

The Crib, Cross, and Communion

Hebrews 10:19-25

So many diversions. Like no other time of the year, the next few days will be filled with last minute shopping, making it to 10 parties in 6 nights, and either preparing for guests or traveling to become guests. Patience begins to wear thin, tempers at best are slightly restrained by a thread, and emotions are continually on edge.

Somewhere in the background we may faintly hear the once familiar sound of “on earth peace among men” with a concerted effort to avoid the source of that peace in a lame attempt to be politically correct and not offend. Ironically, it is an effort assigned predominantly to those of the Christian faith by those who have flagrantly denied the authentic history and source of the season itself.

Don’t you find it interesting that the more our culture has removed itself from the *source* of peace on earth, the greater the unrest, frustration, fear, and chaos not only in society but in homes and individual lives.

It would be so easy to become cynical and withdraw, but we do have a choice. We can either be like Scrooge or like God. In the midst of a cynical and anti-Christian world, we find that “God so loved *that* world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” The world Jesus was born into was really not much different than ours today in regard to faith. As a matter of fact, when the world was at its worst—most resentful and resistant—He had the greatest impact.

The unapologetic, bold, yet gracious truth Jesus embodied so contagiously infected those who followed Him that upon His ascension, His Holy Spirit indwelt them with that same boldness and empowered them to change the then known world. It was the personification of God in Christ that fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies providing the consistent thread of faith in God from the time of Adam and Eve to the present and throughout eternity. It all began with the miracle of His birth in a humble **crib**; it was modeled and proven on the **cross** and in the resurrection, and it is afforded to us to experience in the highest possible intimacy of **communion** with God and each other today.

Just as the angel proclaimed to a chaotic and fearful world 2,000 years ago, we have the incredible privilege of proclaiming that same hope in the restoration of relationships today.

At a time when one might have every reason to be cynical and distracted and to withdraw, this could well be one of the most exciting times in recent history to make the life changing difference of Christmas.

LIFE RESPONSE

1. This week **MEMORIZE** and **MEDITATE** on Luke 2:14; John 1:29; and John 14:27, “*And on earth peace among men,*” for “*Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” and “*Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give you.*”
2. Between now and the end of the year set aside a 15 minute period of time each day when you can be alone with God, meditate on the above scriptures in their entirety, and ask Him to give you His perspective and purpose for the day and for those around you (all of “those”).
3. What would it mean if we were to truly grasp the reality of God’s initiative to provide His grace, forgiveness, and the intimacy He desires to have with us? What are the limits? What would they do for us emotionally? For Him?

See Hebrews 10:19-23.

4. Consider the initiative we are each to take in proactively encouraging each other as the evidence of our unconditional access and relationship with God in Christ? Make a list of those excluded from Him and us? What is the place of obedience in being proactive?
5. Pray that our church would become the symbol of relationships between Him and each other for our community and families in anticipation of this new year.

“His life is the highest and the holiest entering through the most humble of doors.”
and we have free and unhindered access through Jesus. (Italics mine) - Oswald Chambers

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

What is God's greatest desire? ...His purpose?

- His greatest commandment
Matt 22:37-39 / Deut 6; Lev 18
Bottom Line: Relationships

Koinonia

Harmony

To be imitators of God

The trilogy of God
Father, Son, Holy Spirit
The template of all relationships

Immediate context:
Marriage Eph 5:22-33
Family Eph 6:1-4
Social Eph 6:5-24

Larger Context
Church Ephesians

The picture of God's desire

Communion: A consistent thread of God's desire toward man and for His people.

Gen 3:8 – Rejected

Ex 31:18 – Revealed

Its Power

GOD'S GRACE IN FULFILLING HIS DESIRE

◆THE CRIB ◆ THE CROSS ◆ THE COMMUNION

THE CRIB: Luke 2:8-15; Matt 2:1-11

"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace"

Perhaps the greatest display of unity out of diversity

King of the Jews Born in a feeding crib

Shepherds The common ones

Magi
(Num 24:17) The prestigious

Their responsiveness

Joseph/Mary "Be it done to me according to your Word:"

Shepherds "Let's go and see."

Magi "arrived; went their way; rejoiced exceedingly."

The culture "search for the child to destroy Him..."

THE CROSS: Heb 10:19-25

19 "To enter His presence" Total confidence

20 "Through the veil" Total access

22 "Hearts sprinkled clean" Total forgiveness

23 "Hold fast" Total hope

The root of baptism: Rom 6 – "United with Him"

THE COMMUNION: Heb 10:23-25

Koinonia – sharing – partnership - participation – fellowship – unity

The natural continuum...

Let us... strong exhortation

...draw near

...hold fast

...not forsake assembly together

The fulfillment of Jesus' final prayer

"That they may be one just as We are one." John 17:22

... AND MY CONVICTION:

■ Toward God

To grasp the reality of God's initiative to provide His grace, forgiveness, and intimacy He desires with me.

United in Him Rom 6:1-13

To know Him Phil 3:10

■ Toward Others

To grip the opportunity to personally initiate God's grace, forgiveness, and intimacy He desires for me to have with others.

As an imitator 2 Cor 5:17

As a minister 2 Cor 5:18

As an ambassador 2 Cor 5:20