**Series Road Map: Evergreen**

**Series Overview:** Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year… right? Well, not for everyone. Though we like to talk about how Christmas is magical, the reality for many is that it’s just a yearly remind of everything they don’t have. Everything they have lost. But it’s not supposed to be like this. Christmas is so much more than a magical celebration, it is a reminder of the single greatest source of joy, peace, and hope the world has ever known. Let’s make this Christmas the most meaningful one yet!

**Week Overview:** Peace is something we are severely lacking in our world today. We see it all around us in the news and on social media. But that same lack of peace that exists “out there” also exists in our own hearts. Each of us is desperately in need of peace in our relationship with God. Christmas is the ultimate reminder that we can have that!

***Outline:***

**Grab the Room (Intro):** stressful/heavycurrent events… clip from WW1 Christmas story

**Tension (what’s the struggle):** How do we find true peace

**Text:** Luke 1:30-33 ; 2:14 Romans 5:7-8

**THP**: Peace is Possible

**Supporting Points:** Each of us are in need of the same peace that the world needs.

**Application (call to action)**:

*Red – Scripture*

*Blue – Personal Story*

*Green – Prop*

***THP/Main Points – Bold***

**Evergreen**

**December 2021**

**Northview Church**

**Script:**

Hey Northview Students! Welcome back to our second week of Evergreen. Like we talked about last week, and evergreen tree is the classic symbol of Christmas. It's really a pretty amazing tree when you think about it because it's one of the few that makes it through winter. It's specifically designed to be able to withstand the cold temperatures and the heavy snow. In this series, we are asking the question, is your faith Evergreen? Do you have a faith in God that can stand strong in even the most difficult seasons of life? The reality is, all of us can grow in this area. And that's what we want to do this Christmas. We want this to be a Christmas where you reflect on the deep truth of the Christmas story and our prayer is that it spurs on spiritual growth in each and every one of your lives! We want this to be a Christmas where your soul is cared for more than your stomach, your mind is challenged more than entertained, and your heart is filled with truth instead of just nostalgia. So let me pray for us and then we will jump right in!

(pray)

 I wouldn't have to try very hard to convince all of you that our world is severely lacking in peace. In fact, all I would need to do is have you watch the news and it would become extremely obvious. Unfortunately, peace rarely makes the news. In fact, the opposite is true. News and social media are packed full of stories of violence, hate, and discrimination. Just think of this past semester... the news was packed full of the violence and evil that happened in Afghanistan and debate about whose fault it was. There are constant and ongoing debates about how to move forward through the COVID-19 pandemic, with name-calling and hate coming from both sides. Even in the Christain world, there has been story after story of how one pastor’s poor decisions have hurt the lives of many. It’s so disappointing and heavy.

The world's a mess isn't it? And everyone can feel it. That's why rates of depression and anxiety are higher than they've ever been before. Maybe that's something you experienced personally, or someone you love has dealt with depression or anxiety. No matter who you are, it's affecting all of us on some level. We live in a world that is desperate for peace, but is there any way to get it.

**THP: Peace is Possible.**

But do you realize that this isn’t anything new? Right near the beginning of the Bible, in Genesis 3, sin entered the world and it's been full of the same evils that we see today ever since: violence, anger, crime, hate, injustice, and the list goes on and on and on. But please understand that this was NOT God’s design. God created a perfect world in which peace was not only possible, but it was the reality! Adam and Eve lived in the garden of Eden in perfect peace with their creator. What a beautiful picture. But then, like I mentioned earlier, sin crept in. Adam and Eve decided to trust themselves more than God, a decision we have all made and continue to make, and that was the beginning of all this brokenness we see today.

In the midst of all this darkness, the Christmas story offers a glimmer of peace. But why? Why does Jesus’ arrival on Earth offer us peace? Let's jump into the Christmas story and find out…

 The Christmas Story really begins when Mary first gets news that she's going to have a baby. An angel appears to her and tells her that she is going to conceive. Obviously this is a pretty big surprise to a woman who has never had sex before. At first, Mary is shocked and confused, and rightfully so. But the angel speaks words of comfort over her when he says...

(Luke 1:30-33)

**30** But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. **31** You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, **33** and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

Fast forward to when Mary actually gives birth, the first Christmas, and angels appear again to tell a group of shepherds the news. They say,

**11 “**Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.”

It is in these passages that we can start to see why PEACE is such a central theme to the Christmas story. In fact, it seems to be one of the primary reasons why Jesus came! There is a peace that every person, from the beginning of time, is desperately in need of. And yes, that includes every single person listening to me right know. Do you realize you are in desperate need of peace?

 Let me make myself completely clear... Each and every person listening to my voice right now, along with every other person in the world is desperately in need of peace in their relationship with God. We talked earlier about how our world is desperately in need of peace, but guys what I need you to understand right now is that your own heart is in need of that same peace. Everybody needs peace. Like I mentioned before, in Genesis 3 sin entered the world through the actions of Adam and Eve. They chose their way over God's way, and we've been doing the same ever since. Our mistakes and our decision to live our own way over God's way separates us from him. This is called sin. We are all broken and we are all separated from God since he is perfect and holy.

 Guys, this is a massive problem because we were created to be in relationship with God. That was the primary purpose God designed us for. When we are not in a relationship with God, we are not living in the way we were designed to live, and it shows! Have you ever seen something get used in a way it wasn't designed to be used? Look at these examples...



 These are hilarious examples because it's so obvious that these people are not using these things in the way they were designed to be used. That doesn't mean it's a bad umbrella or bad vacuum cleaner if it doesn't work, because it wasn't designed to do that in the first place. The same is true for us. When we are not living in the way we were created to live, we are just setting ourselves up for failure!

 But now we're faced with a big problem.Everybody needs peace, but we can't achieve this peace on our own. We can't get back into right relationship with God on our own. We are broken and sinful. We make mistakes and fall short constantly. But here’s the good news... **Peace is Possible**! Not because of anything we has done, we can't possibly bring about this peace on our own. This is why we are in need of a SAVIOR. God himself needed to decide that we were worth saving, and guess what... He did! And because of this truth, **Peace is Possible**! God made a way for there to be peace between himself and his creation, just like he had intended from the very beginning of creation! That’s why, when the angels appeared to the shepherds, they were singing,

(Luke 2:14)

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,

 and on earth PEACE to those on whom his favor rests.”

God gets the glory because he did the work! He made a way for us to be in relationship with him again, even when we could not do that on our own. He made a way for peace. This reminds me of one of my favorite Christmas songs. It's one that you all know and will definitely recognize. It's called Hark the Herald Angels Sing. Now this is a very upbeat song and usually sung in a very light-hearted manner, but it is packed full of some profound truth. The opening lines are my absolute favorite….

 Hark! The herald angels sing,

“Glory to the newborn King!

Peace on earth and mercy mild,

God and sinners reconciled.”

(really PREACH this next section)

Did you catch that? “Peace on earth and mercy mild **God and sinners reconciled**.” That is the exact peace that I'm talking about! The peace that comes with reconciliation between us and God. This truth is was make peace possible! This peace exists when we know our creator and our creator knows us. This peace comes from knowing that we are fully known and fully loved at the same time. This peace is only available with God, and it is only available because of God! And this peace is Evergreen. It is not based on circumstances or situations, and it's definitely not based on what we do. This reconciliation came through the work of Jesus: his life on Earth, and death and resurrection.

It’s permanent. It’s consistent. It's never changing. It's evergreen. We all need it. And hear me on this... no matter what you read in the news or see on social media, no matter how much you feel like your world is swirling around you, **Peace is Possible.**

 Let me pause for a moment to ask you... Do you know this peace? Do you have a relationship with your creator? Do you know him and love him? Guys, everybody needs this peace... every single person in this room.They are probably some of you who have made the decision to follow Jesus, and so you have a relationship with God, but for some reason you just have not felt that peace recently. You're getting caught up in everything going on in the world around you... in your personal life, in your friend group, at school, and it's distracting you from your relationship with God. You don't feel the peace that comes from knowing the creator of the universe, even though you know Him. My prayer for you this Christmas season is that you are reminded of the peace that comes from knowing God and knowing He is in control. You are fully known and fully loved by your creator. He did the work. He reconciled your relationship with Him. Rest in that truth this season.

 I also know there are some of you who have never experienced this peace before because you do not have a relationship with God. You don't know the one who created you, even though you were designed to. Please hear me on this... I truly believe there's not a more perfect time to step into that relationship with God then at the Christmas season. The first Christmas was a moment where God showed up on Earth. He reached out his hand for us to hold onto. He extended us a gift that all we have to do is accept. Is that you? Do you want to accept that gift right now? He's offering it to you. All you have to do is say yes. Accepting the gift means trusting Jesus is who He says He is, and choosing to follow him for the rest of your life. I want to give you a chance to do that right now...

(give opportunity to pray to trust in Jesus)

Now let’s close by singing “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” together. As we do, let’s reflect on the mind-blowing truth that God has made a way for us to be in right relationship with Him again. He paved the way for God and sinners to be reconciled. Let’s celebrate that truth and rest in the peace that comes with it. Before we sing, let’s just sit. You have nowhere else to be and nothing else to do. Just rest in the fact that you are loved by your creator... that you know your creator and He knows you. After a few moments, we will stand and sing together...

(close in singing “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing”)

That was beautiful. I want to close tonight by giving you something. It’s not much, but my prayer is that it would be an encouragement to you. You know, sometimes we need a physical reminder of what is true. Something to carry with us, and literally hold onto. We have these small leather evergreen trees that I want to give to everyone. My challenge for you is to put this in your pocket and take it with you wherever you go all the way until Christmas Day. I want this to serve as a reminder of the joy and peace that comes with the Christmas season. I want this to be a reminder for you of what Christmas is really all about. So take it with you, and whenever you are feeling a lack of joy or peace, just pull out this small ornament and hold onto. Talk to God and ask Him to remind you of the powerful truth and good news that comes with the Christmas story.

**Peace is Possible**. Love you guys!