

## Goodwill Toward Men: Grace Unleashed – *Luke 2:8-14*

**Introduction** – Grace is a sweet name for a little girl, and the cute little manger scenes we create to picture this “silent night” moment is quite serene and hushed. But there is a problem with thinking of grace as a gentle pond; it came upon the midnight clear more like a torrent (that glorious song of old). And the manger scene ought to be thought more of in terms of a military invasion; the Marines had landed. Nothing would ever be the same throughout the whole world.

We will consider the passage generally, but I will focus on this one phrase – “...goodwill toward men.” There is a manuscript variance, but there really ought not to be a translation issue when considered in the context of all that was being sung, all that was prophesied, and all that was to occur because of the gift of this Child.

**A New King, A New Peace, A New Savior** (vv8-12) – At the time of the birth of Jesus, an angel appeared before a band of shepherds. David and Moses were both shepherds, and while these men certainly responded with great reverence, historians point out that the lifestyle of men working in such fields would have been something like stories today of working-class men working on their own in a field, out at sea, or deep in a mine; they would have been tough, rugged, dirty, and likely quite crass. Guarding their flocks at night, these strong men nevertheless were terrified by the sight and sound of one angel that appeared before them (v 9). They were told to “fear not,” for the news this angel had was news of great joy, “which will be to all people” (v10). In the city of another shepherd (David) a Savior, the Messiah, the Anointed King, had been born.

**A Multitude** (vv13-14) – One angel (messenger) preached a message and then a multitude sang in response – (*Nice liturgy*). One witness proclaimed the Truth and then a multitude added their testimony. This outburst was “sudden” and it was made up of many thousands of an army, a heavenly army, invading the skies and singing. Their song was Gloria in Excelsis Deo (Glory to God in the Highest) and on earth peace, goodwill toward men. The Incarnation declared a new relationship between God and man because now there was a New Adam, a new covenant head. *Eudokia* means goodwill, kindly intent, or benevolence. This army was declaring the purpose of Yahweh through Jesus Christ the God-Man.

**A Multitude of Grace** – “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son...” This is the goodwill toward men. Jesus was sent to reverse the curse brought on by Adam. In Adam, the number of those who will be condemned on the last day is set. But the number of those who will be received into heaven cannot be counted (Rev 7:9-10). Judgment has come upon all men, because in Adam all sinned; however, grace has judged this race in Christ and the result is the justification of sinners, a multitude (Rom 5:15-19). Paul’s rhetorical comment on the difference between death in Adam and life in Christ is obvious but somehow often missed: How much more? This is the Goodwill Toward Men.

**Grace That Doesn’t Ask Permission** – Grace is strong, offensive, and doesn’t take no for an answer. Grace invades the darkness with light. Grace declares an antithesis to the Pax Romana of Caesar and the city of Man (Caesar Augustus took his name, meaning “worthy of worship,” declared himself to be the son of god, and claimed to have brought peace on earth). Herod claimed to be the King of the Jews. Jesus, even at the moment of His birth, challenges both thrones with an army of angels singing while He lies in a manger wrapped in swaddling cloths. When we pray, “thy kingdom come,” we are praying this grace upon the world.

**Grace That Cannot Be Stopped** – Goodwill Toward Men means that God will accomplish what He has begun and that is the salvation of the world. Having been judged in Christ, this new race has such an extent that Paul says we have a ministry of reconciliation to the world (2 Cor 5:18-19). Jesus Christ has come to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29) and not to condemn the world (John 3:17). The message on Hallmark Christmas cards (Peace on Earth, Goodwill toward Men) means that in the end, the world is redeemed, as the scriptures over and over again attest (Zech 9:10, Isaiah 40:5, 1 John 2:2, Matt 13:33).

**Grace For You** – The shepherds that night heard a message of the salvation of the world, an optimistic message of the work of the gospel. But they had to then respond – for it or against it. They left with haste and went and worshipped this newborn King (Luke 2:15-16), and then they went and told the world (v17). There is grace for the world, this is true. But it is very important for you to hear yourself that there is grace for you – and it is by faith that you will apprehend it. The message of goodwill comes to people who have nothing to offer that Child. The shepherds did nothing to deserve the angelic visitation and we have done nothing to hear it repeated to us again. They made haste and the world has never been the same. Should not we also make haste? There is peace on earth – would you have it? There is God’s goodwill toward men – would you receive it? It has come, it continues to pour out, and it will cover the earth – lay down your arms and come to the Lord Jesus Christ.