

Sermon Title: **Series Characters of Christmas 2 – Mary & Joseph – Second Sunday of Advent - Peace**

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Scripture Reference: **Matthew 1:18-25**

Thesis: **Before Mary and Joseph could experience Peace with each other they had to come to Peace with God;**

Purpose: **Today, we will learn how to experience both Peace with God and the Peace of God.**

Key Word: **"Peace"**

Key Points: **#1 Jesus Did Not Bring Peace on Earth**
 #2 Jesus Brought an Opportunity for Peace with God
 #3 Jesus Brought the Peace of God

I) Introduction:

Scripture Reading is: **Matthew 1:18-25**

A) The Setting:

1) **We all want to live in Peace . . . don't we?**

- (a) Then why is it so hard for us to achieve peace?
- (b) Why are we fighting and quarreling with each other?
- (c) Is it even possible to achieve Peace?

2) **We cannot say truthfully, that everyone wants peace.**

- (a) For the most part, in our culture we grew up having been taught to value human life.
- (b) But there are cultures who teach children to hate others and to even kill them.

3) **This is going on in Palestine today where even the textbooks used in the schools are teaching children to hate Israelis and Americans.**

- (a) This is going on in many of the radical Muslim areas of the Middle East.
- (b) Children are taught to die killing and maiming people outside their faith will be rewarded in the next life and this is simply not true.

4) **We think it was bad when Hitler taught that the Jews were less than human for rejecting their Savior?**

- (a) Well I tell you that there is a whole generation being raised today being taught to not only hate; but to kill is to be rewarded.
- (b) Those of us who have studied God's Word are not surprised by this;
- (c) For we know that near the end of this age before the Lord establishes true Peace there will be an Army that will rise up to exterminate the Jews and anyone who gets in their way.
- (d) I believe we are witnessing the time when the prophetic events of the last days are being lived out before us.

5) **Every generation has longed for Peace from the beginning of time.**

- (a) Adam and Eve could not attain it even within their own family.
- (b) There have been short periods in history where some appearance of Peace was experienced.
- (c) But there has been and will be no lasting Peace on earth until Jesus comes to establish His kingdom.

6) **Jesus Himself said that we could expect war and rumors of wars until that day when His Kingdom has come.**

- (a) But there is a Peace that can be found.
- (b) For it is possible to experience an inner Peace even amid trouble times.

7) **Continuing our series on the Characters of Christmas today it take us to Mary and Joseph.**

- (a) To say their relationship started on a rocky road would be an understatement.
- (b) Mary is pregnant and engaged to Joseph who was a righteous man.

8) **The theme for our Advent candle this week is Peace.**

- (a) As we will see Mary and Joseph are in need of Peace.
- (b) They must find Peace with each other if they are to be married.
- (c) They also need Peace with God and the Peace of God to face the challenges ahead.

- (d) This brings us to the part of our story in our scripture reading for today where we pick up the events found in the gospel of **Matthew 1:18-25**.

B) *Sermon Prayer*

C) (The Hook)

- 1) **We know from Luke's Gospel account that when Mary is told the news that she is with child . . . she goes off to stay and help her Aunt Elizabeth who is having a miracle baby of her own.**
 - (a) Since Zachariah was struck dumb (unable to speak),
 - (b) It must have been nice to have someone to talk to about the exciting news.
- 2) **But now she returns and tells Joseph the whole story.**
 - (a) Now think about this from Joseph's perspective . . .
 - (i) Your fiancée to whom you are pledged has been gone mysteriously for months.
 - (ii) Only to return and tell you she is pregnant and it was by the Holy Spirit of God.
 - (b) Do you think you would believe her?
 - (c) Not likely?
- 3) **But as we know from the Bible that God spoke to Joseph in a dream and told him it was true.**
 - (a) So, Joseph makes peace with Mary.
 - (b) They find Peace with God and the Peace of God.
 - (c) Having no idea what lays ahead of them in these troubled times.
- 4) **Today, we will learn how to experience both Peace with God and the Peace of God.**

TS: **But we must first begin with acknowledging the fact that . . .**

II) Body: (Key Points)

A) Key Point #1: **Jesus Did Not Bring Peace on Earth**

- 1) The Old Testament calls Jesus the Prince of Peace.
 - (a) But in **Matthew 10:34-39**, we have a quote from Jesus who said,
 - (b) **"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. 35 For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; 36 and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' 37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.**
- 2) **Jesus came to earth to reconcile mankind with God.**
 - (a) But God must have first place in our priorities and our heart.
 - (b) If we are not willing to give up the things of this world for Jesus, we will not find the Peace for which we are looking.
- 3) **This causes problems in family relationships where unless they too have come to Jesus and can understand they will not accept our putting God first.**
 - (a) It is not that our relationships with our parents, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters are not important and have to be neglected . . .
 - (b) But we must be willing to put God first.
- 4) **The taking up of ones cross to the first century person meant only one thing and that is to die.**
 - (a) The cross was the most cruellest form of death invented.
 - (b) Yet, Jesus asks His follower to be willing to pick up their cross not so they could die physically . . .
 - (c) Jesus is asking us to put to death our own wills and to replace it with His will.

- 5) **If we are going to be His follower we are to trust that Jesus, who is God, knows what is best for us in the big picture.**
 - (a) Following Jesus takes a commitment.
 - (b) This is what is wrong with the world today for the world teaches it is all about what "I want."
- 6) **The Bible teaches us that it is about what "God wants".**
 - (a) Are you seeking God's will for your life or pursuing what you think will bring you happiness.
 - (b) Let me ask you a Dr. Phil question, "How is that working for you?"
 - (c) Are you finding real peace and happiness?
 - (d) Or are you just aimlessly going through life like Solomon trying every indulgence under the sun to find meaning and finding that it is all meaningless.
- 7) **Solomon who is said to be the wisest man to every live could not find the one thing that would bring him peace with God.**
 - (a) He writes a whole book on his endeavor called Ecclesiastics and in the end comes to the conclusion that there is only one conclusion;
 - (b) **"Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."** (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

TS: **So, while Jesus did not come to establish Peace on earth at this time we still can find that . . .**

- B) Key Point #2: **Jesus Brought an Opportunity for Peace with God**
 - 1) **Before Mary and Joseph could experience Peace with each other they had to come to Peace with God;**
 - (a) They had to believe what the Angel Gabriel told them and accept that this child was from God.
 - (b) They had to stop fighting what their common sense told them and believe and trust God.
 - 2) **Jesus was God and would be born as a baby and live as a man.**
 - (a) Jesus would experience life as we live it so that He could relate to us.
 - (b) Jesus came to show us the way to be reconciled back to God and save people from the death sentence they were on.
 - (c) In order to have peace with God we have to stop fighting with God and accept Him as our Lord.
 - (d) **We must be willing to put our trust in Jesus.**
 - 3) Illustration: **A WORLD OF PEACE¹**
 - (a) **Bruce Larson tells how he helped people struggling to surrender their lives to Christ:**
 - (b) "For many years I worked in New York City and counseled at my office any number of people who were wrestling with this yes-or-no decision. Often I would suggest they walk with me from my office down to the RCA Building on Fifth Avenue. In the entrance of that building is a gigantic statue of Atlas, a beautifully proportioned man who, with all his muscles straining, is holding the world upon his shoulders. There he is, the most powerfully built man in the world, and he can barely stand up under this burden. *'Now that's one way to live,'* I would point out to my companion, *'trying to carry the world on your shoulders. But now come across the street with me.'*
 - (c) On the other side of Fifth Avenue is Saint Patrick's Cathedral, and there behind the high altar is a little shrine of the boy Jesus, perhaps eight or nine years old, and with no effort he is holding the world in one hand. My point was illustrated

graphically.

This is the choice we have; *we can carry the world on our shoulders, or we can say, 'I give up, Lord; here's my life. I give you my world, the whole world.'*"

TS: **So, stop fighting with God and make peace by accepting and then . . .**

C) Key Point #3: **Jesus Can also Bring the Peace of God**

- 1) Illustration: **A four-year-old and a six-year-old presented their mom with a houseplant.²**
 - (a) They had used their own money to buy it and she was thrilled.
 - (b) The older of them said with a sad face, "*There was a bouquet at the flower shop that we wanted to give you. It was real pretty but it was too expensive. It had a ribbon on it that said 'Rest In Peace,' and we thought it would be just perfect since you are always asking for a little peace so that you can rest.*"
 - (c) Just as these boys did not understand the meaning here we too can have difficulty understanding the meaning of the Peace of God.
- 2) **You see I believe that Mary and Joseph not only found Peace with God, they also experienced the Peace of God.**
 - (a) When they responded to God's Call on their life and did that which they were told to do . . . **then I believe they experienced the Peace of God.**
 - (b) The problem is that while many people understand what it means to have **Peace with God**, they find it difficult to understand what is meant by the **Peace of God**.
 - (c) Is it possible to have one without the other?
 - (d) I'm not sure it is.
- 3) **There is a prescription written in Philippians 4:6-9 where Paul tells us, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."**(NIV)
- 4) **You see Paul is telling us that to have true Peace we must not worry about anything because we trust God.**
 - (a) That true peace comes through praying about everything trusting God to handle it in the best way possible..
 - (b) That true peace is a result of meditating on that which is holy which will keep us right with God.
 - (c) And by putting into practice that which was learned from Paul's teaching.
- 5) **David Jeremiah wrote in a recent devotional about the Peace of God.³**
 - (a) First quoting the Apostle Paul from this same section of **Philippians 4:9, "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you."**
 - (b) **What Paul knew was that the words, "the God of Peace will be with you." are significant for at least two reasons:**
 - (i) First, Paul was alone in jail when he wrote them; and second,
 - (ii) He wrote them as part of a letter in which the theme of it was "joy in Christ."
 - (c) **Perhaps it's possible to will ourselves into a state of peace and serenity.**
 - (i) But what happens when the human will fails?

² Todd Coget, sermoncentral.com. May 2002

³ Turning Points with David Jeremiah Friday, December 2

- (ii) What happens when we cannot mentally overcome the negative effects of our circumstances?
- (d) **Paul found joy in jail because he was NOT . . . just in jail — he was “in Christ in jail.”**
 - (i) His joy and serenity were not based on temporary things like personal comfort.
 - (ii) They were based on his trust of Christ to do what is best.
- 6) **The Peace of God is an inner peace that comes from being right with God.**
 - (a) It comes from responding to the call that God has for you.
 - (b) It comes from being in the center of God's will for you.
 - (c) When you find that sweet spot in God's will you can experience the Peace of God.
 - (d) The Peace of God is the main way you know you're doing the right thing.
(repeat this section?)

TS: **So, will there ever be a time of Peace on earth? . . .**

III) Conclusion (Life Application)

A) **Well the good news is that one day Jesus will bring Peace to Earth.**

- 1) The Prophet Isaiah said in Chapter 9:6-7a, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.”
- 2) And in the Book of Revelation at the end of the story when the new heaven and earth come to be it tells us in 21:3b-4, “. . . **Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away.**”
- 3) The prophecy will be complete and the Peace of God will rule.

B) **Do you have peace with God and more importantly, do you have the peace of God?**

- 1) God wants to be at peace with you.
- 2) But you need to admit your need for God and ask Him to help you.
- 3) Let Jesus be your Peace and experience Peace like never before.
- 4) Answer God's call for you.

IV) Invitation: **Let us Pray!**