

**“Look Up! The Star of Peace Draws Near!” – Pr Jim Sprengle**  
**Advent Midweek 1 – December 6, 2023**

- I. **Mark 2 and 1 Timothy 6** – previously read
- II. **Christmas gets here earlier and earlier each year.**
  - a. I don't mean Christmas Day, as of course it's always the same day... I mean the build up to Christmas... it starts earlier all the time.
  - b. It shouldn't be surprising to see retail stores figuring out ways to get us in the “Christmas spirit” sooner – which actually means getting us in the “spending spirit”.
    - i. Stores compete to be the first ones to put up Christmas colors and lights... along with promotions to attract customers.
    - ii. Maybe your coworker or the radio is playing Christmas songs... and they started the day after Thanksgiving!
    - iii. For some of you, several batches of Christmas cookies have already been baked, and at least one batch has already disappeared – and maybe reappeared on your waistline 😊
  - c. I guess we have to start early because we put so much pressure on ourselves to get a mountain of work done... we give ourselves goals to meet for the season...
    - i. This year, I'm getting shopping done early, or
    - ii. This time around, all the cards will be sent before December 10, or
    - iii. I want to get my lights up and Christmas tree done by December 1.
  - d. Those goals are fine, but for Advent this year, I would like us to consider the goal of peace...
    - i. I know it's countercultural to have peace during this season of hustle and bustle, but let's take a few weeks and think about how we seek peace and try to define the peace we are seeking.
    - ii. We will look at our beliefs and behaviors leading up to Christmas... and how we are trying to find peace, but also what kind of peace we are looking for.
  - e. This year's Advent series, “Peace Came to Earth,” uses the example of a star to talk about peace... specifically a five-point star.
    - i. Each point of the star is a different direction we go to find the peace we're seeking... but it's all in the wrong direction – outward instead of looking to God.
      - 1. But the good news is that God meets us where we are, stops our constant chasing after the wrong things, and gives us a new understanding of His gift of peace.
      - 2. Real peace always comes through the birth of Jesus, the Word made flesh, who stepped into our world, and fills the void in our hearts with true peace.

III. **The first point of our star is the top one.**

- a. The top point (or direction) is a typical way we seek peace: possessions.
  - i. The more stuff we have, the better.
  - ii. There is a reason retailers advertise... because we buy stuff!
- b. Christmas and the lead up to it has a way of getting people to want things... almost like a kid in a candy store.
  - i. Getting ready for Christmas for many people means getting more and newer stuff than we already have.
  - ii. Somehow, we are conditioned to believe that Christmas cannot be right unless we have all the right things... whether that's the gifts, the decorations, or whatever we need to make it perfect.
- c. As we picture the top point of this star... when does end?
  - i. What's the length we go to find the peace we're looking for?
  - ii. Lessons in life remind us that stuff can't bring us any real peace...
    - 1. Almost every toy we ever had is gone or broken...
    - 2. Nothing lasts forever, and the greatest thing today will just need to be replaced tomorrow with something better.
  - iii. Before we go any further away from God, He tells us, "Enough already!"
    - 1. Through the Scriptures He reminds us many times over that we can have peace in His ways... just like Paul says today, "But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content" (1 Timothy 6:6–8).
    - 2. God sees us rushing forward, gathering up as much as we can... but He knows that danger is ahead... and like any good Father, He stops us in our tracks.
    - 3. Our heavenly Father stops us out of love and His knowledge of the trouble we will get into.
    - 4. The words of Paul fit perfectly: "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction" (1 Timothy 6:9).
    - 5. The end of that road is "ruin and destruction", but the funny thing is that God still provides more than enough for us anyway!
      - a. He's already given us the food and clothing we need and a bunch of things that fill our homes and garages.
      - b. Now, He could be like, "Okay, you have what you need so be content..." – but He goes much farther than just giving us the gifts of creation... He gives us His Son.

IV. **Jesus Christ came into the world, and a star showed the way to peace.**

- a. Think about the Wise Men as they sought peace.

- i. They saw the star from 100's if not 1000's of miles away... and yet through God's inspiration they knew what that star meant.
  - ii. The long-awaited Savior... the Messiah promised from ancient times was born!
  - iii. They had discovered a true treasure beyond anything they could acquire or earn themselves.
  - iv. These guys actually brought treasure with them – gifts from the heart to welcome the newborn King – and a thank offering for the saving grace that would bless the world.
  - v. They followed the star until they laid eyes on the only thing that can bring real peace – and it was a person – Jesus Christ our Lord.
- b. That's the star that guides us every Advent.
- i. It's a star that still shines, of course not literally, but the star of peace is shining brightly to remind us what our true treasure is.
  - ii. Our greatest treasure and richest gain are not found in a bank account or the stuff we've acquired... our treasure is found in the message of the Christmas star.
  - iii. That star doesn't move or constantly force us to search it out.
  - iv. Our peace comes from the certainty of that star that points to the One who is God's lasting treasure.
- c. Live your life in the same way as the Magi, as they were totally content knowing that the King had been born.
- i. God's peace comes to us as He meets us in all the distractions and ways we seek out a false peace.
  - ii. He says, "Follow Me," and we have His words of promise and blessing to do just that.
  - iii. That's a gift the Wise Men didn't have yet – Jesus' own words – but we have this gift in front of us every moment of the day if we choose it.

V. **The star of peace helps us to focus on the source of peace.**

- a. It's more than just adding to our list of presents or trying to find the latest and greatest thing to make us feel content.
- b. No, God as our wise Father, is quick to say, "Enough already!" and focuses our eyes on lasting treasure instead.
- c. The Messiah is the true treasure we cannot overlook... and the gift of His coming into this world as a little baby is more than enough to satisfy our search for peace in this world – especially during this season of Advent and Christmas.
- d. Our peace is found in the One who has already come and made us His own. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Based on Advent series: "Paavola, Daniel Dr., *Peace Came to Earth*, Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, 2023