

Sermon 讲道信息

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Finding the Peace Promised at Christmas 在圣诞中寻见那应许的平安

INTRO: Christmas comes with many gifts! Gifts under the Tree.... but even better gifts that God gives to us through His Son and Our Savior, Jesus Christ.

引言：圣诞节总会带来许多礼物。树下的礼物固然令人期待，但更宝贵的是上帝借着祂的儿子、我们的救主耶稣基督所赐的礼物。

Specifically, on this second Sunday of Advent, we are thinking of the precious gift called peace.

今天，在将临期的第二个主日，我们特别思想其中一份非常珍贵的礼物——平安。

Jesus plainly and unreservedly promised peace when he said:

耶稣清楚又毫不保留地应许平安，当祂说：

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27)

“我留下平安给你们，我把我的平安赐给你们。我所赐给你们，不像世人所赐的。你们心里不要忧愁，也不要胆怯。”（约 14:27）

He couldn't have stated it more clearly! What an offer! What a gift!

祂已经说得再明白不过了！多么奇妙的邀请！多么宝贵的礼物！

Peace is a central element of the Christmas story.

平安是圣诞故事的核心元素。

But as we are aware of the real-world circumstances of Jesus's birth in the First Century, we can't help but notice how easily that peace could have been stolen.

但当我们回到第一世纪耶稣降生的真实环境时，就会发现那份平安其实很容易被偷走。

We know by experience that peace in heart, soul, and mind can be precarious and fragile. It can so easily be lost! We must protect it, build it up, and deepen it.

我们自己也深知，内心、性情、意念上的平安是多么不确定和脆弱，很容易失去；我们必须保护它、建立它、让它扎根更深。

Therefore, we could understand if two key characters to the Christmas story, Joseph and Mary, had lost their peace.

因此，我们可以理解：圣诞故事中的两个关键人物——约瑟和马利亚——曾经失去了平安。

Like them, we sometimes face peace thieves: circumstances, situations, and even people which would steal our peace.

像他们一样，我们都面对“平安大盗”：环境、处境，甚至一些人，都会偷走我们的平安。

Joseph and Mary faced many “peace thieves”, such as:

约瑟和马利亚面对了许多“平安大盗”，例如：

The peace thief called “change”.

名为“改变”的平安大盗。

We often claim that we love change. But what we really mean is: “I love change as long as I can manage the change. I love change as long as I have a say in it, as long as it doesn't surprise me. That kind of change I'm good with.”

我们常说自己喜欢改变。但其实我们真正喜欢的，是“可以掌控的改变”——能提前准备、不会让我们惊讶、是我们可以参与决定的改变。

But it is the change that hits us out of the blue, the change we're not expecting, which we can't control, that can steal our peace.

但那些突如其来、毫无预警、无法控制的改变，往往会偷走我们的平安。

This could certainly be true for Mary and Joseph. Consider the unexpected changes they faced in a very short period of time:

这正是马利亚和约瑟所经历的。试想，在极短的时间之内，他们遇到了一连串无法预料的改变：

Mary suddenly finds herself unexpectedly “expecting”: an unmarried, pregnant teenager. And she is not expecting just any child, but the long-awaited Messiah, the Son of God.

马利亚突然发现自己怀孕了：一个未婚、怀着身孕的少女，而且怀的不是普通的孩子，而是期待已久的弥赛亚、上帝的儿子。

No doubt Mary and Joseph felt the pressure to get married by the expectations of society and the circumstances of the time. Thus, it seems that they married before they truly were ready.

不难想象，马利亚和约瑟在社会眼光和时代压力下很可能在尚未准备好之前就匆忙成婚。

Following this “hurried up” wedding, they were then forced to make an unplanned and ill-timed journey to Bethlehem while Mary was heavily pregnant.

匆匆结婚后，他们又不得不在马利亚临盆之时踏上一段意外且时机极不理想的旅程——前往伯利恒。

When they finally arrived in Bethlehem, they found unanticipated and unglamorous accommodation in a barn or shed, sharing space with the animals.

好不容易到了伯利恒，却只能入注意料之外、毫无光彩的地方——一个畜棚或小屋，与牲畜共处。

Then the holy stillness of the magical moment of Jesus's birth was shattered by unexpected guests: Shocked, fascinated, and smelly shepherds invaded the nativity scene!

耶稣降生那神圣的时刻很快又被意外来客打破——那些惊讶、激动、甚至还有点气味的牧羊人来访。

Finally, when it seemed that things were just about to settle down, they had to make an unplanned and urgent trip far from home into the unfamiliar landscape of Egypt.

终于，好不容易稍稍平静下来，他们又不得不紧急离开自己的家乡，逃往遥远陌生的埃及。

We read the familiar Christmas story under the impression that all the characters knew what was coming, but in actual fact, it was an unexpected change for everyone.

我们阅读熟悉的圣诞故事时，以为这些人物都知道接下来会发生什么；其实，对他们来说一切都是突如其来的改变。

On top of all of this, the world in which they lived was dealing with great change as well. This would be apparent through the taxes that they were forced to pay to a foreign occupier, the Romans.

更何况，他们所处的世界也在剧烈变化，例如必须向占领他们的罗马帝国缴纳重税。

Yet, it seems during all of the change, Mary and Joseph maintained a deep peace. How could they do it?
然而，在这一切改变中，马利亚和约瑟似乎仍保持着深深的平安。他们是怎么做到的？

First, and most importantly, they trusted God in the midst of the uncertainty.

首先，也是最重要的，他们在不确定中信靠上帝。

Their trust was evident and proven through their immediate and unquestioning obedience.

他们的信靠从他们即时、毫不犹豫的顺服中就能看出来。

Mary's response to the astounding announcement by the Angel of her conception: "I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled." (Luke 1:38).

马利亚在听见天使宣告自己怀孕时，回应说：“我是主的使女，愿意照你的话实现在我身上。”（路 1:38）

Or consider the response of a groggy Joseph to the surprising news that he would soon wed an inexplicably pregnant teenager. Matthew tells us: "When Joseph woke up, he did what the Angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife." (Mt.1:24)

或想想，从睡梦中惊醒后，头脑昏沉的约瑟对让人吃惊的消息的回应：“约瑟醒来，就遵照主的使者的吩咐把妻子娶过来。”（太 1:24）

We must understand that this kind of radical trust in times of change and uncertainty does not just happen.

我们必须明白：这种在巨变中仍能信靠的态度，不会凭空出现。

God chose Mary and Joseph for this awesome calling, because they walked close to Him and they knew Him well.

上帝拣选马利亚和约瑟承担如此重要的呼召，是因为他们平日与神同行、认识祂甚深。

Stay near to God and you will have peace in seasons of unexpected and unmanageable change!

若我们愿意亲近神，在无法预期和掌控的改变中也必能经历祂的平安。

Secondly, we note that Mary and Joseph made themselves useful in the time of change.

其次，马利亚和约瑟在改变中继续让自己被神使用。

We have noted that both Mary and Joseph willingly submitted to God's call, but more than that, instead of wasting time railing against change or dreaming of the "good old days", they asked themselves: "how can I be used of God in the midst of this change?"

他们不仅愿意顺服神的呼召，更没有浪费时间怨叹改变、怀念所谓美好的过去，而是问自己：“在这改变中，上帝要怎样使用我？”

When we see God's hand in the change, and experience His constant and reassuring presence, we can then begin to think about how God might use us in new and meaningful ways, in our new reality.

当我们看到上帝在改变中的作为，感受到祂持续且安慰的同在，我们就能够思想：在新的环境里，我们也能找到神要我们承担的新使命。

We note the "peace thief" of difficult people.

名为“难相处的人”的平安大盗。

The days surrounding the expectation and birth of Jesus was a high and holy time for Joseph and Mary. God, through his angels, had met with them face to face!

在耶稣降生前后的日子，是马利亚和约瑟人生中最神圣的时刻。上帝通过天使亲自与他们面对面说话。

It may be safe to assume that they received at least some words of praise and encouragement from close friends and family. But at the same time, it is likely that some looked down on this unmarried, pregnant teenager with an unlikely story.

我们也可以假设马利亚和约瑟得到亲友们的赞美与鼓励。但同时，很可能有人会轻视未婚怀孕的马利亚，觉得她的故事不可信。

And no doubt Joseph was judged for his radical choice to marry her!

而且有人会批评约瑟去迎娶玛利亚的决定。

Then there was the cold-hearted innkeeper who refused lodging to a pregnant woman.

还有，旅店老板冷漠拒绝了即将生产的孕妇。

But most tragically, there was King Herod, who put out a contract on the life of their child, forcing them to flee to a distant and foreign land.

最可悲的是有希律王——他要夺走他们孩子的性命，逼他们不得不逃亡到异国他乡。

Yes, Mary and Joseph knew all about difficult people.

是的，马利亚和约瑟深知什么是“难相处的人”。

But again, somehow, it seems they maintained their faith and their peace. How?

但他们似乎依然保持信心和平安。如何做到？

Do you have difficult people in your life? How can we prevent difficult people from stealing our peace?

你的生命中是否也有让你很难相处的人？你如何防止他们偷走你的平安？

Mary and Joseph's response was instinctual. They ignored the naysayers and stayed faithful to God's call upon their lives.

马利亚和约瑟的本能反应非常清楚：他们忽略那些否定的声音，坚持忠心地完成上帝对他们的呼召。

When difficult people try to steal your peace, stay focused on God's will for your life!

当难相处的人试图偷走你的平安时，把注意力放在上帝给你的使命上。

The third “peace thief” is need.

名为“需要”的平安大盗。

Mary and Joseph have become so “mythologized” and we have exalted them so highly, sometimes we forget that though they were certainly special people and people of extraordinary faith, they were still only human, and as humans they certainly knew what it was to be in need.

随着时间，我们往往把马利亚和约瑟“神化”，把他们想得太超凡；虽然他们是特别的人也有非一般的信心，但却忘记了他们其实也是普通人，也会有需要，也会经历缺乏。

We don't know much about their economic situation, but the Christmas story offers a hint.

虽然我们对他们的经济状况知之甚少，但圣诞故事给了我们一些线索：

We're told that after the long and arduous journey to Bethlehem they “wrapped [Jesus] in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.” (Luke 2:7).

他们经过长途跋涉来到伯利恒时，只能“用布包起（耶稣）来，放在马槽里，因为客店里没有地方。”（路 2:7）

It seems that they had limited economic pull. No doubt there were rooms available, but they simply didn't

have the money to pay the inflated prices.

似乎他们在经济上并没有优势——不是没有房间，而是他们负担不起当时被抬高的价格。

They needed a soft bed, and a warm and private place, but that need went unmet.

他们需要柔软的床，需要温暖、私密的地方，但却没有得到所需要的。

Again and again Mary and Joseph had proven their faithfulness to God. They were willing to be what He wanted them to be, and to go where He wanted them to go.

他们已经多次向神显明自己的忠心，愿意顺服成为上帝要他们成为的人，愿意走上帝要他们走的路。

I wonder, now, have they begun to doubt God's faithful provision and care?

我猜他们是否也曾怀疑神是否仍然看顾他们？

As far as they were concerned, they had done everything right, everything that was asked of them, yet things were not working out as they had imagined or planned.

对他们而言，他们已经做对了一切，完成了对他们的要求，但事情却并没有像他们想象或计划中那样顺利。

Can you relate? Have you ever been there? Have you ever felt that you're doing everything right as far as you can tell, but things just aren't coming together for you as you had hoped or imagined?

你是否也有同样的经历？你是否曾觉得自己已经尽力顺服神，但事情却没有按你所想的发展？

Yet, facing these unexpected developments it seemed that Mary and Joseph still retained peace in their heart and in their mind.

然而，即使面对这些现实，马利亚和约瑟似乎仍保持心中的平安。

With the value of an historical record, we can see what they could not see at the time: that Jesus' birth in a stable was all part of God's perfect plan.

从历史的角度，我们能看到他们当时看不到的事实：耶稣出生在马槽里是神完美计划的一部分。

The shepherds were given very specific instructions by the Angels: "This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (Lk.2:12)

天使给牧羊人的指示非常明确：“你们要看见一个婴孩，包着布，卧在马槽里，那就是给你们的记号。”（路2:12）

Thus, they could easily identify him from all the other baby boys born in the crowded city that night, and they knew exactly where to look for him.

因此，他们能在拥挤的伯利恒众多新生婴儿中精确地找到耶稣。

But apart from the practical considerations, Jesus' birth in a stable is a powerful statement of His character and purpose.

但除了实际层面的原因，耶稣出生在马棚里更表达了祂的性情与使命：

So, why was the Savior and King born in a place where animals were kept? And why was He then laid in the animals' food trough?

为什么救主、君王要出生在牲畜栖身之处？为什么祂的第一张床是牲畜的食槽？

Surely, God's Son deserved a high-profile birth in the most elegant of surroundings. But, instead, God's own Son made His appearance on earth in the lowliest of circumstances. This humble birth conveys an amazing message to all: the transcendent God condescended to come to us.

祂本应降生在最尊贵的环境，但神的儿子却选择最卑微的方式来到世上。祂要告诉我们：这位超越万有的神愿

意降卑，来到我们中间。

Instead of coming to earth as a pampered, privileged ruler, Jesus was born in meekness, as one of us.

祂不是以被伺候的尊贵君王身份来到世界，而是以谦卑的身份与我们相同。

He is approachable, accessible, available—no palace gates bar the way to Him; no ring of guards prevents our approach. The King of Kings came humbly, and His first bed was a manger.

祂是温柔的、可亲近的、随时可接近的——没有宫门阻挡，没有侍卫拦阻。这位万王之王以谦卑进入世界，祂的第一张床，就是马槽。

Like Mary and Joseph, we can't see the end of the story, but God can, and He always has our best interests at heart.

像马利亚和约瑟一样，我们无法预知故事的结局，但上帝能够，而且祂始终以我们的益处为念。

Remind us, dear Lord, that you love us just as you loved Mary and Joseph; that you have a plan for each one of us, and just as you were faithful to Mary and Joseph you will be faithful to us.

主啊，提醒我们：你爱我们，如同你爱马利亚和约瑟；你为我们每个人都有计划；你怎样信实带领他们，也必信实带领我们。

Help us to trust you as the Good and All-wise God. Help us, like Mary and Joseph, to surrender to your will that we might know the wonder of your peace!

帮助我们信靠你是良善、全智的上帝，帮助我们学习像玛利亚和约瑟一样顺服祂的旨意，好让我们经历你奇妙的平安。

Peace is a feeling, and peace is an attitude, but above all, peace is something that must be won, and Jesus did that for us on the cross. Paul writes:

平安是一种感受，也是一种态度，但最重要的是，平安是耶稣在十字架上为我们赢得的。保罗说：

“Therefore since we have been justified through faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom.5:1).

“所以，我们既因信称义，就藉着我们的主耶稣基督得以与神和好。”(罗 5:1)

Today, at the Communion Table, we commemorate and celebrate that peace won for us at an unimaginable price!

今天在圣餐桌前，我们纪念并庆祝那以无法想象的代价为我们赢得的平安。

May we know this peace this Advent Season and every day, no matter what we are facing!

愿我们在这个将临期，以及每一天，在各种境遇中，都能经历从上帝的平安。