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Substance of Sermon preached by our Pastor
on Christmas Morning. 1974.

Lesson. Luke 1. vv.46-80.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Luke 2. 14.

The subject is one of the most remarkable manifestations of the heavenly powers descending ~~over the plains~~ over the plains of Bethlehem that we have in the whole history of the human race and the world. There is always an attraction in the wonderful account given by St Luke exclusively, of the descent of those heavenly powers. For when we read "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God," the heavenly host to me is the whole company of heaven: all the holy angels and the glorified saints of God. It must be that all the company of glory joined in the song to celebrate the nativity of the Son of God; His assumption of a holy humanity for the work of our redemption.

I have read as a Text and subject matter the very holy, heavenly language of the great Gloria sung in the firmament by them. It is sublime indeed. Listen to it! They sang, - singing may seem remote from the earth now, especially as it would appear that we are facing the worst crisis since the last Great War, and probably next year will be sombre and black for this country. I have seen a notice of the head of friendly countries, without naming Britain, inferring the complete ruin of our finance and economics in 1975. Little do we know how low we shall sink before we fall down where there is none to help and cry to the Lord in our trouble to save us out of our distresses. (I must speak as I feel led.) I want to make one thing plain to you as a people. Whether some of us live to see it we cannot tell, but I feel persuaded in my soul that the Lord will never completely forsake Britain. It has always been in our history, and it is the experience of all the Lord's saints when they have departed from Him, they have known a period of severe chastening, sore judgment, and His people have gone into captivity until He has heard their cry when they have sought Him by reason of their affliction, and He has remembered for them His holy covenant. Where shall we find the glorious foundation as to our hope in the subject matter of the Text? In the birth of the Saviour; the coming of a Redeemer. Think how wonderful the coverage of the song is! "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, - this earth; this poor sin-stricken earth we spend a few days living on. - on earth peace, good will toward men."

So if the good Lord will be pleased to assist me I hope, though unskilled and incapable, to work it out with you to the glory of His holy Name, and I

will begin here. Three things are gathered up here in Christ: highest: earth: men. Think of it! "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Highest: earth: men. sinful, ruined, wretched men: earth; all the misery, chaos, discord brought about by the fall of man, Satan, and sin; yet all three things are united in Christ. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men. So the three things are all inter-related; integral parts of the same plan and scheme in the heart of God. I hasten, though I am out of my depth here, to comment on "Glory to God in the highest."

So at the birth of Christ they sang this; "Glory to God in the highest." What is the meaning of the sacred Scripture, the divine language as we have it in the English language? What is glory? Glory must mean the sum total of all the divine properties, perfections, attributes of God Himself, resplendent in effulgence, shining forth from the glorious, infinite Being of Jehovah, the very Being of God: all His perfections in ^{the} resplendent effulgence of His Being and character; of all His holy attributes shining forth. Your conception of it began when you were brought under the law of God and saw His glory from Sinai in divine justice, and you feared it would consume you.

Now I will go further. This glory in the Text is a different glory: it is not a consuming glory, but the glory that shone forth in the person of the sweet Babe of Bethlehem, the incarnate Son of God. It is as you know, what we term in the Christian faith the Shekinah glory, and it is all the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, shining forth in grace and truth. As that glory irradiates your soul and fills your ransomed spirit you have the experience spoken of by the apostle; "But we all, with open face, - not a veil, but the open face of faith, - beholding as in a glass, - the glass of the gospel, - the glory of the Lord, are changed ~~from~~ ^{into} the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." That was the glory that shone forth in the birth of Christ. It is not a glory that prohibits approach: it irresistibly draws gracious people to Him, fills their hearts with joy, holy peace, and the experience of salvation. "Glory to God in the highest."

'Highest' applies to heaven itself; all the Lord's covenant purposes, divine decrees, and the birth and coming of Christ to the glory of God in the fulfilling and accomplishment of His divine purpose. The decree of salvation, the settlement of the Covenant of Grace saw its fulfilment in the birth of the Saviour. "Glory to God in the highest." Why? Because in the birth of Christ the plan conceived by eternal wisdom was effected by boundless love. "Glory to God in the highest." How wonderful the word is! As some of you know, we have contemplated the joy that must have been experienced in heaven when the dear Saviour returned, having accomplished the work of redemption: and oh! the joy in heaven when Christ assumed our nature to

accomplish the work of redemption! So they heralded His birth. "Glory to God in the highest." If I could lead your thoughts to this; "Glory to God in the highest," because so much work was to be accomplished by Him,- the atonement for His people's sins; the redemption of the Church of God; the taking and drowning in the depths of the sea of their sins, and the expiation of them: the devil defeated; death vanquished; heaven appeased, so God could be satisfied and pleased.

"Glory to God in the highest." This is inter-related with "and on earth peace." How shall we view it? What is the term 'peace'? I will propose it to you in these terms. There could be no true peace apart from the fulfilling of a number of divine things. There could be no peace with a broken law. The law of God was violated. There could be no peace with God's holy law in His hand, violated by us. God could not by-pass His law and show clemency, and it will be the same in your experience. God will never by-pass a broken law.

I will make a few propositions to you. There could be no peace until One came according to the eternal wisdom of God, who was able to become our Surety; take our place before God, and Deity in the abstract never could. It was impossible for Deity to be our Surety: it was impossible for Deity to be made of a woman, made under the law and stand in our place. So the Son of God assumed a precious, holy Body,- a reasonable soul and a true human Body He assumed into indissoluble union with His divine Person as He came here, made of a woman, made under the law and stood as our Surety. View the wonder of it! Christ from His birth to His death, - some here in the congregation are skilled needle-women. I do not suppose any are engaged in tapestry. Beautiful tapestries may take a person's lifetime to complete. With all the dexterity, skill, beauty, and wisdom, they work on it through their whole life to complete. Any of you who are skilled with your needle, it may take you six months or a year to complete your work, and it is an object of exquisite beauty. From His birth to His death Christ was working the robe of righteousness for His saints by restoring honour to the law in the complete fulfilment of it. This was needful for peace to flow. He magnified the law and made it honourable: He fulfilled the holy law of God in every jot and tittle. In all His obedience He wrought the robe. Some of you have it on: you are ready for heaven. He will never say to you; "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" No longer has God the Father a broken law in His hand: it is fulfilled. All honour has been restored to it by His well beloved Son as our Surety. Peace flows. Justice and mercy join hands and go to meet and kiss a weeping child. In the heavenly ^{Bank} the credit is put to your account of His obedience. Think of the heavenly Bank! When He said; "It is finished," all the credit of His blessed merits was put to your account, in heaven before you were born. Peace flows. The Father no longer has in His hands a broken law. It is magnified, honoured, fulfilled. Peace flows. This is the beginning.

The next is, there must be, - there was a price paid to redeem us before peace could flow. We sold ourselves for nought. Adam sold us before we were born. Your father sold the whole human race when he fell, - your federal head. The first Adam sold you for nought; and we have gone on selling ourselves for nought. We think nothing of jeopardising all for sin. It is in the very foul, ruined nature of man that he would destroy himself for one sin. Don't you deny it. We are shot through with sin. If you know the folly of nature you will realise that you would sell yourself for sin. It is in the folly and recklessness of sin that we would have it if we go to hell for it; the strength and love of sin is so great in human nature. I shall not minimise it. If the devil brings before you a sin you so easily fall into, and the flaming lusts of nature rise, you would put out your hand to take it. We have sold ourselves for nought.

Christ came to pay the price of our redemption. You know that to redeem ~~us~~ something precious there must be paid an immense or a smaller sum. We were sold under sin: slaves in the slave market of Satan. Christ came to pay the price; to redeem us, and the price was His precious life; nothing less. He must give His very life to redeem us, so on the cross He voluntarily gave His life as the great Shepherd of the sheep. He paid the price. When He gave His life and the precious Person died on Calvary's cross, they pierced His side with a spear, "and forthwith came there out blood and water." Why? Because the blood is the life: that is why. If I speak of your life it is tantamount to speaking of your blood. It will be obvious to you that the life is in the blood. So His precious side was pierced: His heart was; "And forthwith came there out blood and water." He had paid the price, and peace flowed. He has redeemed you from sin, death, and hell. There could be no peace unless you were redeemed. "Having made peace by the blood of his cross Precious blood! Think of the fountain: the blood atoned. He made atonement, redeemed you, paid the price. And think of Atonement: you will see it means At-one-ment. It brings God and you together as one. God and sinners made one by His precious blood. This is where peace flows, - and water, to cleanse the filth of the daughters of Zion; to take away all their corruption and sin, and so the fountain is open: peace flows. The iniquity of the land was removed in one day. People get confused in their minds concerning the Atonement. I will try to make it clear to you, If you are in Christ by faith in vital union with Him, when He shed His vital blood on Calvary's cross your sins were atoned for, your debt paid. Your sins were put away for ever. It is once for all. In your conscience the Holy Ghost applies the merits of the shed, vital blood of Christ to cleanse you from the defilement of sin. Your sins were put away at Calvary, my friends. O the wonder of it! He deals with your guilt and defilement, but your sins were swallowed up and put away at Calvary, never to be remembered against you. Peace flows.

I will go further. He rose on the third day. The resurrection of Christ

proved the virtue and validity of His sacrifice, and the reality of His vicarious death. He rose. When He rose triumphant and victorious over sin, death and hell He had conquered death by dying. Peace flows. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power." Peace flows. He made peace by the blood of His cross, and He is risen, the Mighty Conqueror, and you are justified freely. Not a voice will be raised against you in the Day of Judgment. If ever you come on earth to the joy of being led into the doctrine of justification you will know the beginning of this. You will stand before a holy God who sees through you; God with His holy law, and not a voice will be raised against you, because Christ your Surety fulfilled the law for you, and every voice is on your part. "If we confess our sins..what? He is faithful and just." The justice of God demands it. "He is..just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Hence the channel is open: peace flows. All the divine attributes are in harmony,- mercy, justice, truth, love. Peace flows: peace on earth. This is it. I hope I have been enabled to set this forth for the glory of God and the good and establishment of souls.

He ascended and is enthroned,- your King. You have got those dear to you who are near eternity, and this seems to come home to me with the family: they are like birds flown from the nest. You realise you are getting to the day when you will leave them all. Before Christ left us He called us together you and I, and He spoke to us. He was about to suffer, and He would rise and go to glory. He told us He had a gift for us. He would be gone from this world: also He had left something in His Will. It was Peace. He said; "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." -"Here you are. Here is My peace: peace I procured at the price of suffering and agony. I am giving it to you." If the Lord gives you will receive, and the devil, sin, and the world can never take away. In His divine Will, sealed with blood, He left you peace, and you inherit it.

"and on earth peace." First, there is a state of peace. Nothing can ever alter the state of peace between the eternal Trinity and you: it can never be violated. The holy Father looks on you in His holy Son and He communicates to you by the Holy Ghost a state of peace. God has no new demands: it is all settled. He views you in His dear Son, and you are complete in Him. Go back to Calvary and listen to the flood: hear the precious fountain flowing. The Lord has drowned your sins for ever, and you are in a state of reconciliation with Him because the Lord has filled your heart with love to Him. He is the dearest, sweetest Object of your soul and you are in a state of peace. You are troubled with defilement but there is a way open. You may go and confess to Him and communion is restored. It is a state of peace. The saints of God have a peace which Satan, sin, and the

world can never disturb. It is a deep, sweet river that flows into your soul giving you to know that when you die you will be in glory. Peace flows as a river.

"and on earth peace, good will toward men." It is a state of peace: peace you enjoy in your soul and conscience. Why? Because you know the Lord loves you. There will be times when you are up to your neck in trouble, and you think you will be devastated by fear and anxiety. Jesus Himself draws near and you commit all to Him, and you have not a trouble in the world. You have got peace. If any said; "How do you feel?" you would say; "Most peaceful. My Father loves me, cares for me, and I have left all in His blessed hands, and I have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

You have peace too, with the whole Church of God: complete peace. All the sins of the Church are drowned in the depths of the sea, and you see the Church in Christ, and you are in a state of peace with all the Church of God. You will be in heaven together, around the Throne of God in full enjoyment of peace. You live in peace, and you will die in peace.

"And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast." (474)

"good will toward men." I will express this to you by quoting two or three Scriptures. "good will toward men." "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." This is good will toward men. And, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." This is good will toward men. And the poor man who fell among thieves and was left half dead. Two came and passed by. The Samaritan saw him and looked on him with compassion. He came where he was. He went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast and took him to an inn and paid for him. This is good will toward men. Thanks be to God. Amen.