

# True Joy and Peace



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“**A**nd the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people...’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!” (Luke 2:10, 13-14).

Joy to the world! Peace on earth! The words are the recurring refrain of Christmas celebrations down through the centuries, drawn from the angels’ greetings to the shepherds so many years ago. It’s a message we all long to hear: the promise of Good News in a very bad news kind of world.

And yet, two millennia later, have we really seen the joy and peace promised in the Christmas story? The words can begin to sound like meaningless platitudes. Our world is anything but peaceful. And joy? Real joy? Most of us are content to merely avoid as much sorrow as possible. After all, there’s plenty of despair to go around—even, and sometimes especially, at this time of the year. Lasting peace and joy feel elusive at best and like an illusion at worst.

Has God failed to keep His promises then? By no means! Peace really has descended to earth, and joy really is offered to all people. The trouble is, they don’t come the way we expect them. We want peace, but we want peace on our

own terms: an end to all wars, fighting, and crime. We want joy, but we want it to be synonymous with happiness, devoid of any hint of suffering, pain, and grief.

These are not the promises God makes in the miracle of Christmas. Jesus expressly tells us He does not give peace as the world gives (John 14:27). And the Psalmist reminds us that our shouts of joy must often be reaped from fields first planted in weeping (Psalm 126:5-6).

It’s clear then that the peace and joy God offers are different than those longed for by the wider world. So what exactly is the “peace on earth” of which the angels sing? What “great joy” do they proclaim?

The angel tells us. “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). This babe, wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger, is the long-awaited Messiah. In a world devoid of lasting peace and joy, He comes to make true peace and joy possible. The world trapped in sin needed saving. And, lo, the angels announce a Saviour.

Immanuel comes to make peace between God and men. He comes to bring a joy deeper and richer than anything we could imagine. For Christ comes to make us children of God, to welcome us into His family, and to give us life eternal with Him.

These assurances do not pluck you out from the trials of this world, of course. You shall face sorrows

of various kinds. But we are given hope to bear up in the midst of our sufferings. In the same way, Scripture tells us that Christ Himself, “for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame” (Hebrews 12:2). That joy in Christ is given to you too, to sustain you as you bear your own crosses.

You may not always feel joyful. But the joy of the Lord—the hope He gives—transcends our emotions, because it is grounded in the promises of God and not our feelings. It is the anchor in the storm of sorrows and pains of this world. It brings peace when nothing else can.

You have the opportunity to share that joy with others this Christmas season. Friends and family, both in the pews and outside the church’s walls, are struggling with hidden grief. Tell them Jesus loves them. Tell them the Prince of Peace has come. For it is in Christ alone that we—and they—find hope. It is in Christ alone that we find true joy inexpressible (1 Peter 1:8). It is in Christ alone that we find the peace which surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7).

*“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”*

- Romans 15:13 -