

CHRISTMAS AT PALM VALLEY CHURCH

CONNECT

The prophet Isaiah refers to the Messiah as the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). These words were of incredible comfort to a Jewish population living in conflict. Peace is what they desired, and the Messiah would bring it to them, and to us, though not in a manner anyone expected. This Christmas, we'll look at how the Messiah that God sent to Israel brought peace not only in their time of conflict, but in our time of conflict as well.

- Share a story of a special gift you received at Christmas one year. What made the item so special to you?
- How do you handle surprises? Share a brief example.

DISCOVER

Read Luke 2:13-14

¹³Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, ¹⁴“Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”

Read Ephesians 2:14-16

¹⁴For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. ¹⁵He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. ¹⁶Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.

Read John 14:27-29

²⁷“I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So, don't be troubled or afraid. ²⁸Remember what I told you: I am going away, but I will come back to you again. If you really loved me, you would be happy that I am going to the Father, who is greater than I am. ²⁹I have told you these things before they happen so that when they do happen, you will believe.

- Looking at these passages, what are some ways Jesus brings peace?

- In Luke 2:13, how do you think the shepherds responded when, "¹³*Suddenly*, the angel was joined by *a vast host* (a huge number - think hundreds or thousands) of others - the *armies* of heaven" appeared - singing praises? What do you think you would have thought?
- How did Jesus make peace between Jews and Gentiles?
- What makes "peace of mind and heart" a gift only Jesus can give?
- What does Jesus say in the John 14 passage that is essential to the Christian faith? What makes it so important?

GROW

Big Idea: Jesus is the gift of peace for all

- Do you have difficulty receiving special gifts from people? If so, how does this impact your ability to receive forgiveness, especially from God?
- Are you confident that you have received the gift of peace that Jesus brought? How do you know?
- Does knowing Jesus has promised to return make any impact on your feelings of peace during this season?
- How do you celebrate Jesus' gift of peace?

NEXT STEPS

- We want to encourage you to experience more than just opening presents on Christmas morning. At online.palmvalley.org, you can find a brief devotional you can do with your family that morning to remind you and your family of what happened that first Christmas. Just read the passage and answer the questions together as a family. Pray together at the end, thanking God for His great gift - of Peace!
- What are your plans as an individual, and as a group to read and study through the Bible in 2019? We want to encourage and challenge you to join us on the Route 66 journey! There is a reading plan and other great resources at www.palmvalley.org/Route66

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Read Luke 2:1-20 | ¹At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. ²(This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. ⁴And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. ⁵He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child.

⁶And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. ⁷She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

⁸That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. ⁹Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, ¹⁰but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. ¹¹The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord (Jesus)—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! ¹²And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

¹³Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."

¹⁵When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

¹⁶They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. ¹⁷After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. ¹⁸All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, ¹⁹but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. ²⁰The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

- Why did Mary and Joseph have to go to Jerusalem?
- Who told the shepherds about Jesus?
- If you were a shepherd, would you have been frightened when the angel appeared?
- The angels and shepherds all did something, what was it, and why did they do it?
- Why do you praise God for Jesus?
- Who can you tell about Jesus?