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Intro. A few years ago in a small town, something noticeable was missing from the city’s Nativity Scene—someone had stolen baby Jesus. The townspeople were all up in arms about it & crying out, “Who would do such a thing?” A couple of days later, a note appeared, saying “Baby Jesus will appear on Christmas morning.” True to his promise, Baby Jesus was returned & everyone was at peace again. Isn’t it odd how we humans can get all worked-up about certain decorations & miss out on the real peace brought by God through the Messiah? As we continue our series from Luke 1-2 on “A Christmas Carol” & the 4 hymns in Luke’s opening chapters, today we turn to Luke 2:14, “A Song of Peace.”

Theme: Praising God

Background: Luke researched the life & ministry of Jesus, focusing significantly on the poor & the outcasts of society, showing Jesus to be the Savior of the world.

- Larger Context: Before focusing on this song, it is important to think of it in the larger context—God sent His angel Gabriel to announce to Zechariah that he & his wife Elizabeth would have a son in their old age & that son would be the forerunner to the Messiah (John the Baptist). Moreover, Gabriel appeared to Mary & told her she would become pregnant by the work of the Holy Spirit, because she was a virgin, & the Messiah would be born through her. The news of both babies results in songs of praise & blessing from Mary & Zechariah. Chapter 2 begins by showing us how Joseph & Mary, in Nazareth, journeyed south to Bethlehem, to obey a decree to be counted in their hometown for the purposes of taxation. While there, the time came for Mary to deliver her firstborn Son & He was born in a manger, because there was no room in the inn—or better yet, there was no extra rooms to be found, so the next best accommodations were found among the animals. This news came to a group of shepherds in the region of Bethlehem via an angel & a group of angels began singing this song.

➤ This song teaches us 2 big actions to take in light of Christ’s coming into the world:

1. Give glory to God in heaven for sending Christ the Lord to save sinners (2:14a)

- The heavenly host which appeared with the angel’s announcement to the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem sang “Glory to God in the highest”

Illus: We sing songs & say words which have lost their meaning to us—we use the word “holiday” as a replacement for Christmas, but it actually means “holy day.” We sing “Gloria in Excelsis Deo” & we may know it’s Latin for “Glory to God in the highest,” but we forget “the highest” references heaven & “glory” refers to praising God for His great value

- Why do we give God glory & value Him as One of great worth?
 - 1) Because He is faithful & has fulfilled His promise to send the Messiah to deliver us from our sins
 - 2) Because He is just & will right every wrong ever committed on earth
 - 3) Because He is “God in the highest”—He is above all other gods (false gods & demonic gods & manmade gods) & as the Supreme or Almighty God, whatever He says will happen, including the Truth of Jesus Christ
 - 4) Because He is the One True & Living God & all must bow to Him
 - 5) Because He does not regard anyone superior because of socio-economic status, but especially takes notice of the humble & lowly of heart
- The shepherds had heard that the Messiah would come to deliver them one day, but it’s safe to say that none of them were expecting it in their lifetime, because God had been silent for more than 400 years—but now that promise was coming true!

- We, too, must give glory to God—claiming His value & worth to us—for sending the Lord Jesus Christ to save us from our sins

2. **Get peace with God on earth through surrendering to Christ the Lord for salvation (2:14b)**

- Various Bible translations present the latter part of verse 14 differently. The most famous, the KJV, says “and on earth peace, goodwill to men.” That translation, as popular as it is, isn’t the most accurate. A better translation, seen in multiple Bible versions today, would be “and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased”—peace on those of His favor
- “those of His favor”—refers to God’s elect, those who receive His grace
- Understand that Jesus comes for “all people” (2:10), but only those who receive His favor benefit from His coming into the world (2:14)

Illus: You may have lots of family members and/or friends, but only certain ones benefit from receiving a Christmas gift from you or only certain close family members benefit from your estate—we do it through relationships, but God establishes relationships through grace/favor

- This understanding is important because the angels are not making a blanket promise of peace & goodwill for all the people of the world, but they are promising peace for all who receive His favor—all who receive His gift of grace (& that happens by faith)
- The word for “peace” has its roots in the OT term shalom. It means peace, well-being, blessing. The Jews use it as a form of “hello” & “goodbye,” but it means “may God bless you” or “may God’s peace go with you” (our “goodbye” came from the phrase “God be with ye”)

Illus: This notion of “peace” is significant for Luke’s message & for us today—in 27 BC Caesar Augustus ushered in the Pax Romana, or Roman peace. The Roman Empire brought various nationalities to peace with each other under their rule. Moreover, the Roman army began using paved roads, making travel by land faster & easier than any other time in history. They also sailed the seas & did away with most of the piracy of those days. Thus, it was much safer to travel by land or sea & people called it their time of peace. It lasted until AD 180, ending with the death of Marcus Aurelius, proving peace with man is temporary, while peace with God is so much more.

- Throughout history, mankind has tried making peace with God by appeasing Him. Many people have offered various sacrifices to appease the gods, sometimes cutting themselves to show their devotion to a particular god or even going so far as sacrificing their children to the god Molech. Yahweh, the One True & Living God has said the only way to have peace with Him is through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ & that peace comes when one recognizes a holy God, their own sinfulness & Christ as the only hope & answer to sin. They must repent from their sins & trust in God through the Messiah

Conc. By this time of the month & year, you’ve probably had your fill of Christmas parties, eggnog, fruitcake, white elephant gifts, Christmas songs, Presidential debates & more! You may be ready for some peace & quiet, but speaking of Presidential debates, in just over one month, Iowa will vote for the Democratic & Republican candidates & the other states will follow in the coming days/weeks—you may/should vote for a President next November, but a President won’t bring you lasting peace, so don’t put your hope there. And even though you may elect a President, you don’t get to elect a king. Jesus is both King & Lord but is only personal when He becomes your Savior. Won’t you receive His gift of grace today—today is the day of salvation—so you can have peace with God? Don’t insult Him by refusing His gift but receive it with joy!