

God's Good Will and Peace
(Luke 2:13-14)



Christmas is often a time when people like to speak about peace on earth and good will toward their fellow man. Many believe that this is the real message and reason behind Christmas. It boils down to striving to live peacefully with others and doing acts of good will and kindness toward people who are in need. For many Christmas means donating money to the Salvation Army, seeking to bring peace into someone's stressful life by giving them a special Christmas gift.

Others feel Christmas means reaching out to feed and help the poor and less fortunate. Then too, the general population believes that Christmas is all about giving gifts to their family members. For others Christmas speaks of a wishful prayer and desire for peace to come on earth among the nations, to live peaceably with others, and possess the yuletide spirit and cheer several days before and on Christmas Day. There are many mushy, gushy, and touchy things which are associated with the Christmas season and holiday but in truth they have nothing to do with the real message of Christmas.

Luke 2:13-14 records these beloved but often misunderstood words:

“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.”

In this devotional study about Christmas, I want to reflect on the specific words of the angelic choir which said, “on earth peace, good will toward men.”

The Christmas message speaks of good will and peace.

1. There is a message of God’s good will and grace.



The KJV translation “good will toward men” (favor, kindness, pleasure) does NOT mean or infer that God will be gracious or show good will to those people who show good will to others, suggesting that human merit is the basis of God’s favor, grace, and salvation.

In fact, the yuletide spirit at Christmas and helping others is not the good will of the Christmas story. The goodness comes from God and it is expressed toward man. It is not an expression of good people doing good things for other people. It is God’s good will reaching down to mankind who is need of a Savior. The Christmas message has to do with God’s favor being extended to mankind – not mankind extending favor toward others! In other words, the Christmas message speaks about God’s good will (not man’s acts of good will). It is God’s good will bestowed upon doomed sinners.

Ephesians 2:8-9 expresses it in this way:

“For by grace are ye saved (God’s good will toward men) through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (not man’s good will toward God or others).

The “good will” of Christmas is God’s good will (grace and kindness) which was extended to every sinner, who had absolutely no hope of salvation from hell, if Christ had not entered the world and died on the cross. The Bible is very clear that it’s God’s good will toward lost sinners which is the reason for Christmas or the incarnation of Jesus Christ. It’s God’s good will toward the unsaved that brought Jesus Christ into the world. We are saved because of God’s goodness and kindness extended to us through Christ (Titus 3:5).

Luke 2:13-14 once again reads:

“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.”

The sudden appearance of the other angels represents God’s sudden action in providing a Savior! This is the “good will” that is being presented in the announcement of Christ’s birth. Jesus was born and suddenly the Savior had entered the world.

Luke 2:11 gives us the meaning of the angelic statement of the “good will” that was extended to mankind when it states: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” There can be no doubt about it. The entrance of the Savior into the world was God’s good will that was showered upon lost mankind. This means that Jesus was born to die upon Calvary’s cross and Christ’s sacrificial death was the grace and kindness (good will) mentioned at the birth of Christ.

“He was born in the shadow of a tree,
Ever present was the knowledge He would be
Hanging on the tree, The tree of Calvary.”

Christ’s entered the world to become our Savior from hell and damnation. This is the true good will of Christmas! Don’t miss the real meaning and message of Christmas. Your eternity depends on it!



The true message of Christmas is God's grace being extended toward us through the cross of Jesus Christ. Of course, as a secondary application, I can express and emulate God's good will and favor toward the lost or unsaved. I can extend favor and blessing toward others and I can do this in various ways.

- ✓ I can share a Gospel tract with someone which contains the true Gospel message of Christmas. In doing this I will be expressing good will toward others (Mark 16:15).
- ✓ I can always be ready to share the truth with others and become an instrument of God's good will toward expressed to man.
- ✓ I can become salt and light before a watching world as I express acts of kindness toward others (Matt. 5:13-14).

However, we must never forget that everything about Christmas is rooted in God's good will toward sinners. It's God reaching down to sinners, not people practicing acts of good will toward others.

Jesus said in Luke 19:10:

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

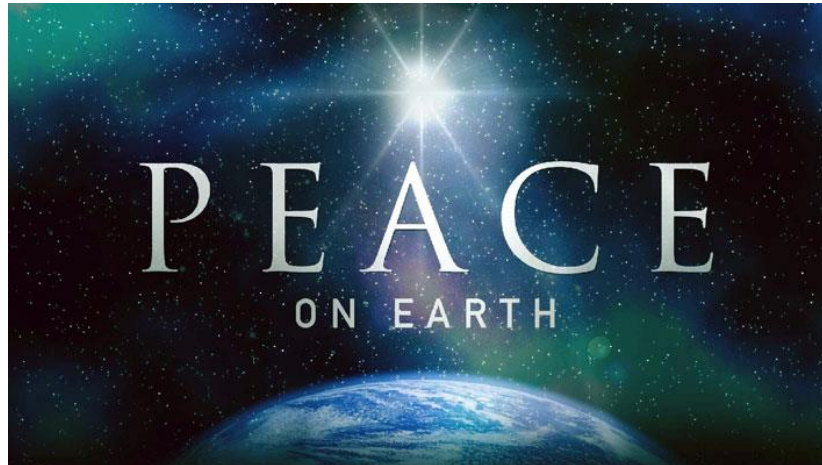
This is the real Christmas story! This is God's good will that is extended toward a lost human race.

"God rest you merry, gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay;
Remember Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas Day,
To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy;
O tidings of comfort and joy!"

Yes, the Christmas message is one of good will and peace. We have seen that it is a message of God's good will and grace. But it does not end here.

2. There is a message of God's peace and tranquility.

A little boy and girl were singing their favorite Christmas carol in church the Sunday before Christmas. The boy concluded "Silent Night" with the words, "Sleep in heavenly beans." "No," his sister corrected, "not beans, but peas. Sleep in heavenly peas."



How does peace fit into the Christmas story – “peace on earth?” The idea behind the KJV translation is that God’s peace would be given to people upon whom His favor, grace, and salvation already rest – “on earth peace, good will toward men.” You cannot have peace without God’s good will. The two are inseparably bound together. The text of Luke 2:14 may be understood in this way: “on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests.” The entire Christmas message would speak of God’s good will (grace and favor) being extended toward those who believe on Jesus Christ (God’s Son). This grace or kindness would then result in peace becoming part of the daily lives of God’s children. It’s the peace and rest that floods into one’s heart when they know that they are saved from hell and the peace that God’s children can experience in their new relationship with God.

The Bible declares that “There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked” (Isa. 48:22). Only when we express faith in Christ can we be delivered from the judgment for our sins and find true peace in life. So, the angelic choir is speaking about salvation’s peace that is granted to sinners who believe on Christ to be their Savior.

The phrase “peace on earth” is NOT talking about peaceful relations between nations. I don’t know how many times I have heard this interpretation of Luke 2:14. Universal peaceful relationship among the nations cannot exist and will not happen until the Second Coming of Christ to earth.

Isaiah 9:6-7 is another Christmas passage that mentions peace:

“For unto us a child is born (*Christmas*), unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder (*Kingdom or Millennium*): and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father (*meaning Christ as God will be the father or source of peace and tranquility that will be experienced on earth throughout the age of the Kingdom - Psalm 46:6-10*), The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

The point of this prophecy seems to be this. In order to get to the Second Coming there must be a first coming (Bethlehem and the birth of Christ). One of the purposes of Christ’s entrance into the world was to ultimately get the world into the Millennium. The Second Coming and the Millennium (1,000 years of peace on earth – Rev. 20:1-7) is based and contingent upon Christ’s first coming and birth but peace among nations did not occur at Christ’s first coming. This is a well-established Biblical and historical fact.

We also know peace is not on earth today with communism overtaking the world, nations fighting one another, terrorism on the rise, and China raising its ugly head to take on world dominance. Many people during the Christmas season are saying: “Let’s have peace, peace, peace.” But they are living in a dreamworld. There cannot be true and lasting peace on earth between the nations until He returns to rule the earth.

Longfellow was looking ahead to the time of final justice when he wrote these familiar words.

“And in despair I bowed my head:
“There is no peace on earth,” I said,
“For hate is strong and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.”

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
God is not dead, nor doth he sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men.”

Yes, there is coming a day of peace on earth, but this can only occur when Jesus returns to earth as the King. Only then will right prevail and evil will be removed from the earth! Jesus will not be the “prince of peace” until His Second Coming. This old world can never have true and lasting peace until the Prince of Peace returns. You see, Christ’s first coming and entrance into the world was NOT a promise of peaceful relations between the world nations. This will not happen until the Second Coming.

So, the angelic phrase “on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14) is NOT talking about relational peace among the nations or possessing peaceful relations between people in general as nice and fluffy as this might sound. The angels which spoke in Luke 2:14 were actually talking about the peace that God’s children experience, when they are saved from God’s wrath, and the peace and tranquility they can experience in their hearts on a daily basis through their relationship with God. Angels desire to know more about these wonderful truths of grace, salvation, and peace (“which things the angels desire to look into” – 1 Pet. 1:12).

Luke 1:79 explains peace in this manner:

“To give light to them that sit in darkness and *in* the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

The “peace on earth” and “way of peace” are similar references to how people can experience God’s true rest and peace, knowing their sins are forgiven, they are saved from hell, and can now live with God’s peace permeating their hearts and lives.

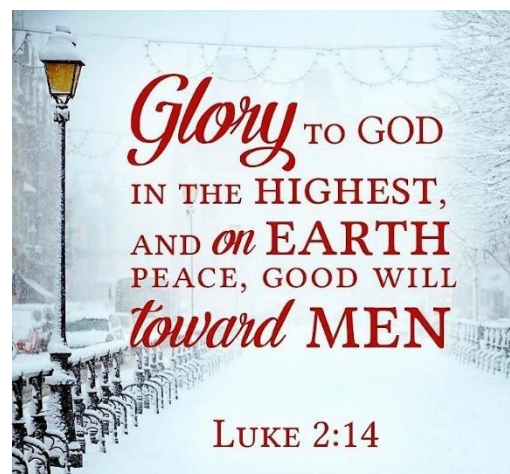
Jesus said Luke 7:50:

“Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”

Luke 8:48 adds:

“And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.”

You cannot “go in peace” until you know the God of peace through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

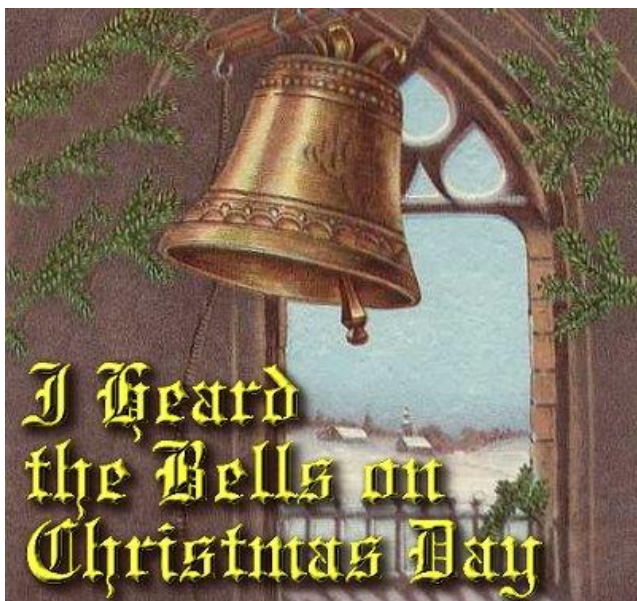


The angelic visitors were talking about the peace that God's children can possess in their hearts and lives because of the forgiveness of sins and receiving the free gift of salvation through Christ. This is the peace that would be experienced on earth with Christ's first coming and because of His incarnation and death upon the cross. This is the peace that comes from salvation's rest!

Jesus exclaimed in Matthew 11:29:

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

After this short devotional study, we may have a much better understanding of the words of the beloved Christmas carol.



"I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play
And mild and sweet their songs repeat
Of peace on earth good will to men."

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was an artist of literary genius who wrote many influential masterpieces. Whether in short story, book, or poetry, Longfellow captivated his readers with his amazing knack for story-telling, but one day this great artist was struck by a tragedy that would change his life forever. July 9, 1861, Longfellow was

sleeping at his house when he was awakened by screaming in the next room. His wife, who was fixing their daughters hair, had somehow caught her dress on fire and was engulfed in flames. He rushed to her aid trying desperately to put out the fire.

The fire killed his wife and left his face burned and scarred. His injuries were so bad that he could not even attend his wife's funeral. He resorted to himself alone and in despair. His family was left in silence as Longfellow left the rest of the world to revolve on its own. He wanted no part of this cruel world. Longfellow needed a peace that only Jesus Christ could bring. On Christmas day in 1863, he sat down

and desperately tried to reflect on the joys of the season and wrote "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day."

"Till, ringing, singing, on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,
Of peace on earth, good will to men!"

Longfellow had finally found the peace that he needed when he turned once again to the God who was in control of all the world and its problems, as well as his own problems. Though the world will never understand how a Christian can go through trials, we as Christians realize that God is in control. No matter what trials we face, we can, through God's good will and favor, always have peace on earth. It is a peace that comes into our hearts through possessing a saving relationship with God. It is a peace that stems from God's good will or grace being extended toward us through His Son Jesus Christ. It is a peace that only His children can possess, a peace that "passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7).

Have you heard the true bells of the Christmas season ringing which declare the message of God's grace extended to hell-bound lost sinners? The bells of Christmas ring out of God's saving grace through Jesus Christ and the peace that we can possess in our hearts knowing that we are saved and prepared for Heaven. But they also represent the peace we can experience in our daily Christian life through exceedingly difficult trials. The bells of Christmas truth are ringing forth from the pages of Scripture, but we must hear them since "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

When we hear the message of God's good will or grace extended to us as sinners, we can express faith in Christ who died and rose from the grave to give of salvation from hell and eternal life in Heaven.

Galatians 3:26

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

Only when we place faith in Christ to save our souls will we have true peace. It will be the peace and rest that comes from being saved. Yes, we can possess the peace of knowing that we saved, that God accepts us, but also experience the daily peace

that only God's children can have as they experience His inner tranquility and calmness of soul. Peace on earth! Peace in our hearts! The peace of God!

Jesus said in John 14:27:

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

We've all been there and have experienced those times in life when we are discouraged, fearful, worried, perplexed and weighed down with care. It is part of life. It might be due to the death of a loved one. It might be because of a medical test result we are waiting for or have received. It might be because our company is downsizing. It might be due to bad choices our children have made. It might be due to difficult decisions we are facing. There are so many events in life which can overwhelm us. But God is still saying to us today, "on earth peace, good will toward men." How wonderful it is to experience the peace and rest that comes from being saved and trusting in the only One who can give us peace through the trials we face in life. Peace on earth! Peace in your heart! God will toward men!