

SERMON

Luke 2:13,14

A Song of Peace

Nunawading and Waverley, 29-11-20

Dear friends in Christ,

Watching young children is a terrific activity, especially when you have experienced a bit of life. Child A has a toy, child B reaches for it, child A bashes Child B over the head with said toy. Child B screams and runs to the umpire, namely mum or dad. Here you have a microcosm of our world, of protests in the streets, acts of terrorism, state and federal bun fighting, cyber crime and spying, and the poor old United Nations trying to bring peace to warring parties.

How tremendous it is to have a song of peace. In times of great upset, we can sing and we can have peace. Last week, we heard about the song of faith. Today, it is the angels who bring to us a song of peace. It comes from the angels because God initiated this peace; it was he who discussed with his Son the plight of humanity and suggested he go and suffer the anger and the troubled hearts of people everywhere. And so, it seems right that praise should begin in heaven and the great army host of angels compose a song of praise. **Suddenly, there was with the angel a large army from heaven praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest”.** They were praising God as the transcendent Lord, greater than a billion universes. Heaven is a word we use to describe God’s reign yet the strange thing is that at the forefront of this song is not the power of God but the grace and favour of the Lord.

Peace of any kind is a gift from our dear heavenly Father. You notice that in the second verse of the song: **Glory to God in the highest and on the earth, peace to people with whom he is pleased** Not peace on earth but **peace to the people on earth**. Whatever peace human beings arrive at from a treaty through to a session with the psychologist is a gift of God. But it is the peace

that arrives through his Son, our Saviour and Lord that really changes everything.

Some people think that God's good will is for people who have pleased him but the context does not support this. That would mean only some people who have earned God's favour would find peace when we know that no one deserves God's favour. Rather the contrast is between heaven and earth, God and all nations. God's pleasure is in all mankind: **peace to the people on earth.**

What is this peace? God establishes a relationship of peace with you because he reconciles you to himself, as Paul explains in Rom 5. All people exist in an enemy state of mind and behaviour towards God but through the gift of the Son in a manger, God has broken down the barrier of sin and rejection and brings his redemption to us today. Peace is the product of this salvation and that is why our Saviour tells us: **Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.** The Pax Romana was an enforced peace based on military power and the ability to conquer and suppress. God's peace is based on a new relationship of redemption God establishes through his Son. It is **a peace beyond human understanding** as we say each Sunday.

If we are honest, there is a savage beast that occasionally arises within us. We are all capable of attacking another, verbally or in other ways. The primitive amygdala takes over the more rational cerebral cortex. Therefore, all human beings need peace in their hearts and minds. I have found through knowing Christ and his grace, a softening of hardened ways of thinking and acting can occur. Bible reading and prayer, confession and then being instructed and taught by the Spirit bring a healing peace into the heart. We need to grow in peaceful ways and it can occur if we seek it.

Finally, after the peace of forgiveness and the peace of healing, comes the peace of glory. Simeon waited all his life for the coming of the Messiah and finally he saw Mary and Joseph

coming into the temple precincts. He boldly took the eight-day old Jesus into his arms and declared he could not **depart in peace**.

Like Simeon, we are ready to die because we know we shall enter into eternal peace. Often, when Jesus healed someone, he said: **go in peace, your faith has saved you**. We live in a divine peace now and then we enter into a visible peace, a peace in our bodies and minds. A serene bliss awaits us.

Deep peace in the mind and the heart will lead you and me to sing. How wondrous it will be when all of humanity takes up this song of peace.