



December 08 Sermon Study Guide **Pastor Lee Towns– Carols of Advent: *Peace***

⁹ Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified, ¹⁰ but the angel reassured them. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. ¹¹ The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! ¹² And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.” ¹³ Suddenly, 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.” ¹⁵ When 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.” ¹⁶ They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. ¹⁷ After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. ¹⁸ All who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished, ¹⁹ but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. ²⁰ The 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. Luke 2:9-20 (NLT)

A Life Application Study Guide

James 1:22-25 tells us to put into practice what we are discovering in God’s word.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. What is one of your favorite Christmas Carols and why?

'Silent Night' is one of the world's most famous Christmas melodies. The story goes that the carol (originally 'Stille Nacht') was first performed on the evening of Christmas Eve in 1818. Joseph Mohr, a young Catholic priest at St Nicholas Church, Oberndorf bei Salzburg in Austria, was in despair: the organ at his church had been incapacitated by mice, and the chances of fixing the instrument before the evening service were looking slim. But young Joseph had an idea. A few years before, he had written a rather beautiful poem called 'Stille Nacht'. So, he asked Franz Xavez Gruber, a schoolmaster and organist in a nearby town, to set his six-stanza poem to music. That night, the two men sang 'Stille Nacht' for the first time at the church's Christmas Mass, while Mohr played guitar and the choir repeated the last two lines of each verse.

As we continue this new series consider these lyrics and the image portrayed in this well-known carol:
*Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright. Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child.
Holy infant so tender and mild, Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.
Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight. Glories stream from heaven afar
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia, Christ the Saviour is born! Christ the Saviour is born
Silent night, holy night! Son of God love's pure light. Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With dawn of redeeming grace, Jesus Lord, at Thy birth, Jesus Lord, at Thy birth.*

Question: What images came to mind as you read the lyrics or perhaps you actually sang the words outloud. Did you experience a sense of peace in those few moments of reflection as you sang these words written so long ago?

2. How do you define **Peace**? If 10 people were polled there would likely be 10 unique answers, but your answer will define where you search for peace and how you know when you've found it. Lee suggests that you may be searching for a **replacement** to true peace. Read through these options and questions to discover how you may be approaching your own quest for lasting peace.

3.

- ***A Placebo peace*** - something that looks like peace but really isn't. - *(we tend to use the buzz of something new and call it peace, but it simply serves as a temporary lapse in the awareness of the absence of peace in our soul.*

Question: What has been a placebo peace for you?

- ***A Novocain peace*** - something to numb the pain of the absence of peace - *(we search for something that will numb the pain of the absence of real peace in our soul. We are fully aware that there is no peace but instead we make a choice to medicate the pain away.*

Question: What have you sought out to mask the pain caused by an absence of peace in your soul?

- ***An Alternative peace*** – a substitute - *(we tend to find something to put in the place of peace because we have reached the conclusion that there is no real peace available from any source.)*

Question: What has offered you a sense of peace but only temporarily?

4. There are 4 noises that can derail peace from settling in and taking up residence in our soul.
1. There are life noises that are inevitable like a loss of job security, an illness, the loss of a loved one that we are desperately missing. God is willing to solve some of our problems and walk with us through others. *“Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.” -1 Peter 5:7 NLT*
You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you! Isaiah 26:3 NLT
Question: How do these verses reassure you that God can bring about peace in the places where you have no peace currently?

2. Soul noise is a product of wants desires and longings can lead us into deep levels of unrest. The antidote is described in this verse. *“Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart’s desires.” - Psalm 37:4 NLT*
Question: How will you allow God to realign your heart to His?

3. Who are you in conflict with today? Take a moment and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart about this. *“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. John 14:27NLT “When people’s lives please the LORD, even their enemies are at peace with them.” - Proverbs 16:7 NLT*
Question: What do you believe is true about the promise and the statement in the verses above?

4. A guilt free conscious produces peace. Guilt is not a friend but rather a weapon used by the enemy of your soul.

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. ² And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.

Romans 8:1-2 NLT

Question: What is keeping you awake at night? How will you allow the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to free you from the bondage of living in guilt (used by the enemy as a weapon) as you allow Him to speak truth into your soul?

5. Reflect back and consider this question: Where have you lost or missed experiencing a true and lasting peace in your soul?

We are reminded that Christ is the “*Prince of Peace.*”

*The biblical concept of peace (shalom) is far richer than our everyday connotations of the word “peace.” The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call shalom. In English we call it peace, but it means far more than just peace of mind or ceasefire between enemies. In the Bible shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as the creator and savior opens doors and speaks welcome to the creatures in whom he delights. Shalom, in other words, is the way things are supposed to be. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995)*

Question: How will the teaching today impact your pursuit of a lasting peace in your soul and how will you offer that same peace to others?

