

JESUS: GOD'S GIFT OF PEACE

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Text: Luke 1:68-79; and 2:14

Michele Hardie tells following story, "Advent was one week away so we thought we'd see what the children remembered from our family devotions the year before. "Who can tell me what the four candles in the Advent wreath represent?" I asked.

Luke jumped in with seven-year-old wisdom and exuberance. "There's love, joy, peace, and ... and ... "

"I know!" six-year-old Elise interrupted to finish her brother's sentence: "Peace and quiet!"

-- Michele L. Hardie, Holland, Michigan. Christian Reader, "Kids of the Kingdom."

Peace and quiet may be exactly what we are looking for about now or will be looking for in a few days. However, the peace that Jesus offers is a lasting peace and the quiet is a quietness in our souls. This is the message of John the Baptist. One day Jesus will bring peace to this chaotic world in which we live, but today He wants to bring peace to our souls.

Note the various *promises* found in John's message that would bring peace to God's people.

I. THROUGH JESUS, GOD HAS GRANTED HUMANITY PEACE THROUGH REDEMPTION (vv. 68-75).

A. Through Jesus, God graciously intervened in the lives of humanity as He had promised (vv. 68-70).

B. Through Jesus, victory over the enemies of our peace is secured (vv. 71-75).

The "oath" (v. 73) to Abraham in view here is recorded in Genesis 22:16-18, where the Lord promised Abraham not only that his descendants' enemies would be subdued but also that universal blessing would result from his obedience. Therefore, the salvation in view here involves both political deliverance and spiritual blessing (cf. the next verses). *EBC*

II. THROUGH JESUS, GOD HAS GRANTED HUMANITY ASSURANCE THROUGH FORGIVENESS (vv. 76-79).

A. Through Jesus, John preached, that humanity could find forgiveness of sins.

B. Through Jesus there is mercy from God.

Max Lucado writes, "God does not save us because of what we have done. Only a puny god could be bought with tithes. Only an egotistical god would be impressed with our pain. Only a temperamental god could be satisfied by sacrifices. Only a heartless god would sell salvation to the highest bidders.

And only a great God does for his children what they can't do for themselves.

God's delight is received upon surrender, not awarded upon conquest. The first step to joy is a plea for help, an

acknowledgement of moral destitution, an admission of inward paucity.

Those who taste God's presence have declared spiritual bankruptcy and are aware of their spiritual crisis...Their pockets are empty. Their options are gone. They have long since stopped demanding justice; they are pleading for mercy." (23)

C. Through Jesus there is peace with God (vv. 76-79).

CONCLUSION

Carl Michalson, a brilliant young theologian who died in a plane crash some years ago, once told about playing with his young son one afternoon. They were tussling playfully on their front lawn when Michalson accidentally hit the young boy in the face with his elbow. It was a sharp blow full to his son's face. The little boy was stunned by the impact of the elbow. It hurt, and he was just about to burst into tears. But then he looked into his father's eyes. Instead of anger and hostility, he saw there his father's sympathy and concern; he saw there his father's love and compassion. Instead of exploding into tears, the little boy suddenly burst into laughter. What he saw in his father's eyes made all the difference!

The sharp blow of God's message to us is: Repentance. But, look into your father's eyes. What he offers you is forgiveness and that makes all the difference. Repent and you will be forgiven.