

Rediscovering Christmas: Peace+Favour

There's different perspectives on Christmas. World. Church. Within the church.

- There's differing emphasis between the gospels and even within them.
 - Last week we looked at the differing titles of Jesus in Matthew 1 and focused on Jesus the Son of Abraham.
 - Jesus is the true Isaac: promised, given, offered.
 - Jesus being born shows us that God is faithful, relational, covenantal.
 - We rediscover that God keeps his promise.
 - We rediscover that God invests in his covenant.
 - We rediscover that God himself is the greatest gift.

*Luke 2 1 In those days **Caesar Augustus** issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register. 4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because **he belonged to the house and line of David**. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and **placed him in a manger**, because there was no guest room available for them.*

*8 And **there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby**, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; **he is the Messiah, the Lord**. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." 13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 "**Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.**"*

The gospel writers offer different perspectives to each other.

- Matthew shows an elevated Jesus as son of David, Messiah, King of Israel. Who is visited by magi bearing expensive gifts.
- Luke shows Jesus, a king, but born resting in a food trough, surrounded by shepherds.
- Jesus is the king of kings, but he's also the king of the outsiders too.
 - Shepherds were as outside as you could get. Excluded.
 - But they were included at the very beginning.
 - Jesus includes all. **The incarnation was for all.**

But there's another contrast here too.

- We see the difference between an emperor and a king.
- Caesar Augustus makes a decree and the whole empire responds.
 - Augustus had such power that he started a period of time called the Pax Romana: the peace of Rome.
 - Peace built by military conquest and subjugation.
- The emperor makes his decree from a palace while the king is born in a stable.
 - And this king of the people, with the people, all people - brings true peace.
 - He brings true peace because he is the incarnation of peace

*Isaiah 9 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.⁷ **Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.***

Jesus is the prince of peace. Peace where it matters. Peace that flows from the favour of God's heart for relationship.

Conclusion

There is favour for you.

- You might feel left out like the shepherds. But you will get a message.
- You might feel pushed around like Joseph and Mary - having to travel for the plans of a tyrant.
- But God has a plan
- His plan is peace and favour for you.

There is favour for us.

- Favour for us in our mission. Favour for us in our provision. Favour for us in our identity. Favour for us in our impact.

Rediscover the peace and favour that is Jesus the Son of Man who ascends to rule the universe. King of all - not just an empire.