

Christmas Sermon (#1)
Peace in the Holy Spirit
Luke 2:14
Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan

Introduction

Today is December 24th , Christmas Eve; December 25th is the date the western churches celebrate the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ; but the eastern Orthodox churches celebrate on a different date. Actually no one knows when the Lord Jesus was born, and I am not going to debate about the exact birth date of the Lord, but I will look into the meaning of his birth.

^{NAS} **Luke 2:14** “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”

This is the praise from the heavenly angels to Yahweh God on the night the Lord Jesus was born. It says “peace among men”, but through two thousand years history we see that wars and more wars have been happening all the time, pandemics and natural disasters happened everywhere and all the time. Where is the peace? Why is it like that? Let’s look at the Bible to find the answer.

Different aspects of peace

We look at the peace in the Bible. The Bible talks about different kinds of peace:

1. Peace from physical harm;
2. Peace in our hearts;
3. Peace in our relationship with God and with other people.

But the Lord Jesus said specifically that his disciples will have trouble in this world, he did not promise there will be no physical harm to his disciples.

^{NIV} **John 16:33** “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Here the Lord Jesus specifically says that in this world his disciples will have trouble; This statement of the Lord has been fulfilled. In the two thousand year history of the church, many many faithful Christians have been persecuted and killed for the sake of the Lord Jesus and the

gospel; even today there is still severe persecution against Christians in different places in the world. Christians being persecuted is inevitable, we cannot avoid it. The Lord never promised that we will not be persecuted, but he said that as long as we stay in him we would have peace of heart, not physical peace.

We can ask Yahweh God to protect us from harm, but there is no promise of physical peace for us in the Bible. Therefore we don't study peace in terms of physical harm, we will only study peace in our hearts and peace in our relationship with other people.

Peace in heart

Now let's study the peace in our heart.

^{NIV} **John 14:27** 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.

This passage is part of the last teaching that the Lord Jesus gave to the disciples before he was arrested and crucified; the Lord's last teaching covers 4 chapters in the gospel of John: John 13, 14, 15 and 16.

Here the Lord said that he gave his peace to us, the world cannot give us this kind of peace. He said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." So peace of heart means that our hearts are not troubled nor afraid.

It is easier said than done. When you don't have to face real danger nor threat, you can talk about peace of heart. But when you face real danger, you would be very afraid and very troubled, unless you have the true peace from the Lord; This peace will guard your heart and your whole being, only then you will have no fear. Let me tell you, this true peace is very real, it is amazing.

My testimony. I can testify about this amazing peace with my testimony. I was born in Ho Chi Minh City of South Vietnam, and I escaped out of Vietnam in 1978. I followed my elder sister and her husband (my brother-in-law) to go from Ho Chi Minh City of South Vietnam to North Vietnam, we tried to cross the border between Vietnam and China; We paid the local people to guide us. There is a small river between Vietnam and China, we had to wade across this river. North Vietnam is not a tropical area, it is just as cold as southern China in winter. It was February winter time, around 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning; our guides led us to this small river, they waded in the river first, we waded behind them. The water reached my chest, I didn't know how to swim, today I still don't know how to swim; but amazingly I wasn't afraid at all, I had perfect peace in my

heart; and even though it was winter time, I didn't feel cold at all. I fixed my eyes on our guides, I followed them step by step until we reached the other side of the river, that's the Chinese territory. The guides led us to a market place to sit down, then they went back to Vietnam. The market place was very quiet, we sat there until dawn, then we reported ourselves to the Chinese police. (I have written a testimony, if you want to know more about my walk with Yahweh God, you can read my testimony "Goodness and Lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life" from the CDC website). Since 1978 until now 2023, it has been 45 years, in all these years whenever I think about that journey, I am always amazed: It was winter time, and my whole body was wet, yet I didn't feel cold at all, I wasn't strong physically, and I am still not strong physically. It took us about 10 or 15 minutes to wade across that river, it was very dangerous during that 10 or 15 minutes: If I slipped I would have fallen into the river; if the Vietnamese soldiers or Chinese soldiers saw us, they would stop us and arrest us; but there were neither Vietnamese soldiers nor Chinese soldiers around in those 10 or 15 minutes, the river was absolutely calm and peaceful; I wasn't afraid at all, I had perfect peace in my heart, we just waded and crossed the river step by step carefully, it was just like the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. Only until we reached the Chinese border and sat in the market place, then I felt cold and I was exhausted, I was shivering and almost collapsed.

This experience was truly a miracle, I can only ascribe this to Yahweh God's loving kindness and amazing grace, He protected me and led me to safety. That was just one of many miracles that I have experienced.

Please take notice, at that time I was not a Christian, I became a Christian in 1983, five years after this incident. Luke 2:14 says "peace among men with whom He is pleased", it refers to those whom Yahweh God is pleased with, they may or may not be Christians. It is those with whom Yahweh God is pleased who will have the true peace in heart. Even if you are a Christian, but if God is not pleased with you, you would not have the true peace.

Peace with God

After we look at peace in our hearts, now we talk about peace with God.

^{NAU} **Romans 5:1** Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

This passage says we have been justified by faith. To justify means to make righteous, to be justified means to be made righteous, we have been justified means we have been made righteous, how? By faith through the Lord Jesus Christ. That means when we have faith in the Lord Jesus, Yahweh God will make us righteous, in other words God will grant righteousness to us.

Faith in the Bible is very deep, it is not simply believing that Jesus is the Son of God. Last time we already saw that when Abraham believed God, he was walking in obedience to God all his life, he did exactly everything God had told him to do, he was absolutely obedient to God. When we believe in the Lord Jesus, we also have to be absolutely obedient to all of his teaching. In the future we will study about faith.

This passage Romans 5:1 says that when we have faith, we are made righteous, then we will have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now please read this passage carefully; After we have been justified, then we will have peace with God; that means before we are justified, we had no peace with Him! If we had no peace with God, that means we were His enemies!

Many people would say that before I believed in Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ, I did not do anything against God! But do you know that when you don't obey God's commandments, that means you don't submit to His kingship, you are against His rule, therefore you are an enemy of God!

Then when you have faith in Jesus Christ, God will grant righteousness to you; only when you have righteousness, then you will have peace with God.

Peace with people

After we look at peace with God, now we study peace with people.

1. Strive for peace with everyone

^{ESV} **Hebrews 12:14** Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Besides peace in our heart and peace with God, the Bible teaches that we need to strive for peace with everyone. Notice the word "everyone", which includes both Christians and non believers.

In the passage John 16:33 we just read, the Lord said we will have trouble in the world, the people in the world will give us trouble; but here in Hebrews 12:14 it says we need to strive for peace with everyone! That means even though the people in the world may persecute us, we don't hate them, we still strive to have peace with them. Of course we don't compromise the commandments of God in order to please them, but as long as it is not against the teaching of God, we do everything we can to have peace with the people in the world.

This passage also says that we need to strive for holiness, because without holiness you will not see the Lord. If you do not see the Lord, that means you have lost your salvation. Today we won't talk about holiness, we will only talk about striving for peace with everyone; in the future if the Lord is willing, we will talk about holiness.

2. Peace with your brother

After we strive for peace with everyone, now we look at peace with our brother.

^{NAU} **Matthew 5:23 – 24** “Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,²⁴ leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.”

Here the Lord Jesus is talking about the relationship with your Christian brother, not with the people in the world. Please look carefully, the Lord did not say that if it was your fault, then you should go to reconcile with your brother; no, no, the Lord did not say that! The Lord said that if your brother has something against you, if your brother is angry or unhappy with you, you should go to reconcile with him no matter whether it was your fault or not, but as long as your brother has something against you, you should go to reconcile with him. The responsibility is on you to reconcile with him.

Here the Lord is teaching us that the peace with our brother is more important than offering to God, if we don't have peace with our brother, our offering will not be accepted by God.

Today there is no more physical temple, the temple was destroyed in AD 70 almost 2000 years ago. Because there is no more temple, we don't present offering at the altar, but we do offer spiritual offering. What is our spiritual offering?

^{NAU} **Hebrews 13:15 – 16** Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.¹⁶ And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

This passage says that giving thanks to God, doing good and sharing with others, these are our spiritual sacrifice to God. But remember we need to have peace with our brother before we present the spiritual offering. If you don't have peace with your brother, even though you give thanks to God, or you do good and share with others, all these would not be accepted by God.

3. When your brother sinned against you

Some people would say if it is my fault, I agree I should apologize, but what if my brother sinned against me? What should you do when your brother sinned against you?

^{NAU} **Luke 17:3 – 4** “Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴ And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”

When a brother, which means a Christian, commits sin, you rebuke him, you need to point out to him his sin; if he repents of his sin, you should forgive him. Even if he sins against you again and again, as long as he repents and asks for forgiveness, you should forgive him. If you want to have peace with people, forgiveness is essential.

Please pay attention to these words in verse 3: “your brother sins”, sin means going against the teaching of God. If he has done anything against the teaching of God, then he has sinned, and he needs to repent; but if he did not do anything against the teaching of God, that’s not a sin. There is a big difference between him actually committing a sin and you simply don’t like his behavior, his behavior upsets you, but that’s not a sin. For example, some people talk very loud and laugh very loud, that could upset a lot of people, and that may or may not be a sin; but if he slanders people, he talks behind people’s back to destroy people’s reputation, or he makes fun of people to embarrass people (some people like to do that), that is a sin. If he has sinned according to the teaching of the Lord Jesus, then he needs to repent, but if he has not sinned against the teaching of the Lord Jesus, he doesn’t need to repent.

Conclusion

Now we sum up everything we have studied today. On the night the Lord Jesus was born, the heavenly host declared, “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.” Peace is not for everyone, but only for those Yahweh God is pleased with. Who are the people whom God is pleased with?

First of all, when you sin, that means you don’t submit to the kingship of God, you become an enemy of God, then you certainly won’t have peace in heart; Only when you submit to the kingship of God, He will be pleased with you, and He will give you the true peace in heart.

If you have this true peace from God, even though you face a very dangerous situation or a very sad situation in life, you still have the peace to guard your heart. If you have peace in heart you can handle the difficult situations in life and handle the relationship with other people much better.

Peace in the Holy Spirit

The true peace in heart can lead to physical peace and peace with people. On the contrary if you don't have peace in heart, that will cause problems in your own life and in your relationship with people.

We need to strive for peace with everyone, including non-Christians. The people in the world may persecute us, but we don't hate them, we still strive for peace with them, of course we don't compromise the teaching of the Lord to please them.

If your Christian brother has something against you, he is unhappy with you. You should go to reconcile with him; But on the other hand when your brother has sinned against you, that means he is doing things against the teaching of the Lord Jesus, you should forgive him if he repents.

It is hard to forgive those who have hurt you; only if you yourself have been forgiven by God and you have the true peace from God, then you can forgive other people; if you don't have the true peace from God it is hard to have peace with other people.