**CHRISTMAS EVE 2, MIC. 5:2, 4, 5, IS. 7:14, 9:1-7, LK. 2:8-20, DEC. 24/22.**

Well, it’s upon us. It doesn’t matter whether you’reready or not. It’s here. It’s now. Christmas tends to come on us too quickly; there’s always too much to do in too short a time.

 **I wonder if God was hurried** at the 1st Christmas. Do you think the Father had to hurry Jesus along to get ready? Do you think He was anxious? Impatient? Overprotective? They’re funny questions, because we rest in the assurance that God has all things under His control. **But there was this new variable**. While God had created everything, Jesus had not yet walked the earth as the God-Man. And He was about to be born of a human. How would all that work out? How risky was this action by God? We humans, after all, are pretty unpredictable at best.

T**he world & Christians share this holiday**, with lots of similarities—the time of celebration, the gift giving, giving to the poor, times together with family & friends around too much food. But there’s this great divide where the world goes crazy over lights. We enjoy those lights too but unlike the world our true light is Jesus, who came as the light of the world. Those walk-ing in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of darkness a light has dawned. While the world thinks it can create its own light, we understand **a light has dawned**. It’s not from us. It’s from the outside. **It’s from God.**

**Jesus’ pedigree** is like our resume today. It was an awful resume. It included prostitution, incest, racial impurity, adultery, murder & more. It **demonstrated that nothing in our past could deter God from committing Himself to us, to come & walk with us—Immanuel.** Nothing of our impurity could contaminate God’s purity, holiness or purpose. This **genealogy also lock-ed Jesus in history**. These events really happened. God’s here with us! When the angels app-eared to the shepherds **they brought good news, not** advice. They didn’t say, “Here’s what you need to do.” They said, “We bring you good tidings of great joy that will be for all the people.”

The **Wise men searching for the king of the** **Jews** encountered an enraged King. Going into a palace & asking where the king is doesn’t make the guy on the throne happy. Herod would do whatever it took to destroy any opposition to his throne. But there’s a little Herod in every one of us. We make ourselves king of the castle, the master of our souls. But we have to **allow Jesus, by His grace, to claim and hold undisputed Kingship of our hearts**.

So **what does Christmas mean**? It **means** illumination & light—spiritual light—from God. It **means** reconciliation & peace with God by grace. It **means** God taking on a human nature—all great gifts God gives us at Christmas. **So, how do we respond to what He gives and receive it?**

**Micah** declared 500 years ahead of the event, **Jesus would be born in puny Bethlehem. Out of you will come One who will be ruler over Israel, whose origin is from ancient time. His greatness will reach to the ends of the earth**. And **He will be their peace.**

**Isaiah** declared 700 years before the event: **The Lord will give a sign**: The virgin will be with child & give birth to a son—Immanuel. **The people walking in darkness** have seen a great light; on those living in the shadow of death a light has dawned. The nation is joyful because of it. The yoke that burdens them is removed...T**o us a child’s born, a son’s given**. The government will be on His shoulders. **Wonderful counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace**. He will reign on David’s throne forever, ruling with justice & righteousness.

The **shepherds heard about Jesus from the** angels & went to see Him for them

selves. Then they spread the word. Everyone who heard them was amazed. The shepherds returned, glorifying & praising God for all they’d heard. We’re so familiar with this passage that it just rings through our heads. Sometimes stuff will come up & I ask Sharon about it. She’ll say I told you. Weren’t you listening? Any other men had that said to them? Yes I remember you speaking about it, but it didn’t really get all the way into my brain. I didn’t pay proper attention.

Unlike me, **the shepherds listened really well.** Their attention was riveted on the ang-els. They got the message & acted on it. We get the message but seem not so impacted by it. Is it because we’ve heard it too many times? We can’t afford to only ½ listen to God.

**Mary pondered/treasured what she heard,** taking God’s Word way inside. If you do not really ponder/treasure, you won’t truly hear its message. It’s a call to respond to what you hear.

**What did the angels want us to hear**? “Peace on earth, good will to men.” God’s peace means an end to separation, bitterness & warfare. T**he most important peace is peace with God**. W**ho’s in control of your life? If it’s you, then you’re not at peace with God. If you’re not at peace with God, then there’s no peace with others**. If that’s so, **there’s no peace on earth.**

**But the message of Christmas is “God & sinners reconciled”.** **By assuming a human nature, Jesus bridges the gap**; He dies for our sins, heals the breach & **He makes peace**.

**How can you have peace with God**? **You won’t get it if you keep trying to control God**. You say, “I don’t do that!” **Listen**, when you live the way **you** want & say, “I’m going to obey the Bible so now God has to bless me & give me a good life”, you’re trying to control, not trust God. When you obey God to **earn** His blessing & heaven, you’re seeking to be your own saviour.

**The 1st step to peace with God is** to recognize y**ou need** to be saved by sheer grace, because even the right things I do I’ve done for the wrong reasons. Rest in what Jesus has done & turn from your old way of living. Then, if you’ve admitted your flaws, surrendered your pride & learned how to live without controlling every situation, you can be a reconciler—with a world different from you. Christmas means peace with God is available--with God & between people.

“**Fear not, behold**, I bring you tidings of great joy”. I**f we accept its good tidings, Christmas should end fear**. We fear rejection & failure, but when we’re filled with God’s love, it does not matter what others think. If you know God’s good & in control, you can trust Him & fear no-thing, including death. “Behold” means “listen up”! Our response to the angels’ message should be to look to God & know we no longer need to be afraid because a Saviour is born! If the all-powerful Son of God would risk losing all control by coming as a human baby then you can trust Him without reservation & without fear! Behold! Look at Christmas! Look at what Jesus’s done!