

Luke 2:8-14: **8** And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. **9** And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. **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. **11** For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. **12** And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” **13** And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, **14** “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

Intro:

- Good morning, my name is John Seago, I’m a partner here at CLC and am glad you’re with us this morning.
- Many of you know that Fidel Castro, the political revolutionary and long time leader of Cuba died last month. Castro had lead Cuba for 40 years and had fundamentally changed the country. No matter what you think of Cuba or Castro himself, one striking thing from an outside perspective was the amazing contrasts in how people responded to his death. In Little Havana in Maimi, hundreds of Cubans celebrated the news with elation in the streets. The evening he died, they came outside cheered, yelled, and banged pots and pans for several hours. Guys were taking off their shirts waving them around in the sea of large waving flags. Contrast this to the somber setting in Cuba, when the political leader’s ashes were on display and paraded around the island during a government declared nine-day mourning period. He was finally laid in Santiago, where tearful crowds chanted ‘I am Fidel.’
- On one side, absolute joy and celebration, on the other grieving and tears.
- We here in the US experienced this type of split screen reaction to the same political event during our presidential election last month. Some were shocked into uncontrollable tears and devastation while others shouted slogans in their bliss of an unlikely political victory. That’s all I’m going to say about the presidential election.
- These two episodes show us that our country, our kingdoms affect our fears and joys. Depending on where we are, and what kingdoms we belong to greatly shapes our outlook and life.
- Let’s pray.
- Today, as we continue in our advent series we’re in the Christmas narrative, the historical event from 2,020 years ago ushers in a different country. Last week we saw the ushering in of a different king, and next week we’ll see a different life. This morning we’ll look at the country or kingdom.
- There are three aspects we’ll examine: 1) Need for a different kingdom; 2) the Map of the New Kingdom; and 3) the Difference the New Kingdom makes. So a need, a map, and a difference.
- So, first we need to look at the...

I. Need for a Different Kingdom (v8).

- Our passage picks right up from last week. We saw that this promised Messiah, the different king, was born in Bethlehem in the most humble circumstances. Now look at verse 8, “in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.”
- So, same setting, outside the town of Bethlehem and here we have these new characters in our story: shepherds.
 - These are just regular guys doing their regular jobs; they were covering the night shift watching sheep, protecting them from thieves and animals.
 - Now, in the Old Testament people watched their own sheep or their families sheep so it was typically a noble thing, in 1st century middle east though, where our story takes place that's not the case. Being a shepherd was like day labor, they were hired workers and these guys had a pretty bad reputation. They were thought of as being:
 - “dishonest and thieving”

- Always accused of leading “their herds onto other people's land and [stealing] produce of the land.” (Rabbinic Sources)
 - One Jewish authority said "there is no more disreputable occupation than that of a shepherd."¹
- Now, this doesn't really fit that pristine vision of the nativity sets we see around Christmas. Imagine a bunch of these guys considered low lives showing up, uninvited to check out your newborn baby.
- The kid’s version of these stories don’t always give us the most accurate picture, right? The David and Goliath story that we feel is “Sunday school appropriate” ends with David taking his sword and chopping off Goliath's head. Lovely children’s story, huh?
- So, in reality, these shepherds were on the margins of society. Most people looked down on these hired shepherds.
 - One example of how they were looked down on, was that Shepherds were not allowed to hold judicial positions or even be admitted in court as witnesses.² They could not testify against someone in court.
 - Poor choice for witnesses to the most important story of all time here. This is consistent with how God revealed himself in the Gospels, using witnesses who in that cultural context would not have been valued or easily believed.³
- Thinking about these Shepherds, we too can identify groups like this in our society right? This kind of systemic marginalization is too familiar in our country also.
 - We see this stereotyping, devaluing other ethnicities or social classes everyday.
 - **There is so much change needed in our city**, the fall has corrupted man and nature alike so that abuse, decay, wickedness, and injustice abounds. We all know it. Whether you are a Christian or not, everyone in this room is acutely aware at the very least that things are not as they should be. Christian’s don't have the corner market on noticing and feeling the weight of injustice in our society. People’s consciences sense these things because we are all made in the image of God.
- This is one reason we feel so deeply about these political events, we hope for revolution, for something that is not right to be fixed. For war to turn to peace, for fear to turn to joy, and injustice to turn to harmony.
 - But these shouts of national victories are hollow. Dictators are replaced with others. Our politicians lose elections, when elected those that promised the moon let us down; they didn’t deliver.
- These worldly solutions to our desire for a new country will not satisfy because the problem is deeper.
 - The brokenness of our society goes beyond social and economic factors. Our land needs more than healthcare reform, school finance reform, gun control, or whatever else we hope for.
 - Now, at CLC, we are working to improve our city through adoption, advocacy for the marginalized, mentorship, racial reconciliation, etc.
 - But this is not enough, ultimately we’re discontent because we live in a fallen world.
 - At the beginning of the Bible, right after the creation of a good and beautiful world, the first humans on earth disobeyed God. They attempted to be the rulers of their own lives, to determine for themselves what is right and what is wrong instead of ruling under their creator. That fundamentally changed the world and it deeply affected all humankind. We now live in a fallen world where selfishness, pride, and lust are the norms.

¹ Midrash Ps. 23.2, ed. Buber, Vilna 1891, 99b.12, cited by Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, p. 311, fn. 42. Also see, Philo, *de agric.* 61, cited by Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, p. 311, fn. 42.

² Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (SCM/Fortress Press, 1969), TDNT 6:489.

³ Gospel authors are recording historical events not creating the most compelling narrative by human wisdom.

- You may just be thinking about a specific kind of brokenness around this time of year. Christmas is supposed to be joyful and celebratory, but for some of you it may not be peaceful at all. This may bring to the surface conflict in your dysfunctional families, this may be the time of year you have to face those broken relationships. The truth is we need a deeper and more foundational peace: a peace between God and us.
 - That's the source of how we can navigate these relationships with grace and hope. And, these relationships regardless of how hard or wrong they are, also need the same grace and hope you have in Christ.
- This morning, do you feel the need for a different kingdom? We long for lasting acceptance, joy and peace in all the earth, yet it is not found.
 - Have you realized that you are seeking joy in material belongings, peace in relationships, or sentimental experiences that do not satisfy?
 - Maybe you don't, you need to pray for your eyes to be open to your deep need.
- We're not left there though. Not left with a need for a new Kingdom, but there is good reason to believe a new kingdom exists and is near... because we have this map.

II. Map of the New Kingdom (An answer to those deep longings comes from the supernatural, v9-10).

- There is a map of this kingdom available to us. We know about it in two ways:
 - 1. There are blatant markers
 - 2. Subtle signs.
- **1. Blatant markers.**
- Back to our narrative, we see in verse 9, “And an angel of the Lord appeared to them”
 - Now before we even get to what the angel says, we need to look at this character. Some of you are very familiar with the story, you may have grown up around church and so angels are just no big deal. But, others may be asking aren't Angels really just some kinda fairy tales? This is important because angels are consistent with the propositional truth claims Christianity makes that there is a spiritual realm which permeates this world.
 - Scripture gives us a very clear picture that Angels are created, non-human, supernatural beings.
 - Also, their very name means ‘messenger.’ This is their primary role throughout scripture: they deliver announcements from the Lord. And they show up with the Lord is doing something significant.
 - Just in the first chapter of Luke, we saw an angel appeared to Mary privately to announce God's favor on her and that she was going to become pregnant with the Messiah (1:30)
 - We see that there were groups even in Jesus' day that objected to the existence of angels and spirits (Sadducees in Acts 23:8), just like today where many of our neighbors and friends in the city hold to reductive physicalism: Everything that existence can be reduced down to its fundamental physical or material basis; no room for supernatural, spirits, or angels.
 - One theologian says it this way, “An unbelieving world may dismiss talk of angels as mere superstition, but Scripture offers it as insight into the state of affairs as they really are.”⁴
 - The Bible teaches us there is a pervasive unseen world right here among us that has an intentionality we'll see in a second.⁵
 - In our church there are individuals who have had stark and undeniable supernatural experiences. If you're unsure about this, come talk to us. Bring your doubts and questions. We may not be able to answer them all, but we can at least give you what we know from clear biblical teaching and from our own experiences as a church.

⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 404.

⁵ 2 Kings 6:17, Heb 12:22

- Now, look what happens next... this angel shows up, “and the glory of the Lord shone around them,”
 - Here God’s glory manifests in the form of light⁶ Luke uses this same image in Acts when describing Paul’s conversion in the middle of the day, a bright light shone around him and blinded him.⁷
 - This is the type of manifestation of God’s glory, a bright light, brighter than the sun appears.
- See, this supernatural event, these angels and this brightness, are signposts; blatant markers on this map.
 - **This glory that pierced through the night was not the glory of the angels, but the glory of God.**
 - So, Christianity is not just some vague supernaturalism like in Stranger Things or the cheesy spiritualism of ghost hunters type shows where another realm just exists without order, purpose, and authority.
 - **No, the Lord is at the head of the hierarchy of the supernatural. Angels work for him and seek to bring him glory when they worship him in song.**⁸
- These signs, this map is not pointing us from this world to another realm. We are not called to leave the physical world and enter into some mystical nirvana.
 - The glorious has arrived here on earth.⁹
 - The birth of Christ shows us the supernatural is committed to this world, to us, where we are. That’s what the blatant signs are about: the supernatural piercing the natural.
- We also have these **2. Subtle Signs.**
- It does not take the appearance of supernatural beings like angels to point us to God and his glory.
- We see in response to this blinding light and angels, shepherds were “filled with great fear.”
 - Shepherds were reacting to the fact there is obviously a better kingdom, but **this does not only happen whenever angels appear.**
 - In the past, we often refer to moments like these as the thin places: experiences or aspects of the world when we find the divine right here in our daily lives.
 - This is one unique feature of Christianity. We affirm the intrinsic value of this world, God made all physical existences and declared it good. Even though its deeply marred by sin in the fall, it is still valuable and God committed to redeem this world and us in it.
- Creation and human experience still show his glory in those thin places.
 - Romans 1 tells us we can learn things about God through examining and reflecting upon nature.¹⁰

⁶ Sometimes, God’s glory is manifest in the Bible as bright light, fire, smoke, or a cloud. The verb “shone” in verse 9 associates this manifestation with a visible brightness.

⁷ Acts 26:13

⁸ It’s important to note again although we have the existence and appearance of supernatural angelic beings on the scene, the glory and praises are not directed to them, but to the LORD. Twice in Revelation, John tried to worship the angel that was revealing this glorious truth to him about the last days and the kingdom to come, and both times the Angel told him “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” (Rev 19:10 and 22:9) So, there is a spiritual realm, but it is ordered under the absolute authority of the Lord.

So we have these spiritual beings and the glory that accompanies them. But, this is not polytheism, like Greek mythology. We do not believe there are multiple equal entities that work together sometimes but fight each other at other times. These messengers we see in the Bible are under the authority of and come from the Lord. The Bible presents us with a consistent explanation that there is a hierarchy in the spiritual realm. God and Satan are not equal powers dueling.

⁹ Now, remember, the angel was not sent to the chief priests or the official elders in the Jewish community (they were not prepared to receive this news), but the angel comes to a company of poor hired hands most likely of ill repute, who were plain men working the night shift. These guys were not performing high religious acts like leading in the temple, delivering a sermon, or presenting an offering. They were just doing their job.

¹⁰ Romans 1:20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world,^[a] in the things that have been made.

- Psalm 19 says “the heavens declare the glory of God.”
- That’s the perplexing thing, all these things we long for, are actually tasted of the divine here on earth.
 - In philosophy we talk about the problem of evil, some argue they cannot believe in God because of the existence of morally evil acts, ugliness, despair, and injustice.
 - However, the reasons we’re not content with these things, the reasons we’re hopefully for a new political leader or new season of life, better relationships is because we’ve tasted the goodness. We’ve experienced kindness from others, beauty in nature, and joy in art.
 - One of the strongest signs of the existence of the divine, of the transcendent, is the **problem of beauty.**
 - Whether its in genuine friendship, marital intimacy, moving music, or natural wonders, these thin places point to the transcendent.
 - Parents, think about those rare moments when your children who usually act like natural-born enemies show kindness to one another. When they sit and read a book next to one another without kicking or screaming at their sibling. I know it’s rare, but why does that happen? It’s a thin place of peace on earth.
 - That is what is so compelling about visual art. For advent, one of our partners Rachelle Kearns has painted these phenomenon pieces: This one correspondence to our focus today, Rachelle told me that “A New Land focused on just that - we don't know exactly what the new Kingdom will look like, but it draws us in. It ignites the imagination for what one day could be - something so awesome, so beautiful, that it points us to Beauty itself. This is what we long for, and its been brought to us.”
- **The implications of beauty in this world is staggering. The fact that there is a transcendent, a supernatural realm intertwined with this one changes everything.**
- This is what happened to the shepherds. Their reaction is a natural, a proper response in the presence of the Lord’s glory.
 - Verse 9 says they were greatly afraid”
 - We saw Peter drop to his knees in awe before Christ after seeing a miracle for the first time.¹¹
 - Same with Mary, back in chapter 1, she was “greatly troubled” when the angel appeared and he told her “Do not be afraid.”¹²
- That’s exactly what the angel tells the shepherds here: Fear not!
- The blatant markers of the supernatural realm and the subtle signs of beauty in the everyday point to the divine can be a source of joy and peace, not fear.¹³
- So, the divine, the supernatural we find here in the natural is a map that includes our divine origins in creation and we’ll see point forward to our spiritual hope in the new creation.
 - McGrath argues that truth helps us see reality more clearly, "Like a lens bringing a vast landscape into sharp focus, or a map helping us grasp the features of the terrain around us, the Christian vision of reality offers a new way of understanding, imagining, and behaving.”
- This map is not driving directions. It doesn't start us here and we climb our way up to heaven. This is map is like Google Maps on your phone. You open it up and zoom out and it tells you were you are. You can look around and try to figure it out, but this map gives you a perspective and truth you cannot acquire otherwise.

¹¹ Luke 5:8

¹² Luke 1:29

¹³ Berger, in *Signals of Transcendence*, discussed the things we long for the most come from somewhere else – an outside origin Berger says “By signals of transcendence I mean phenomena that are to be found within the domain of our “natural” reality but that appear to point beyond that reality.” These signals are detected in human gestures of order, play, laughter, and beauty. Though he doesn’t elaborate on beauty in *Rumor of Angels*. Berger, Peter L. (2011-04-26). *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (p. 53).

- **And this map points to the new kingdom... a different kingdom.**

III. Difference of this New Kingdom:

- This map, the supernatural appearances, subtle signs, and the thin places do not point us to a far off land, but help us realize what country we're in, and what kingdom we can identify with now.
- Remember those two different groups of people reacting to the same political event based on what affiliation they had, what their vision of the country they were in was.
- This morning, I'm inviting you to become a citizen of the Kingdom of God. You need a new country, the Lord has given you a map to realize the nature and beauty of his country. Come this morning.
- Finally in our passage we get to see the details of this Kingdom. This is where there is a different message and a different life.

A. Different Message: ("Good news" of the gospel in Jesus, Christ, the Lord vv10-11.)

- Look at verse 10, that angels claims that the shepherds should have great joy and not great fear because "I bring you good news."
 - This is actually one word and can be translated gospel.
 - So this here is the angel claiming, "I bring you the gospel."
- This 'good news' is "of great joy that will be for all the people"¹⁴
 - This message is the source of joy.
 - You may have heard that term a lot, even regulars around here talk about this all the time, but what is the gospel?
- Look at verse 11, the angel gives us the content of the gospel.
- The good news is boiled down to this poignant announcement: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."
 - The announcement of that messiah, Matt talked about last week.
 - The birth of Jesus, his bursting into human history is the source of great joy for all types of people.
 - In what way is he a 'Savior'? In Mathew an angel appearing to Joseph explained "you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."¹⁵
 - Birth of Christ is the good news/gospel to all people: especially the marginalized, powerless because we all are enemies of God. Everyone needed to be saved from our sins, and we were hopeless to do it without this baby who will grow up to serve as a substitute for us on the cross, carrying the penalty of ours sins. His death paid the punishment for our sin and his resurrection defeats sin, death, and evils so we may be reconciled with God if we have faith in him.
 - This really is good news for all types of people! Even those in other religions. Even the non-religious. This message is open for you too!
- SO, a Savior is born, but keep reading in verse 11, "who is Christ the Lord."
 - Also, this newborn is "Christ," the Greek word for Messiah, a title. From the beginning of Christianity, the apostles taught that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the deliverer promised in the OT, the great leader Israel has been anticipating.¹⁶
 - **This is what the angel is telling these shepherds, a baby was just born that the entire OT has been waiting for: covenants, patriarchs, the law, prophets, kings, and poets for thousands of years have been promised, asking for, and anticipating this one fragile infant that was just born in that nearby town Bethlehem.**

¹⁴ This is NOT "all people will experience great joy because of the gospel" when the gospel is revealed in its entirety to all people, it will actually be a source of great fear for those who did not respond in faith.

¹⁵ Matt 1:21

¹⁶ That's what it means when we see verse like Acts 5:42 that the early church went into the Temple and homes and "did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ."

- BUT WAIT, there's more... (feel like an infomercial) not only is this baby a savior, THE messiah, but look, he is also THE LORD.
 - They wanted someone to "Make Israel Great Again." I'm sorry, I couldn't resist.
 - But instead, they received God himself in the form of a baby.
 - Jews thought the good news would be an ethno-centric leader coming lead Israel in conquest, not a Messiah who would bring peace to all types of people groups. This is a better savior than even the Jewish leaders were expecting.¹⁷
- NO WONDER this message was accompanied by blinding light and the glory of the Lord!
- This is God himself, creator of the universe, breaking into human history through this small town to deliver us, to deliver all of us who have faith, including this bunch of rag tag, scoundrels, shepherding on the margin of society.
- **That is the message of this new kingdom. A different message than expected.**

B. Different Life in the New Kingdom: We respond to that good news.

- First, in testing and tasting (v12);
 - In verse 12, the angel does not just bring this message and ask for blind faith in this 'good news.' The angel gives them a sign or proof that this is real.
 - He says "And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."
 - Essentially, here is some proof, go verify this bazaar message I've given to you.
 - This is the angel telling the shepherds to go find those sign posts, use that map, look for evidence of the transcendent.
 - Ground your great joy in truth, not just an empty promise.
 - Life in the kingdom is of testing and tasting this good news. This week, look for those sign posts, examining the map, and finding great joy and peace in our newly adopted country.
 - But also test and taste the gospel by trusting God in that challenging relationship.
 - You can extend the grace you've received by the gospel to that person who has sinned against you.
 - You can forgive them as Christ forgave you and let go of your need to pay them back, to shame them.
 - Or maybe you need to test the gospel by finding your worth in Christ's adoption of you, not the opinion of others.
 - Test and taste the gospel, it will prove better than materialism, idolizing that vacation time, or your reputation.
 - We taste the beauty, peace, and can respond to the injustice, marginalization in our city.
- Secondly, life in this new kingdom is different because it is permeated with worship. When we zoom out, see the kingdom we're in, bask in the glorious light of the gospel we join the angelic chorus (v13-14).

¹⁷ This is so much better than the Messiah, the leader Israel was expecting, but it should not have been. Because as we've discussed here at CLC so many times, the addition of Jesus to the Bible is not a plot twist. The fact that a Savior came to reconcile us with God was not a post-script. Scripture teaches us this was the plan from the beginning. And we see it throughout the Bible.

1 Peter 1:10-12: "Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look."

One of the most relevant passage for this announcement of the angels is Isaiah 9:6-7, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this."

- Look what happens after the message was delivered: heaven spills over into that field.¹⁸
- This is the pinnacle turning point of God’s redemptive history: he has just sent his only son, the savior, the Christ who is also the Lord into his created order to return it to a greater glory than even the garden of Eden. That’s something to celebrate! And that’s what we see here.
- In verse 13, “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host”
The sky fills up with thousands of shining angelic beings now appear to sing, look at their song: Verse 14, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”
- The angels respond to this good news by praising God in two ways:
 - 1) Give Glory to God
 - These angels are singing to give God more glory.¹⁹
 - They are seeking to spread the song and his reputation for what he’s doing in human history.
 - Let’s join this chorus this week by spreading God’s reputation.
 - We do this by talking about the gospel: this rescue plan launched by the birth of Christ
 - But also, we spread God’s glory by telling our story: How God has brought us personal joy and peace.
 - For my family this looks like sharing with others how even in this stressful season of work, school, and church life, how God has brought poignant joy and mercy in our marriage and family life. How the Lord has used high demands of work and school to reorient how I find my identity in his kingdom, not in the changes I’m trying to cause in this old country.
 - 2) The angels praise God for bringing peace on earth
 - Ultimately this is the peace of salvation that individuals receive to replace their enmity with God.²⁰
 - Remember, Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would be a “Prince of Peace” (Is 9:6).
 - Jesus himself affirms this this aspect of his mission in the world like this.²¹
 - We long for peace, joy, justice, and beauty in our world.
 - He does not just help us see that in the world, he achieves it for us. He is the most beautiful, just and joy giving being in existence.
 - There will be ultimate peace in the New Kingdom, but also, God’s grace in the gospel empowers us to work to oppose dictators, end human rights abuses, restore the marginalized, work for racial reconciliation.

¹⁸ Scripture gives us glimpses of God’s heavenly presence and the activities around him and its continual worship, singing and dancing. And here we see that breaks through from the rejoicing in heaven over the good news, to what is now happening on earth.

¹⁹ Michael Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 137. “God’s glory is the infinite and radiant magnificence of God. The only other words that come close to describing it are ‘splendor’ and ‘majesty.’ God’s purpose to glorify himself is to enable his creatures to magnify and enjoy the glory of his being. Thus, closely related to God’s glory is God’s reputation and faithfulness (e.g. Exod 14:4). As the incarnate manifestation of the glorious God, Jesus is the “Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:8). Jesus receives glory from the Father (John 1:14; Acts 3:13; Phil 2:10-11; 1 Peter 1:21) and from Christians because of his self-giving work on the cross (1 Thess 2:19). A key promise of the gospel is that humans will share in the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess 2:14), and Christians will themselves be glorified on the last day (Rom 8:30).”

²⁰ Today there is peace on earth in Christ. We are no longer enemies with God, but adopted children and heirs. Paul wrote in Romans 5:9-11: “Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. **10** For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. **11** More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”

²¹ “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” John 14:27-29

- The gospel tells me that God will bring peace and justice in its entirety in the new kingdom, so I am free to trust him with the global project and focus on loving the person in front of me.
 - When I take the weight of establishing world peace off my shoulders, I can reach out those the Lord has brought into my life.
- He is doing something great in human history and I can trust him and faithfully seek to honor him in my part, knowing the social and economic reforms I desire are up to him.
 - This frees me to be effective in love and not guilt, shame, or pride.
- Yes, he is coming back. Redemptive history is not complete yet but we can create thin places in love and faithfulness to him.
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- Church, we need a better kingdom, we have evidence one exists, and the Lord has delivered it through this savior who we celebrate today.
- Let's pray.

Lord's Supper: one of the ways we bring glory to God and worship Christ for his birth, death, and resurrection is by the Lord's Supper. 1 Corinthians 11:24 "that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for^[b] you. Do this in remembrance of me."^[c] ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.