

# **Peace in a Troubled World**

## **Luke 2:1-7 (NRSVue)**



AS WE PREPARE TO CELEBRATE the birth of the Prince of Peace, we cannot ignore the reality that peace is missing from our world. Violence and war tear apart nations. Division and hostility break relationships in towns and families. Anxiety and fear unsettle many hearts. Peace dribbles off our tongues, but we still thirst for a satisfying drink.

The longing for peace isn't new. People were desperate the night Jesus was born.

### **Lack of Peace in Jesus' World**

The Roman world lacked peace when Jesus was born. Luke tells us that Caesar Augustus issued a decree that the entire world should be registered. Behind that decree was the machinery of empire—a government that promised “Pax Romana,” Roman peace, but distilled it through power and oppression.

The Roman Empire ruled by force, crushing uprisings, silencing opposition.

Protests were dangerous.

Taxes burdened poor families, driving them deeper into poverty. Many lost their land, homes, and livelihoods.

Mary and Joseph themselves were uprooted, compelled to travel to Bethlehem because of Caesar's decree. The decree's purpose was a census, and with it a head tax. Economic hardship may have kept Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem two years until the Magi came and brought gifts that helped them flee to Egypt. God's protection and peace were at work, even against the oppression of empire.

When Jesus was born, the world wasn't calm or serene. It was troubled, insecure, and yearning for a peace better than the fragile, greedy peace of the Roman empire.

## **Offer of Peace**

To that troubled world, God offered peace, not through Caesar's power, but through the cry of a newborn child. Mary gave birth to her firstborn son, protected him with bands of cloth, and placed him in a stable's feeding trough because there wasn't a room left in the inn.

This disturbing scene was God's declaration: *Peace does not come from palaces or armies, but from the presence of my Son.* The manger became the throne of peace. The Child told the world, "God's peace isn't distant, but close."

Jesus' birth was God's answer to the world's unrest. Where Rome offered control, Christ offered the end of hostility, division, and anxiety. Where the Roman Empire demanded submission, Christ gave compassion. Where anger reigned, Christ brought hope and new life.

This peace was both a gift and an invitation—offered freely by Christ, lived out by his people and completed when he comes again.

## **The Prince of Peace**

Jesus is the Prince of Peace, whose presence with us gives us calmness even now. His peace isn't a lack of conflict, but the richness of God's love in woe.

The Christ Child calls you to love others, to forgive, and to live as a force of peace in a divided world. Uncle Wilbur and Grampa square off across a holiday dinner table. Or neighbor Donna and neighbor Cynthia struggle with each other over what their kids did. Your gracious words may bring Christ's peace to the family table. Your wise counsel may bring harmony to your street. Then Christ's light chases away the shadow of discord.

This harmony and goodwill isn't a dream. It's the fruit of Christ's presence, offered to you in your daily living.

As you celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace,  
receive his peace,

and live it.  
In a world of violence and fear,  
walk gently, speak to heal.  
Show compassion, offer hope.

Christ's peace is a gift and a calling.  
We taste it now,  
await its fullness when he returns.

Listen—  
the manger whispers:  
Receive his peace.  
Live his peace.  
Share his peace  
until dawn breaks and peace is full.

**Amen**

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