

Ordinary People, Extraordinary Peace



Luke 2:1-20



This session continues our journey through the Promise of Peace. We turn to the shepherds on the night Jesus was born and discover how God brings peace into the most ordinary moments of life. Luke begins the story with the power and control of the Roman Empire, yet the announcement of peace does not come to rulers or officials. It comes to a group of tired night-shift workers who are simply doing their best to make it through another day. As we explore their story, we will see the difference between the peace the world tries to offer and the extraordinary peace that comes from the presence of Jesus.

You will need:

- 'Ordinary Peace, Extraordinary Peace' handout
- Pens



Beat

Say:

Before we explore the peace God brings into our ordinary life, we are going to begin with a Christmas clip that is anything but calm. Look out for the small details as you will need them for the questions afterwards.

Watch:

The Grinch (2018) – Can't Escape Christmas – Movieclips (2:36)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiPY5_H9Elw

Ask:

1. What colour stripes are on the hat of the boy who is building a snowman? **Yellow and red**
2. What colour are the birds being fed by the old lady? **Blue**

3. How many carollers are there when the Grinch first spots them? **Nine**
4. Where does the Grinch hide from them? **In an archway**
5. What is the name of the supermarket that the Grinch runs into? **Who Foods**
6. What does the Grinch take out of another shopper's basket? **A jar of pickles**
7. What does the Grinch do when the lady says, 'Well, that's not very nice'? **He elbows the shelf so that the jar falls to the ground and breaks**
8. Why is the Grinch so grumpy? **There are answers to this question which should hopefully open up a discussion about why the Grinch dislikes Christmas so much!**

Say:

Christmas is a season that celebrates peace, yet it can often feel anything but peaceful.

Ask:

When you think about Christmas, what are some moments that feel less peaceful for you or for the people you know?



Ask:

Why do you think peace can feel so hard to find, even in a season that promises it?



Say:

In our first Promise of Peace session we explored what the Bible means when it speaks about peace. As we continue the Christmas story, Luke gives us an important contrast. Before he says anything about shepherds or angels, he directs our attention to Caesar Augustus and the Roman census. This is not a casual detail. Luke is preparing us to see two very different expressions of peace and to recognise why the peace of Jesus is so distinct.

Read:

¹ In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

— (Luke 2:1-3)

Say:

Jesus was born during a period known as the Pax Romana, the 'Roman peace'. Roman leaders

celebrated this era as peaceful, yet it was held in place through military strength, imposed order and political control. It created a quiet empire, but it did not create peace in the way Scripture understands it.

Ask:

Think back to your history lessons. How did Rome maintain its version of peace, and what kind of life do you imagine this created for everyday people?

Say:

The Bible speaks about peace in a very different way. To remind ourselves of this, we will rewatch the Bible Project clip from our first session. As you watch, note anything that helps you understand biblical peace more deeply.

Watch:

Shalom – Peace – Bible Project (3:48)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLYORLZOaZE>

Ask:

How is the Bible's description of peace different from the way we usually use the word today?

Say:

The Hebrew word for peace is shalom. Shalom describes a sense of wholeness and completeness. It is present when broken things are restored, when relationships mend, and when the pieces of life fit together as they were meant to. Shalom does not rely on stillness or calm. Instead, it expresses the way God moves toward what is broken and begins to make it whole again.

Read:

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

— (Luke 2:4-7)

Ask:

Luke moves from the power and authority of Caesar to the journey of two very ordinary people. What might he want us to notice by placing these scenes side by side?

Say:

The story shifts from the centre of imperial power to a small town, an overcrowded home, and the birth of a child who will fulfil God's promise of shalom. God's work begins in the most ordinary and unexpected places.

Read:

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields near by, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'

— (Luke 2:8–12)

Say:

The shepherds were ordinary working people. They held no status and had no influence, and yet they were entrusted with the first announcement of Jesus' birth. They understood the hope of shalom from the Scriptures, but on this night they found themselves overwhelmed and afraid. Their experience reminds us that fear or uncertainty does not keep God at a distance. God meets us as we truly are and brings peace to the places where we feel most unsettled.

Ask:

Why did God choose to reveal this news to a group of ordinary shepherds working the night shift?

Say:

God wanted to show that his peace is not reserved for the powerful or the impressive. The birth of Jesus begins with those who are often overlooked, so that we understand from the very beginning that his peace is for everyone.

Read:

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ 'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.'

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.'

— (Luke 2:13–15)

Say:

When the angels spoke of peace on earth, the Greek New Testament account uses the word *eirene*. This word carries forward the whole meaning of shalom. It does not replace it. It announces that the wholeness promised in the Hebrew Old Testament has now come into the world in Jesus. Peace is no longer an idea we reach for. It is a person who has come near.

Ask:

What difference does it make to know that the peace God gives is made present to us in Jesus?

Read:

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

— (Luke 2:16–20)

Say:

The shepherds ran to find the child and then shared the good news with joy. When they returned to their fields, their work was the same as it had always been. The routine continued and the risks and responsibilities remained. Yet the shepherds were not the same. They had discovered a peace that does not depend on perfect circumstances but on the presence of the one who brings wholeness.

Ask:

What do the shepherds help us understand about how Jesus brings peace into everyday life?

Say:

Some of us experience the world with more noise, intensity or restlessness than others. This does not place us outside the reach of God's peace. The shepherds' fear did not exclude them. Their ordinariness did not exclude them. God met them where they were and offered the peace they had longed for.

Ask:

How might knowing that God brings peace to us as we are, rather than as we think we should be, change the way we think about peace in our own lives?

Say:

The peace God brings is not fragile, temporary or dependent on perfect conditions. It is the wholeness promised in the Scriptures, now fulfilled in Jesus. This extraordinary peace comes to ordinary people, in ordinary moments, just as it did for the shepherds. It is still available to us today.


Ask:

What is your response to the following quote?

'All the peace and favour of the world cannot calm a troubled heart; but where this peace is which Christ gives, all the trouble and disquiet of the world cannot disturb it.'

— Robert Leighton

Sound Check

Say:

Throughout the session, we have seen that God brings extraordinary peace into ordinary moments. The shepherds were working the night shift, carrying out their normal everyday responsibilities, when the light of the angels broke into their darkness. Their circumstances did not suddenly become easier, but everything changed because the extraordinary presence of God met them where they were. For our Sound Check we are going to reflect on what extraordinary peace can look like in our ordinary lives.

Leader's notes:

Divide the group into smaller teams. Each team will need an 'Ordinary Peace, Extraordinary Peace' handout and some pens. Under the Ordinary Peace heading, there is space for the group to create a mind map of the common ways people usually try to find peace in daily life: for example, following routines, self-care, listening to music, or going for a walk.

Under the Extraordinary Peace heading there is a larger space and three Bible references. The full passages are included below for your reference.

²⁷ 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)

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

— (Philippians 4:6-7)

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

**¹⁴ 'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.'**

— (Luke 2:13-14)

Ask the groups to read the Scriptures together and create a second mind map exploring the kind of peace described in these passages. They may notice ideas such as:

Peace that ...

- Is given by Jesus rather than created by us
- Guards the heart and mind
- Is stronger than fear
- Surpasses understanding
- Comes with God's presence

The final section of the handout invites groups to choose one idea from their Extraordinary Peace list and answer the question:

‘What might this look like in an ordinary moment of life today?’

Give the group time to complete the handout and then bring everyone together to share their ideas.

Say:

It is important to remember that the ordinary ways we look for peace are not wrong or unhelpful. Taking a walk, listening to music, spending time with friends, or finding a quiet moment can all help us. Yet the peace Jesus gives reaches far deeper than anything we can create for ourselves. It is a peace that stays with us in every circumstance, a peace that strengthens and steadies us and a peace that reminds us we are never on our own.



Ask:

What other Bible verses can you think of or find that reassure us about the extraordinary peace found in God?



Say:

We have explored the difference between the peace the world offers and the extraordinary peace God gives. We have seen how Heaven broke into the shepherds' ordinary night and how Jesus brought a peace that did not depend on perfect circumstances but on his presence with them.

Ask:

Can you think of a moment when you felt a sense of God's peace or wholeness in an ordinary part of life? It might have been brief or unexpected, but it helped life feel a little more whole for a moment. If you feel comfortable, you are welcome to share it.

Leader's notes:

This may be a good opportunity for the group's leaders to share their experiences of God's peace.

Say:

These moments help us recognise that God's peace often comes to us in small, ordinary places, just as it did for the shepherds.

As we take a moment of Selah, we are going to rest in that same truth. This is not a time to analyse or solve anything. It is simply an opportunity to let the extraordinary peace of God meet us where we are. Listen to the words of this beautiful song and experience God's peace.

Watch:

'Prince of Peace' (Official Music Video) Celtic Worship (4:07)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pr2RG-xR2IA>



Say:

In a piece of music, the coda brings the different aspects of the melody, harmonies and bassline to a conclusion. It pulls together the different themes and often, but not always, brings resolution to a piece of music.

Ask:

As you reflect on everything you have learned today, what is your coda?

What is the one thing you are taking away from this session about the extraordinary peace of Jesus in our ordinary lives?

Leader's notes:

Give the young people a moment to think about your question and briefly share their coda with the group before the session comes to an end.





Ordinary Peace

Create a mind map of the common ways people usually try to find peace in daily life.

Extraordinary Peace

²⁷ 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)

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:6-7)

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ 'Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.'

(Luke 2:13-14)



Extraordinary Peace

Read the Scriptures together and create a second mind map exploring the kind of peace described in these passages.

What might this look like in an ordinary moment of life today?

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