Luke 2:14

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. So many things to be thankful for.

! Christmas Eve at my house was very busy. Christmas week leading up to it was very busy.
We were with lots of family out of town for a few days and came home and had some extended family with us and had more family yesterday. And we've had just a wonderful, wonderful week, but it's busy.
Last night was amazing. One of my favorite nights I've ever been a part of since I've been at this church. But it's busy. This morning, you had to get up and get dressed and get kids dressed and get your husband dressed and come to church.
And it's busy. And for many of us, as soon as church is over, it's going to be a lot of fun. And we're excited about gathering with family and friends, and yet it's busy. And one of the things I want for us this morning to do is to get to be here with hundreds and hundreds of people, and yet take a chance to just rest in the significance of what we celebrate on this day.
[1:37] To give you a chance just to kind of take a deep breath, catch your breath, and just to rest in the goodness of God that He promised a Savior.

And at Christmastime, we celebrate the promise kept, the prophecy fulfilled, the gospel realized.
And it is extremely possible to go to a dozen Christmas event concerts or services and to never really try to wrap your mind around the reality of the rest that Christmas brings.
Because the truth of it is, Christmas for many of us, if we're not purposeful and strategic, Christmas is a lot of things. It's fun.
It's exciting. It's thrilling. It's expensive. It's a lot of things. But for many people, it's anything other than rest. And so even if just for a few moments this morning here together as a church congregation, I want you just to rest.
[2:58] I want you to rest. I want you to rest. In the meaning of Christmas. That we have a God who has made a way for our sin to be paid.

We have a God who not only promised but delivered. And we understand the reason we need Christmas is because we're sinners.
And our sin earns us judgment. And there would be literally no rest if God himself didn't make a way for us.
We could try as hard as we wanted to. We could be as sacrificial as we could be. We could be as religious as we desired. But without the grace of our God and his mercy for our sin, there would never be rest for our soul.
Never. Never. Never. Never. But in Christ, God has made a way for us. In fact, better said, in Christ, God has made the only way for us.
[4:10] And as believers, we find great rest in the meaning of Christmas. Resting in Jesus.

Resting in our redemption that he has provided. Resting in the good promise that the word became flesh and dwelt among us.
Resting in the truth that the light has overcome the darkness. Resting in the truth that in Jesus Emmanuel, God is with us.
And one of the reasons why I just can't imagine not gathering on the Lord's Day, on Christmas Day, is because there's just everything else about this day.
If you miss the centrality of Christ, whatever you have is such an inadequate substitute. It is our rest and our hope and our joy and our love in Christ that gives us everything that we need.
[5:30] And when the Bible teaches us that Jesus, our Redeemer, Emmanuel, meaning God with us, one of the things that tells us is that as Christians, we are never alone.

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Jesus is God with us. He's present. Through the Holy Spirit, He is always present with us.
Now, I understand that at Christmas time, sometimes those who feel lonely, that gets heightened. I understand that sometimes those who have sorrows and griefs on their heart in the holidays, it gets even magnified.
And I also realize that you can be here with hundreds of people, and yet, through the circumstances of life or your family, you may feel alone or you may be going home to households this afternoon this evening that are more quiet than you wish that they were.
I understand that. And yet, even if that's true for you, find your rest in the comfort that Christ is Emmanuel, God with us.
[6:45] So your house, for some, may be more quiet than you wish, but you're not by yourself. In Jesus, we have God with us.

Through the Spirit, we have God always present with us. And as much as you can, in this sanctuary, this room that's been built for the express purpose of the saints gathering to worship God, the Bible is also very clear that the body of Christ is a family.
And so, in this room are your spiritual brothers and sisters. And even if you would, just take a moment, let your eyes just kind of wander to the side in front of you and even turn behind you and just see hundreds of people who, like you, find their hope and their rest in Jesus.
This is a family. This is a spiritual household. And together, we find our purpose and our hope and even our rest in Jesus.
And so, whatever the Christmas season has been for you and has meant for you, it will be completely unsatisfied unless we stop and recognize that in Christ, we have been given forgiveness.
[8:21] In Christ, we have been given salvation. In Christ, we have been given an inheritance. In Christ, we have been given an eternal life. And in Christ, we have been given everything that we need.

We all understand that doesn't mean anything is easy. Not in this life. We all in this room, I would suspect, know people who are sick, know people who are in the hospital, know people who have lost loved ones, and our hearts are burdened for them.
Our hearts grieve for them. But the Bible says we don't grieve as those without hope. There's a different way that Christians go through pain.
And there's a different way that Christians go through loss. It's a hope-filled grief. And it's even a rest-filled grief.
Because ultimately, at the end of all the presents being opened, at the end of all the services, at the end of all the music, at the end of all the food, at the end of going home or your family going home, at the end of it all, when you lay your head on your pillow, and whether you are exhausted from joy, or even if you are burdened with grief, it is always true for us that as believers we can say, God is with us.
[9:49] And no one except a Christian can say that. Nobody except those who know Jesus Christ can honestly say that wherever I go, and whatever comes my way, and whatever victories I am granted, or whatever losses I experience, that we can say with absolute certainty, God is with me.

But we can. In Christ, we can. And so there really, for the Christian, should be no such thing as an unfulfilled Christmas.
This may not be the Christmas of your dreams. The circumstances may or may not be exactly what you would have wished them to be. But there is no unfulfilled Christmas for the Christian.
Because we remind ourselves on this day, that way back in the garden, when man fell, judgment was promised, so was the Savior.
And the Savior has come. And He is the light of the world. And weary souls find their rest in the message, in the meaning of Christmas.
[11:24] And so it's good for us to gather here. It's good for us to be reminded of what we have in Jesus Christ. And I confess to you that I feel today probably what every pastor who's preaching this morning feels.

Where do you go? If you've been preaching for a long time, as I've been blessed to do here, you kind of want, you know, how many Christmas sermons can you write? How many Christmas passages can we turn to?

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And I kind of face that desire to want to say something different or unique or go to some kind of strange place and you leave saying, I've never heard a Christmas sermon from that text.
But I don't want to overthink it. I don't want to take something simple and obvious and try to complicate it. I don't desire today to be novel or creative.
I just want to lead you in your heart to the simple truth of what this day is and not to overthink the obvious. This is Christmas, the day we remember and celebrate and rest in the birth of Jesus.
[12:43] And so, I just want to take you to the familiar story and the familiar words of the birth of Christ and show you why we have rest and why we have hope and why we have joy in the truth that Jesus has been born.

So open with me, if you would, to Luke chapter 2. And I just want to, for a few moments, zero in on verse 14.
It's the story of the account of the angels appearing to the shepherds. The angel is there and there's a multitude of the heavenly hosts.
They're praising God. And this is the message in verse 14. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased.
This is the hymn of the angels. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased.
[14:07] This hymn doesn't rise up from the earth. This hymn comes down from heaven. And the declaration from heaven at the first Christmas is glory to God and peace with those for whom He's pleased.

Let's think for just a few brief moments this morning about what this angelic hymn means for us and the rest that it brings for us.
Number one, this Christmas hymn reminds us that Christmas is for the glory of God and the good of humanity.
Christmas is for the glory of God and the good of humanity. And what a great blessing. These two things are brought together.
That what brings glory to God is also what is best for us. That what we most need is also that which most glorifies God.
[15:22] That as Christians we don't have to choose between do we want to be righteous or do we want what we most desire. It's all one and the same.

What we need the most is to be found righteous in God. And what brings God glory is the proclamation of how His Son makes us righteous.
And so the glory of God and the good of humanity are both perfectly fulfilled in Christ. Christmas is for the glory of God and it's for the good of humanity.
Any Christmas celebration or theology or mentality that misses the glory of God has missed the heart of Christmas.
It happens all the time and many of us talk about it every year. People who on the radio or on a CD or in a recording studio go and record songs about the birth of Christ and the hope of the world and the Savior has come and have zero thought of the glory of God.
[16:53] The singing of the songs in and of themselves and the reading of the story just by itself, if that's all it is, if it's just words sung or just words spoken, miss the essential reality that what we see at Christmas is a display of God's glory in Christ, which also happens to be the very best good for humanity.

Because humanity's biggest problem is that we are sinners under judgment. And so what we most need is to know, is there a way for our sin to be forgiven?
And in Christ, the answer is yes. And in Christ, the glory of God is on display. So at Christmas, what we uniquely see is the glory of God and the good for humanity both mingled perfectly together.
Don't miss that. Because if you miss that, you miss Christmas. No matter the songs you've sung and no matter the gifts you've received and no matter the thrill you've had with family, if you miss that truth, you've missed Christmas.
The angels descend from heaven and declare that here at Christmas, this is about glory to God in the highest.
[18:26] This is the high point of human history up to this point that the promise made in the garden has been kept in Bethlehem.

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And because of it, God is glorified. And because of it, man has its biggest need met. Second, as we look at verse 14, glory to God in the highest and on earth peace.
I want you to see, secondly, that Christmas offers peace. Christmas offers peace. Now, hear this carefully.
you don't have to be a Christian to desire peace. You just have to be one to find it.
The whole world desires it. The whole world longs for it. The whole world is seeking peace, not seeking God because man without God would not seek God.
[19:35] Man seeks sinful things. Man seeks selfish things. Man seeks self-centered things. Now, men, mankind will seek peace, but they seek peace for themselves.

What Christmas uniquely offers us is a peace that is found that satisfies our soul as it brings glory to God. This is what makes Christmas uniquely Christian.
And it's not just about happiness, happiness and joy. It's about a happiness and joy that glorifies God. You don't have to be a Christian to desire peace, but you do have to be a Christian to know it and to experience it because it's found only in Christ.
Now, all people, believer or unbeliever, all people get weary from the strife of this world. All people get tired of the wars that rage.
all people grieve and mourn the loss of a loved one. All people agonize over some of the hardest unending questions of life, but it's uniquely those who know Jesus who know peace.
[20:53] In fact, there was a first century philosopher, he was actually a contemporary of Luke who wrote the gospel. He said, while the emperor may give peace from war on land and sea, he is unable to give peace from passion, grief, and envy.

He cannot give peace of heart for which man yearns more than even our outward peace. In other words, if you ask the unbeliever what do you want, they may say I want peace.
They may even say I long for peace on earth. But what they mean from that is they want a world, a life, an existence without war and without poverty and without theft and without death.
But even if they could have it, even if there could be an emperor or a king or a president so powerful, so effective, so strong that he really could eradicate poverty and he really could eradicate world hunger and he really could cause all fighting to stop and all crime to go away, you know what he could never do?
He could never bring peace inside the individual heart of a human being. Because the absence of peace is felt uniquely by the human being is the problem of sin and the need for God.
[22:30] So when the world talks about peace on earth, what they may long for is to wake up one day and have all the problems of the world gone.

And while that's not possible, even if it were, what they would soon find out is by noon on that day they woke up with no problems in the world, they would have all kinds of battles raging in their own soul.
peace. Because the only way to truly know peace is to know the Christ of Christmas.
Which is why the angels say this is all about glory to God and on earth there is peace. Not because the wars have stopped, not because world hunger has gone away, not because sickness has been done away with, but because there is now rest for the human soul found in the Redeemer named Jesus.
And just think about the fullness of this peace that Luke 14 speaks of. We as Christians have peace with God. Colossians 1.20 Through Him He is reconciling to Himself all things whether on earth or in heaven making peace by the blood of His cross.
[24:03] It's a staggering statement that on the cross when those who hate Him are killing Him and as blood gushes from His brow and as people taunt, mock, and curse His name, Scripture says, Christ in that moment is securing our peace.

What the world thought was the murder of Jesus was actually the glory of God in completing the work of your redemption.
through Christ we have peace with God. We also through God through the work of Christ have peace with one another. Ephesians 4.3 that we are eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.
That's what we have as believers peace with one another. And the hardest of all in terms of human relationships not just peace with another but also in Christ we can have peace with ourselves. Ephesians 2.14 goes on to say he himself is our peace. Christ himself.

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[25:42] The book of Hebrews says therefore is remaining a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

Peace with God peace with each other and even peace in our own heart because of who Christ is. Make note of one final thing as we think about the angelic hymn from Luke 2.14 that Christmas is received by those with whom God is pleased.
Christmas is received by those with whom God is pleased. This is an interesting part of what the angels declare. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.
In one sense the good news is for all people. Verse 10 and the angel said to them fear not for behold I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.
[26:50] So in one sense the good news is for all the people but but at the same time in another sense the peace is just for those with whom God is pleased. The good news is for everybody.

All the world gets to see that Christ has come. All the world can read about the gospel. All the world can see the glory of God displayed in the heavens peace is for those with whom God is pleased. Which brings up a massive question. How can we be pleasing to God? And Hebrews 11 6 answers it.
It says without faith it is impossible to please God. So the heavenly hymn in Luke 2 14 says there's peace for those with whom he is pleased.
How do we please God? Hebrews 11 6 answers it. We must have faith in Christ. So be careful here friends.
[28:11] Real peace with God is not found by those who sing about Jesus if that's all it is.

Peace with God is not found with those who just read about Jesus or who just talk about Jesus. Peace is found by those with whom he is pleased and God is pleased with those who have faith in Jesus.
the world will gladly sing about the birth of Jesus because just the human interest narrative warms their heart.
But the question is do you believe trust love him.
And one way to know that you really believe in him and one way to know that you really trust in him is that the greatest desire of your soul aligns with the song of the angels namely that your greatest joy is the glory of God.
[29:53] One can love secular Christmas even if it includes reading the Christmas story or singing about Jesus. The world can embrace that.

What the unbeliever cannot do is long for the glory of God. Only through the work of grace and repentance will we go from being man centered to centered on the glory of God.
And do not think that just because you love Christmas music means that you have faith in Jesus. One could have a very man centered view of Christmas. Quite honestly churches can have a quite man centered view of Christmas.
And just like in Bethlehem even the religious can miss it. When the angels proclaim that Christmas is all about the glory of God and the offer of peace it's a reminder that that is received by those who would have faith and trust and believe in the Christ of Christmas.
[31:26] And so like the angels today I have good news for you and it's for all of you. And the good news is that the Savior was born.

That while we were sinners Christ died for us. He was born he lived a perfect life and he died for us. The good news I have for you is that the story of Jesus is not just a story it's the truthful account of God making the only way for us.
The good news I have for you is the same good news the angels had 2000 years ago that Christ was born verse 11 he is a Savior he is Christ and he is the Lord and for all who would believe in him trust in him have faith in him for all who would live for the glory of God for all who would repent of their sin and turn away from themselves and set their faith fully in Christ and on who he is you will have peace!
peace not the absence of trouble but peace through the storm through the night and a peace that will lead you home the angel said that night that in the birth of Jesus God was being glorified and peace was being provided a few believed and most did not two thousand years later it's the same the message of Christmas is the same the meaning of Christmas is the same and most have once again missed it but a few rest in

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Jesus because they live for the glory of God and in that truth we find our peace there are a lot of Christmas songs that we sing and a lot of Christmas songs that we enjoy one of them was written by a prolific hymn writer by the name of Isaac Watts in fact more than 750 songs are credited to Isaac Watts you may or may not know the name but you likely are familiar with his songs! [34:30] when I surveyed the wondrous cross at the cross at the cross where I first saw the light and the burden of my heart rolled away but perhaps Isaac Watts song he's most known for was actually not even written to be a Christmas song in fact it wasn't even a song at all in 1719 he wrote a series of poems based on the Psalms he wanted to take the revelation of the New Testament and with that knowledge understanding read the Psalms and see the gospel message and so when he came to Psalm 98 he wrote a paraphrase of the message of Psalm 98 really not a song about the birth of Christ at all it was actually a prophetic word a poem he paraphrased from

Psalm 98 that speaks of the triumphant return of Christ of how Christ has made all things right and now his blessings will flow as far as the curse is found when you bump into Isaac Watts in heaven you may say to him I loved your Christmas song and he may say you've got me confused I didn't write a Christmas song and you say we sang it every year you may have to tell him what song you mean because when he said joy to the world the Lord is come he was thinking not about his first coming but about his second coming when he rules and he reigns over all things forever and forever but you can't separate his birth from his death or his death from his future coming because all of it together proclaims the glory of
God displayed in Christ and so we're going to leave this place this morning singing for many your favorite Christmas song that its author would not have even known you were singing in December but whose message cannot be missed joy has come to the world because Christ reigns over all things Lord we thank you today for your word for the hope and the message of Christmas we thank you today for for your story your name so for me we have you have for me as this is you have you have this me have it that is like it is not so it fathers are my one one one one

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