What needs to change?
- 3 How does your peace with God compel you to invite others into that peace through faith in Christ? How will you tell others about the good news of Jesus Christ this Advent season?

PRAY

Give thanks to God for the peace that you have with Him as a result of the reconciling work of Christ on the cross. Ask God to help you reflect on that peace more often and to invite others to repent of sin and place their hope in Jesus Christ.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - What are some practical steps you can take to place yourself in a position to live with a peaceful, rested heart?
 - Is there something you are neglecting that you ought not to neglect and is causing you to have a restless, chaotic heart? How might you submit this before the Lord?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize Luke 2:14.

LUKE 2:8-38

2:8. The sheep used for temple sacrifices in Jerusalem were kept in fields outside Bethlehem. The work of shepherds was more important at night because of the threats from thieves and predators. Though the social position of shepherds was lowly, the role is often viewed positively in the Bible. God is pictured as a shepherd (Gn 49:24; Ps 23:1). King David was the shepherd of God's people (2Sm 5:2). Jesus called himself "the good shepherd" (Jn 10:11).

Notes:

2:9-10. The glory of the Lord was a bright light (in the midst of the darkness of night), indicating God's glorious presence. It is only natural to be terrified at the sight of an angel, not to mention a sudden, overwhelming light from the sky. The angel spoke to calm the shepherds and refocus their attention on the proclamation of the gospel (good news). All the people could refer to Israel, but given Luke's emphasis on the gospel spreading to the Gentiles, it probably means "all nations."

2:11-12. Savior means "deliverer, redeemer." Messiah (Gk *christos*, equivalent to the Hb *meshiach*) means "anointed one," especially focusing on being anointed as king. Lord (Gk *kurios*) was used of secular rulers, but it is also the standard translation of the primary name of God in Hebrew, *Yahweh*. The shepherds would have been shocked to hear that a divine messianic ruler had been born, but to be told he was lying in a manger and born to a man and woman of humble means would have seemed preposterous.

2:13-14. The praise of the heavenly host is well-known today as the "Gloria in Excelsis Deo," from the first words of v. 14 in the Latin Vulgate (Glory to God in the highest). To give "glory to God" does not give him something he otherwise lacks. Rather, it is a confession of the wondrous glory he forever possesses. The peace to be found on earth was not the Pax Romana (the "universal peace" of the Roman Empire) but peace

with God through faith in Jesus Christ (Rm 5:1). The people whom God favors are those who have found God's undeserved favor, or grace, through Christ.

Notes:

2:15. What has happened refers to the birth of the Savior, who is Christ and Lord (see note at vv. 11–12).

2:17. On the message they were told about this child, see note at vv. 9–10.

2:18 All who heard it included anyone in or around Bethlehem with whom the shepherds had the opportunity to share their story (vv. 8–14).

2:19. It is possible that Luke gained much of his knowledge about what happened in chaps. 1 and 2 from talking to Mary, who recalled the things she had “treasured” in her heart.

2:20. The shepherds returned to the fields outside Bethlehem to tend their flocks. They were glorifying and praising God because everything they found in Bethlehem was just as the angel said it would be (vv. 10–12).

2:22-24. The days of their purification lasted another thirty-three days after the child's circumcision (Lv 12:2–8). To present him to the Lord was what was done with every firstborn male in Israel (Ex 13:2, 12).

2:25-26. Like Zechariah and Elizabeth, Simeon was a righteous person. Israel's consolation spoke of the comfort and hope the people had in regard to God's plan for his people, but, more specifically, it referred to Messiah's role in that plan. In the OT, the Holy Spirit came on a few selected people (Nm 24:2; 1Sm 10:10; 16:13). After the day of Pentecost, the Spirit has indwelt all believers (Jn 14:16–17; 1Co 3:16). The Holy Spirit filled Zechariah so he could prophesy about John (Lk 1:67–79). In this case, the Spirit assured Simeon that he would live long enough to see

the Messiah, so that he could prophesy about Jesus (2:29–32).

2:27. The Holy Spirit guided Simeon to the right place (the temple) at the right time (when the child Jesus was brought to perform ... what was customary under the law).

Notes:

2:28-32. Simeon's words here are traditionally called the "Nunc Dimittis," from wording in the Latin Vulgate translation. Simeon's Divine Master had kept his promise that he would live to see Christ (i.e., your salvation), so he could now die (dismiss your servant). God's salvation in Christ (v. 30) is for all peoples (the Gentiles and Israel). The worldwide scope of the gospel is Luke's ongoing theme in both of his writings (his Gospel and the book of Acts).

2:33-35. Legally, Joseph was Jesus's father even though it was the Holy Spirit who caused Mary to conceive. Jesus was a spiritual divider of society (a sign ... opposed). In considering the gospel about Christ, many in Israel "fell" eternally due to unbelief and others rose by faith to eternal life. Mary would suffer great pain in watching Jesus be rejected and executed. How people respond to Jesus is the difference between pardon and condemnation, eternity in heaven or hell.

2:36-38. The immediate shift of focus from Simeon, a male who prophesied, to Anna, the prophetess, fits with Luke's emphasis on women. The other prophetesses mentioned in the NT are Philip's daughters (Ac 21:8–9). If Anna had been married for seven years and a widow for eighty-four years, she was well over a hundred years old. The Greek text can also be read to mean that she was a widow until age eighty-four, but that reading does not fit the circumstances well. Besides being a prophetess, Anna's other ministry included devotion to prayer. Since Jerusalem was the Jewish capital, the redemption of Jerusalem means the redemption of all the people of Israel.