

The Message of the Carols - Luke 2:13-14

Introduction: There are many sights and sounds connected with Christmas aren't there? Some of the sights include: The presents that are wrapped and the mountains that are snow capped; the decorated trees and the shopping sprees; the lights on display and Santa in his sleigh. And some of the sounds include: Carolers singing and jingle bells ringing; Christmas Pageants and Electronic gadgets; The prancing of reindeer and Christmas cheer. But, amid all the sights and sounds we hear at Christmas, I hope it's not just noise. I hope we can take the time to stop and listen to the message in the music - especially the carols.

As we have counted down the Sundays in December that have led to Christmas this year, our emphasis has been "The message of the Carols. And I hope that in the music we've heard, you have heard the message in the music. That's the important thing. What is the message we have heard in the carols? First, I hope we've heard:

1. The Message of God's Love

Every Christmas carol rings loud with the message of God's love. It was His love for us that allowed God to send His only Son Jesus, into this world to live with us. It was God's love for us that allowed Jesus to experience all the pain and heartache, and stress, and disappointments that we all face everyday. It was because of God's love for us that Jesus went to the cross to die for our. The Christmas Carols remind us that God does love us, even though many people have turned their backs upon Him.

Over the past month, the message of God's love has gone out reminding us that, *"God cares. God hasn't forgotten, and He proved it by sending His Son into the world for us."*

This Christmas, above all the other sounds of sleigh bells, and cash registers ringing, I hope you've heard the message of God's love. That's what God wants us to hear. Secondly, I hope you've heard:

2. The Message of God's Joy

Let's face it, in many ways, there's not a lot of reasons to be joyful are there? Many folks are living below the poverty level. Our country's economic situation seems to be on shaky ground. There's crime in our streets. There's family strife in our homes. There's depression in our minds. There's sickness and disease in our bodies. There's alcoholism and addictions all around us. There's babies and children going hungry, and bills going unpaid.

In fact, in the month of December, more alcohol will be consumed, more drugs will be bought and taken, and more suicides will be committed than during any other month of the year. Why? Because a lot of people are searching for joy in the wrong places.

In the children's story by Dr. Seuss of *"The Grinch That Stole Christmas?"* an evil Grinch goes to Whoville

to steal Christmas because he doesn't want people to have a happy Christmas.

So on Christmas Eve, while everyone is asleep, he steals all their presents. He steals all their Christmas trees and all their tinsel and lights and turkey dinners. He takes everything about Christmas from their homes and hides them in a cave on the hill.

But on Christmas morning the people of Whoville joined hands and begin to sing and rejoice in celebration of Christmas. The message of the story is that their joy at Christmastime doesn't depend upon presents or trees or lights.

Now, Dr. Seuss doesn't tell us where Christmas joy comes from, but I will. It comes from a God who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to come and live among us, and die for us.

And the good news is that His joy can be had by believing in God's Son and asking Him to save you. Which brings me to the last thing I hope you've heard in the carols this year. I hope you've heard:

3. The Message of God's Peace

As our musical reminded us last Sunday morning, Christmas is all about Jesus, the "*Prince of Peace*." Now back when Jesus was born, there was not a lot of peace in the hearts of the people. The Jews were under Roman rule. They were oppressed, used, and abused and there was nothing they could do about it. So on that night Jesus was born they were probably arguing, and filled with despair and selfishness and indifference, much like a lot of people in our world today.

Many folks are going through the motions of life with little or no peace. And because there's no peace in their hearts, when difficulties and troubles come their way, they tend to react in a negative manner. They are cold and hard and bitter and indifferent. They are reacting with fear, with anger, and with a feeling of helplessness.

But there is another way we can choose to react? That's what this is all about anyway - a choice. You can choose to be bitter and angry, or you can choose to have peace.

The Bible says that people can have "*a peace that passes all understanding?*" But it's not the kind of peace the world can give. It's a kind of peace that brings a calm in the middle of a calamity, and gives confidence in the midst of chaos. In Jesus, God gave the world a peace that tells us that God is still on His throne and in control of our world.

There was once a man who lost his wife, leaving him with a six-year-old son. After her funeral, that night as they prepared for bed, the boy asked his dad if he could sleep in his bed. And of course, the Dad said he

could.

But neither one could to go to sleep. They both tossed and turned until late in the night. Finally, the little boy asked, "*Daddy, are you looking at me? Because if you are, I think I can go to sleep.*" And the father answered, "*Yes son, I'm looking at you.*"

The little boy finally fell asleep. The father got up, walked over to the window and pulled back the curtain. He looked up into the starry sky and said, "*Father, are you looking at me? Because if you are, I think I can rest and be at peace.*"

The message of the carols is that God is still looking down upon His creation. Christmas has come to remind us that God loves us, that He wants us to have joy, and a "*peace that passes all understanding.*" Do you have it today?