

### Advent #3: The Proclamation<sup>1</sup>

Luke 2:14  
ABC 12/15/19

This Advent we started with what man's problem is & have clearly seen, from cover to cover in the Bible, our problem is sin. We continually miss the mark of God's holy righteousness making it impossible for us to have a relationship with Him because we're under His righteous wrath for our sins. That's a huge problem, one we can do nothing to change. That's why, as we saw last week, God took it upon Himself to solve the problem by giving us His promise of a coming Redeemer. As soon as man sinned God told Him of One who would come to defeat Satan & redeem us from our slavery to sin & grant us His own righteousness so that we could be restored to having fellowship with our loving, Creator God. Today we see God's proclamation about this promised Messiah, Redeemer, & Savior. What's the proclamation we're most familiar with? Probably the *Emancipation Proclamation*. The executive order signed by President Lincoln that changed the legal status of slaves in the confederate states from slave to free (1/1/1863). There have been many proclamations from presidents, ranging from great to absurd. Here are a few of the special days recognized by presidential proclamation:

- Greek Independence Day
- Tartan Day
- Loyalty Day
- Law Day
- Malcom X Day
- Parent's Day
- Citizenship Day
- Good Neighbor Day
- Family Day
- Child Health Day
- German-American Day
- Leif Erikson Day
- General Pulaski Memorial Day
- America Recycles Day

Bonus question: What is today & who proclaimed it as such? Bill of Rights Day which FDR proclaimed in 1941 on the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ratification of the Bill of Rights.<sup>2</sup> As wonderful as all these proclamations are, the one we're looking at today is far better. It speaks of the

<sup>1</sup> Advent series adapted from Paul David Tripp's Advent sermons from 2010

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_observances\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States\\_by\\_presidential\\_proclamation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_observances_in_the_United_States_by_presidential_proclamation)

fulfillment of God's promise to solve our problem through a Redeemer/Savior who would buy us back & deliver us from our sin. The angels' message was nothing less than the good news, the gospel proclaimed with great joy. God's messengers couldn't wait to proclaim that the promised Savior from our problem was here, the One who'd deliver His people from the curse of sin, death, & hell, & who'd bring them the blessings of His kingdom & the glories of eternity in heaven. This proclamation is just as important & promising today as it was 2,000 years ago. **Lk 2:8-14** PRAY

The whole concept of the glory of the Lord surrounds the Christmas scene. Luke 2:9 says, **The glory of the Lord shone around them.** Then the angels shouted, **Glory to God in the highest.** Isaiah promised, **The glory of the Lord shall be revealed** (40:5). What's that mean? To begin with, **the glory of the Lord** is an expression of God's person. It's any display of His character or attributes. In other words, glory is to God what brightness is to the sun. Glory is to God what wet is to water. Anytime God discloses Himself, He manifests His glory. The psalmist says, **the heavens declare the glory of God** (19:1). Everything He created shows His glory in some way or another. God also revealed His glory in a very particular way through the Shekinah, the physical appearance of His glory that appeared to the Israelites as a pillar of light by night & a pillar of cloud by day (Ex 13:21). But God also spoke through His Word, given to the prophets & recorded in Scripture (2 Pt 1:21). This was the highest & most enduring expression of God's glory OT saints had access to. You see, God only whispers in His creation. He revealed a shadow of His glory in the shekinah. But He speaks with absolute clarity in His Word. Still, there was an incompleteness in it until God **in these last days has spoken to us in His Son** (Heb 1:2). Jesus is God & we see every attribute of God manifest in Him. The fullness of God is seen as it was never seen before in Jesus Christ. Hebs continues, **Jesus is the radiance of His, God's glory.** Who is Jesus? The glory of the Lord. He is the **exact representation** of God (3). He's the personal embodiment of the brightness of God's glory. That's why it says in Jn 1:14, **the Word became flesh, & dwelt among us, & we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace & truth.** The message of Christmas is that God came into the world in all His glory, & what was only a whisper became a shout. What's the familiar, one sentence proclamation found in Lk 2:14? **Glory to God in the highest, & on earth**

**peace among men with whom He is pleased.** Are those words so familiar that we rush past them without understanding them? There's something about familiarity that puts our brains on cruise control. We shouldn't do that with this proclamation. These words are the thoughtful, meaningful response of the great company of angels to the astonishing message the angel proclaimed in vs 9-12. One angel announces the King, Savior, Messiah, Redeemer is born & the company of angels respond with this triumphant declaration of glory & peace. This is a proclamation of celebration of this Baby's birth, the Messiah that was promised. These angels were doing what angels constantly do, praising God (cf Rev. 5:11-12; 7:11-12). All heaven broke loose with rejoicing at the birth of the Son of God. The angels knew Him as the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Trinity before His incarnation, where they saw His inexpressible glory. They understood that the fall had transformed the human race into sinful rebels against God, but they also knew God had provided a way of salvation. The angelic chorus of praise reflects the transcendent pinnacle of all thought & action; the supreme reason for all that exists—the glory of God. The ultimate purpose of the good news of salvation is to save sinners so they can join the angels in glorifying God. But these words also, in a very clear way, define your need & mine. & in defining our need, they define the mission of this promised Redeemer, now come as a Baby. & if they define our need & define His mission, then these words not only announce a birth, they also predict His death. **Glory & peace** are the 2 major words: **Glory to God in the Highest, & on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased.**

The joyful news that on a day, in the fullness of time, in the prophesied city, a Savior was born, who was Christ, the Lord. That news has 2 great outcomes. 2 great purposes: **Glory to God in the highest, & on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!**

**1. Glory to God** Why were the angels praising & glorifying God? Because Jesus the Savior was born. The coming of this Child was the greatest revelation of the glory of God & the coming of this Child would bring peace to God's people. God had informed them long ago of His plan of salvation. They understood humanity's fall into sin & that the majestic 2<sup>nd</sup> member of the Trinity, would lay aside His riches, come to earth in humility for undeserving sinners, live a perfectly

righteous life, & finally die on the cross to bear the curse & punishment of their sins. They understood the true significance of Christ's birth & were praising God because they were seeing the beginning of the final phase of His redemptive plan. The angels tell us that with the birth of this Baby something happens in heaven & on earth. They proclaim that with His birth, this Boy, who is the eternal Son of God, has made the invisible God visible. God's glory shines through all eternity with unparalleled splendor because of the incarnation of Jesus.

Again, all of us were created to live with the glory of God in view. The principal motivation of our life should be that God would be praised. We were created to live a God-ward existence so that God would be the reason we do all that we do. That's the way it was meant to happen but in a moment of disobedience & rebellion, Adam & Eve chose to live for the glory of themselves rather than the glory of God. They wanted something in the creation more than they wanted God. Ever since that moment, there's been, in all our hearts, a glory confusion & a glory war. We don't always live for the glory of God. There are other glories that compete in our heart for His glory. In fact, you could argue that every sin has, at its root, an exchange of God's glory for some other glory. For example, lust exchanges the glory of God for momentary pleasure. Materialism replaces the glory of God with the possession of physical things. Pride chooses to live more for self-glory than God's glory. In some way, we're all glory thieves. If you reflect on your world this week, you probably won't be able to say, *I lived at all times this week with the glory of God in mind*. There are times when lesser glories become more precious to us & we convince ourselves we can't live without them. We all have times where we want the creation more than we want the Creator. That never leads to a heart that's at rest. It never leads to inner peace. It never leads to satisfaction because the shadow glories can't fulfill your heart. They weren't designed to. **Glory to God in the highest!** Imagine what the world would be like if every person lived that way. Imagine what it would be like to live in a world where every human heart was ruled by the glory of God. This is the way God designed all human beings to live, for His glory. Obviously, God is glorified because this Child is born. & peace is to spread everywhere this Child is received. These are the great purposes for the coming of Jesus: Glory ever-ascending from man to God.

Peace ever-descending from God to man. God's glory sung out among men for the sake of His name. God's peace lived out among men for the sake of His name.

**2. Peace on Earth** On earth peace among men with whom He is pleased. On earth peace doesn't refer to peace of mind, rest for the weary, or absence of wars. The angels meant **peace** with God that results from genuine salvation. If we want **peace** to rule in our lives, God must rule in our lives. God's purpose isn't to give us peace that's somehow separated from Him. His purpose is to give us peace by being the most glorious Person in our life. A heart bent on showing the glory of God will know the peace of God. Because God's Son has brought reconciliation, we no longer need to be God's enemies. The angels were praising the Father, giving Him glory in heaven, because He sent salvation down to earth in the person of Jesus Christ, which brings us...

**A. Peace with God** The most basic need we have is peace with God. This is foundational to all our pursuits of peace. Rom 5:1 says, **Therefore, having been justified by faith** (that's the act of believing), **we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.** **Justified** means God declares you to be just in His sight by crediting to you the righteousness of Jesus. & He does that by faith alone: **having been justified by faith.** It's not by works, traditions, being raised in a Christian family, baptism, church membership, or being a good person. It's by faith alone. When we believe in Jesus as our Savior by faith, we are united to Him & His righteousness is counted by God as ours. We are justified by faith. & the result is peace with God. God's anger at us because of our sin is put away. Our rebellion against Him is overcome. God adopts us into His family. & from now on all His dealings with us are for our good. He'll never be against us. He is our Father & our Friend. We have peace with Him. It's the end of enmity & warfare with God. Peace with Him is the most fundamental & important peace there is. You & I were created for peace with God. We were created so the most important thing in our lives would be a relationship with Him. We were created to have the honor of being the worshipful, obedient, children of God.

**B. Peace with Ourselves** Because we have peace with God because of being justified by faith, we can begin to grow in the enjoyment of peace with ourselves. Here I'm thinking of any sense of guilt or anxiety that tends to paralyze us or make us hopeless. Here again believing the promises

of God with a view to glorifying God in our lives is key. Phil 4:6–7 is one of the most precious passages in this regard. It’s actually the most popular verse this year.<sup>3</sup> **Be anxious for nothing** (the opposite of anxiety is peace), **but in everything by prayer & supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God** (in other words, roll your anxieties onto God). The result? **& the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts & your minds in Christ Jesus.** The picture here is that our hearts & our minds are under assault. Guilt, worries, confusions, & doubts threaten our **peace**. & Paul says that God wants to **guard** our **hearts & minds**. He guards them with His peace. Don’t limit the peace of God by what your understanding can see. He gives us inexplicable peace & He does it when we take our anxieties to Him in prayer & trust that He’ll carry them for us (1 Pt 5:7). When we do this, when we come to Him remembering we already have peace with Him, & trust Him as our loving & almighty heavenly Father to help us, His peace comes to us & steadies us, protecting us from the disabling effects of fear, anxiety, & guilt. We’re then able to carry on & God gets the glory for what we do, because we trusted Him. The peace God brings us with Himself allows us to have peace within, peace because we have a relationship with the **Prince of peace** (Is 9:6) who rules all & who guides us by His hand. Because of our relationship with God, we have peace in our hearts, we have rest. Do that this Christmas & all the time. Take your anxieties to God. Tell Him about them. Ask Him to help you. To protect you. To restore your peace. & then to use you to make...

**C. Peace with Others** The 3<sup>rd</sup> relationship where God wants us to enjoy His peace is in our relationships with others. This is the one we sometimes have the least control over. So we need to say it carefully like Paul does in Rom 12:18: **If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.** When we don't have peace with God & we don't have His peace inside of us, it makes it very hard for us to live at peace with others. Ever notice that? Instead our lives are marked by conflict. I don’t think anyone in this room has lived a conflict free 2019, right? Probably not last month or even last week. Have you been free of all moments of irritation or impatience or anger even this morning? All around us is unrest & conflict. We have a peace

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<sup>3</sup> <https://factsandtrends.net/2019/12/10/what-are-the-most-popular-bible-verses-in-2019/>

problem. Brokenness with God leads to brokenness within, which leads to brokenness in the community that's around us. But Jesus tells us His disciples are to be **peacemakers** (Mt 5:9). **Peacemakers** are people who, through being at peace with God, have finally learned how to admit their sins, flaws, & weakness, how to surrender their pride, & how to love without the need to control every situation & every one. Christians should be fanning out into the world being **peacemakers**, agents of reconciliation among all the nations & families of the earth. Why? So that God receives even more glory. This Child, King, Redeemer, & Savior announced by the angel in Lk 2 will be the Mediator who brings us back to God by His death, so we can enjoy peace with God. Because our alienation from God is the root of all our trouble, that peace with God brings with it peace between people. All over the world, people will be brought into peace with God & then peace with each other. All this because this Baby was born.

But this peace the angels proclaimed isn't for everyone. Who is it for? Those **with whom He is pleased**, those **on whom His favor** or grace **rests**. Christmas doesn't bring peace to everyone. **Peace** comes only to those on **whom His favor rests**. That is, God chooses who comes into His peace. If you belong to Jesus the Savior, you have that joyful privilege because God's grace has rested on you. You didn't deserve it; you didn't earn it; you simply received it. It's all God's sovereign kindness & grace. **But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name** (Jn 1:12). It was only to His disciples that Jesus said, **Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful** (Jn 14:27). No one earns God's peace. He gives it to them because He's pleased to do so. Even though God's offer of peace goes out to all, only His chosen, those who receive Christ & trust Him as Savior & Redeemer & Lord, will experience the peace He brings. There are some to whom God sovereignly gives the peace of His salvation, but not to all. The angels weren't rejoicing for what people had done or would do to earn their salvation. No, the heavenly host was glorifying God because, though none can deserve salvation, God is delighted to give it to sinners by His own good pleasure. Jesus was born for a political mission to establish an earthly kingdom. He didn't come on an educational mission to

correct our worldview. God's Son wasn't sent here on a psychological mission just to make sure we felt OK with ourselves. In fact, He didn't come on a religious mission to make sure we did external, religiously appropriate things. No, Jesus' mission is much more radical & fundamental than that. If you don't understand this, you don't understand His mission. If we have a glory & peace problem, then, what we have is a heart problem. Our problem is that something's broken inside us. David gets it right when he prays, **Create in me a clean heart, O God (Ps 51:10)**. That's what we need: radical, personal, long-term, heart-change, because that's our problem. The prophecies of the coming Christ are very clear that He's coming to address this very problem. **I will give you a new heart & put a new spirit within you; & I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh & give you a heart of flesh (Ezek 36:26; 11:19)**. That's God's work, that this stony heart, resistant to change, would become a heart alive by God's work & now able to change. & that people, who once lived for their own glory, would now, by His grace, live for His glory. Not just in religious matters, but in everyday life, in our words, thoughts, actions, relationships, desires, & motives, all would be for the glory of God! That we'd have a heart that's been captivated by the glory of God, that's the mission of Jesus. & that we'd be brought by God's grace into peace with God.

It isn't OK that masses of humans don't live in peace with God. It's not OK that the people who walk this earth live apart from peace with God. As you work & shop & do whatever else it is you do, if you realize the majority of those you see don't understand the real meaning of Christmas (God's glory & our peace with Him), it ought to break your heart. Don't be comfortable with this because, if it were OK for us to live in a broken relationship with God & be just fine, Jesus wouldn't have come. Jesus came because our only hope is His grace. Have you received it?

You don't understand the Baby in the manger unless you know that He came to die as a sacrificial Lamb. He would come & all of His thoughts, desires, actions, reactions, & responses would be fully & completely & perfectly lived to the glory of God. He, on our behalf, would live perfectly, He'd live the life we couldn't live. & on the cross He'd bear our penalty. He'd face the rejection of the Father so we could know His acceptance & have peace with Him. Upward peace



that would create inward peace that would give us the ability to have outward peace. Jesus came willingly with full knowledge of what it would cost Him. He must die so that we would live. He would redeem for Himself humans who live for their own glory & who don't care for peace with God. He would change them into a people who growingly are captivated by the glory of God & who love the fact they have peace with God. **Glory to God in the highest, & on earth peace with whom He is pleased!** There's hardly a better way to sum up what God was about when He created the world or when He came to reclaim the world in Jesus Christ. The point of creation & redemption is that God is glorious & means to be known & praised for His glory by a peace-filled new humanity.

If, as I've been talking, you've been thinking & reflecting on your life, you'll recognize we still have a glory problem. We don't always get glory right. We also recognize we have a peace problem. We don't always care about peace with God. We don't always have peace within. We surely don't always experience peace with each other. The work of God's grace is as needed by us this morning as it's ever been. The angels proclaim our hope. The angels proclaim our redemption. The angels proclaim to us God's grace. Grace of a life lived & grace of a death offered so that we may live for His glory & experience His peace. **Glory to God in the highest, & on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests!**

If you've received the gift of salvation, you have God's good pleasure. & He deserves all the credit & all the glory for it. In fact, what occurred on that evening near Bethlehem was a mere preview & foretaste of the kind of endless praise we will render once we are in heaven (Rev 5:11-14). & if you're at peace with God, then you can go out & be at peace with one another. The more who embrace the gospel & do that, the better off the world is. Christmas means the increase of God's glory & the increase of peace, both with God & between people.

Today, as we think about Jesus, as we reflect on the Messiah who has come, may we thank God that He's satisfied our greatest eternal need by sending His Son, the sinless Savior, to lay down His life so we might be reconciled for God forever. Let us join the angelic chorus in praising & giving God glory, whose majesty shines most vividly in Jesus. Let us hear with joy the angels as

they proclaim peace with God & peace with others all over the world. In all of this, we humbly admit we deserve none of it. God's favor, His grace has rested on us simple because God, in His great kindness, chose that it should. **14**