

Matthew 1:18–25

Third Sunday in Advent: Peace

Sing a Song for Christmas, (Vol. 2)

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

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The Christmas hymn paired with our text today is *Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*. While reading through the lyrics of this hymn, I enjoyed them so much that I made an acrostic poem out of the title—arranging the lines of the song so the first letters of each line spelled out the title of the song. It was a very long acrostic, and I was not able to do it right, with the first letter of each line lining up with a letter of the song title.

But, here it is:

**Hail th’incarnate Diety
A of beauty Thou art the sun
Risen with healing in his wings
K Glory to the new Born King**

**T Now display Thy saving Heav’n
Hark the Herald Angels sing
E Christ the Everlasting Lord**

**Hark! The herald angels sing
E peace on earth and mercy mild
Risen with healing in His wings
A God and sinners reconciled
Late in time, behold Him come
Desire of nations rise**

**Adams likeness, Lord, efface
N work in me, restore this hour
Glory to the newborn King
E Jesus our Emanuel
Light and life to all he brings
Stamp Thine image in its place**

**S Join the Triumph of the skies
I Late in time behold him come
Now display Thy saving power
God and sinners reconciled**

After I finished, I realized that an acrostic poem representing Hark the Herald Angels Sing wasn't what I was hoping it would be. As it stands, the hymn overflows with the same joy and promise of God's peace we meet in our Scripture today. **Matthew 1:18-25 here.**

Our passage introduces us to Joseph. At this point in his life, he's a young man with the world seemingly wide open before him. He is of marrying age, trained as a carpenter or builder, and engaged to a young woman he surely loved. Everything appears stable, exciting, and promising.

But life has a way of surprising us, doesn't it? Just when we're celebrating and anticipating what is ahead, unexpected news can send us in an unexpected direction.

Joseph receives such news: Mary—his fiancée—is pregnant. And he knows he is not the father. As a man faithful to the law, he cares and won't brush it aside. So, he begins forming a plan to quietly end the engagement, protecting Mary's dignity as best he can. But don't rush past the human ache here: Grief and disappointment must have weighed heavily on him.

And yet, in the midst of it, the Holy Spirit is already at work. An angel appears to him—God broke into Joseph's fear to show that this unexpected situation is God's plan. God is doing something new and God revealed that Joseph was a part of it.

This is Biblical peace: **Not the absence of trouble, but the nearness of God in the middle of it.**

Has anything like this—maybe on a smaller scale—ever happened to you? A calling that felt intimidating? Pain that produced suffering? Failure that brought humiliation? Moments when you thought you’d missed your calling? What has shaken you?

Joseph had his own hopes and dreams—plans for a normal life and a normal marriage. But God changed everything, and the new path was not smooth. **And yet—God was with him. That is the heart of biblical peace.**

Joseph heard God’s voice telling him to take Mary as his wife. For Joseph and Mary, it’s the way God is fulfilling the promise of Isaiah 7:14, and repeated in verse 23 today:

“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”—which means *God with us.*” Isaiah 7:14/Matthew 1:23

Joseph didn’t live long enough to stand at the foot of the cross with Mary. He fades from the Gospel story early. He doesn’t get the limelight. But he was chosen—just as Mary was chosen. His calling was quieter and hidden. He lived out the truth that peace comes not from circumstances aligning with our expectations, but from obedience and faithfulness. God was with him. Joseph put in the work that came with the call.

In Luke chapter 2, Jesus got lost among the crowds, left behind in Jerusalem by his parents after being there for one of the Jewish festivals. You can imagine the panic and fear they’d have when they realized they’d left him back in the city as they were walking home with hordes of people. When they go back and find Him, Jesus said, “*Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?*” Those words likely echoed in Joseph’s heart for years. Jesus’ Father was the Lord. Joseph’s role was stewardship—a calling to raise the Son of God in faithfulness.

That, too, is biblical peace: **The humble acceptance that we do not control outcomes, but we belong to the God who does.** It is not my way or the highway. Peace is not sweet, lovely, and free from mistakes. It doesn't need to be created by a Master Chef or Tiffany. Peace is not perfection. Peace doesn't come from our circumstances. It comes from the Living God. We have peace in the face of war. Peace in the face of lots of trouble. Peace when people abandon us or we face lots of trouble. Joseph did the right thing in a very difficult situation. **Joseph followed God and married this woman named Mary.** It is God's way and there is peace in that.

Friends, Advent invites us to rest in this same truth. We cannot outthink God. We cannot manage our stories into perfect stability, proper etiquette and precision. Life is unexpected, embarrassing, and hard. We cannot shield ourselves from every hardship. But we can trust the One who comes near to us.

As the hymn we sang proclaims:
**“Hark! the herald angels sing,
‘Glory to the newborn King!’
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.”**

Peace on earth—not because everything is calm, but because God loves us so much and has reconciled us to him through Jesus.

So, Church Family, may that same peace arise in us because of God's faithfulness. In trusting him, may we pursue obedience like Joseph—the carpenter, the one who heard from the angel, the devoted husband, and the humble servant whose worship was expressed in quiet, costly, daily faithfulness.

Here's the thing, though: Joseph wouldn't want us to exalt *him* today. He's an example of obedience and trusting God, which brings

peace...But his desire was to honor and exalt God. And Joseph would tell us to do the same thing. Even when life makes no sense —like my acrostic of Hark the Herald Angel's sing that was an oddity. **Joseph shows us to follow God's call obediently and honor him with our lives all the way till we are in heaven and worshipping God in heaven for all eternity.**

That's real peace, rooted in God's faithfulness. He's the one who is the Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Sovereign, Ruler of All Space and Time who created us in his image. **Let us also follow God and find peace in Him, even when His plans are different than ours.** And Joseph was in his hands all along. And even now, he's got me. And he's got you. And that's a peace that passes all understanding. Let's pray...Amen.