

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**Christmas Day, December 25, 2015**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 87, 79, 85:1-6, 97 85:13-15.

Lessons: Isaiah 7:10-14, 1 John 1:1-7, Matthew 1:18-23.

Sermon Text: Luke 2:13-14.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

***“Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.’”*** Luke 2:13-14 (NIV)

***“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, good will toward men.”*** Luke 2:13-14 (KJV)

In the name of Jesus who came to save us, dear friends,

About 2000 years ago an angel of the Lord spoke to some shepherds watching over their flocks at night near Bethlehem. He made the most astounding announcement: ***“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”*** (v. 11) Then the whole heavenly host, thousands of angels, a whole army of holy angels, began their song of praise to God. We cannot imagine how beautiful this music was to the ears of the shepherds. We like to think of this song of praise by the angels as being a foretaste of heaven. For there in heaven our songs to the Lord will contain no petitions, no expressions of needs. In heaven we will always be perfectly satisfied. Our songs, then, will also be like the angels' song, with only words of praise for God.

Do you marvel that such heavenly music was sung for the shepherds who certainly were among the lowliest of this earth's people? It is an amazing truth, isn't it? But no more amazing than this, that God showed such great love and mercy to all of us poor, lowly sinners in sending to us a Savior, the promised Christ. In our Christmas worship we want to do more than marvel; we want to meditate on:

**STATEMENTS OF FACT BY THE ANGELS AT JESUS' BIRTH**

- 1. Glory in the highest belongs to God;**
- 2. On earth there is peace; and,**
- 3. God's favor rests on man.**

***“Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.’”*** This song was sung to praise God. The angels emphasized that by saying: ***“Glory to God in the highest”***. Christmas is a time to glorify God. The angels did so at the first Christmas and we should do so on every anniversary of Jesus' birth.

But how very difficult it is for us to remember and do this in the Christmas season! The ways of the unbelieving world and especially the commercialism involved in selling and buying gifts, has spoiled the celebration of Jesus' birth. How difficult it is to remember: Jesus is the reason for the season! Jesus who is to be the very center of this celebration is not at all in the thoughts of those who celebrate in a worldly way. And certainly in the minds of the self-righteous, proud people of the world there is no thought of glorifying God.

Let us, then, be reminded that Christmas is a time to glorify God. The highest kind of praise that we can give should be given to God. For he is above all, all things were created by him, and without him nothing continues to be. The reason why all glory belongs to God is because he sent his one and only Son to become a true man for our salvation. Let us not think of this as a recitation of an ordinary fact. This was an act of God showing his highest love and mercy for poor sinners. Remember, God is not responsible for the sin in this world. People have sinned; we have sinned. We have disobeyed God's commandments. It is altogether right and just that the holy God should reward sinful man with everlasting punishment. Even while we were sinners, however, the Lord showered upon us all his love and mercy in providing a way of salvation for us. He could do nothing more than he did, namely, to send his own Son to save us. ***"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life,"*** (John 3:16) God sent his Son to keep us from being lost forever in hell! Is it not right and proper that we give glory to God in the highest degree? May God the Father's greatest gift of all be the thought in our minds as we give each other gifts.

Let us also meditate on this Christmas fact that **there is peace on earth.**

2.

Another part of the angels' song of praise to God speaks of ***"peace on earth."*** In view of the many false interpretations of this ***"peace on earth"*** by misguided people, it is most important that we realize that the angels were not expressing a pious wish that there might be peace on earth. Rather, this is a statement of fact, a declaration that because the Lord Jesus came to this earth to do his work of redemption, there is peace between God and man.

This peace has nothing to do with the absence of fighting and quarreling among some people and nations. Rather, this is a peace for all people. This peace is a condition that exists between God and sinners because God's wrath has been turned away by the Savior's work of redemption. There could have been no peace with God if Jesus had not come and saved us. For the Bible says, ***"Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath."*** (Eph. 2:3b) It was most necessary that peace be established because of the enmity which existed between God and sinners, due to man's sin.

The glorious declaration of fact by the angels is that with the coming of Jesus there is ***"peace on earth."*** Paul writes: ***"God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them."*** (2 Cor. 5:19) Our sins have been paid for in full by Jesus. God doesn't count them against us anymore. Instead, he accounts us as being righteous in his sight. Paul writes: ***"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*** (2 Cor. 5:21) That's why Isaiah foretold that Jesus would be called the "Prince of Peace." (Is. 9:6) And Paul explains about Jesus: ***"For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility."*** (Eph. 2:14) The apostle further tells us concerning Jesus: ***"God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."*** (Col. 1:19-20)

We who by God's grace believe in Jesus as our Savior have this peace with God. This is the real cause of our Christmas joy. We can say with Paul: ***"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."*** (Rom. 5:1) This is the peace that transcends our human understanding and fills our hearts and minds with the greatest comfort.

There is more yet that is a precious fact in the angels' song of praise, for they sang that **God's favor rests on man.**

3.

2

Our text says that there is *"peace on earth to men on whom his favor rests."* Again this is a statement of fact by the angels. It has nothing to do with people showing their good will to their fellowmen, as it is interpreted by many at Christmas time. The angels were speaking about God showing his good will to men and that his favor rests on them. The Lord told the prophet Ezekiel in the Old Testament times: *"Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?'"* (Ezek. 33:11) Paul also tells us that God *"wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."* (1 Tim. 2:4) The exceedingly happy truth here is that there is universal grace for all people. It is God's good and gracious will that all people repent and be saved by accepting the Lord Jesus as their Savior. This surely shows that God's favor rests on people throughout the world. This is the good news the angel spoke of when he told the shepherds: *"Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."* (v.10) The Baby who lay in the manger was born to be the Savior of the whole world. May each one of us, therefore, pray to him:

Lord Jesus who did come as a Savior for me,

Grant that in true faith and great joy I accept Thee. Amen

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