

Peace Has Come

2 of 4 in *Advent: The Light Has Come*

Dec. 5, 2021

Is. 9:2, 6-7, etc.

We're continuing in our Advent sermon series called *The Light Has Come*. The Light, of course, is Jesus, who tells us, "I am the light of the world."¹

Today's message is called *Peace has Come*, because, as you've seen, peace is the theme of the second Sunday of Advent.

Some seven centuries before the birth of Jesus, the Old Testament prophet Isaiah wrote the following promise of one who would come to bring peace:

²The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.

⁶For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace.**

⁷**Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.**

He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.²

Isaiah wrote these words of hope during a dark time for God's people. In the midst of that darkness, Isaiah prophesied that one day, a glorious light would dawn through the birth of a child destined to reign forevermore as the Prince of Peace. We have come to understand—and hopefully personally experience—that this Prince of Peace is none other than Jesus Christ.

¹ See John 8:12

² Isaiah 2:9:6-7

Of course at Christmastime, we often speak and sing of “peace on earth.” But then we watch the news; we look into our homes; we look into our hearts, and we find that peace remains elusive.

We live in a time when social divisions are acute as they’ve been in a long time. In so many ways, the pandemic has amplified those divisions. It has shone a spotlight on the depth of the divide between races, genders, and political parties, between rich and poor.

And not only is peace elusive on a societal scale. It’s also hard to come by in our personal lives. The famous author H.G. Wells was quoted later in his life as saying, “I cannot adjust my life to secure any fruitful peace. Here I am, at age 64, still seeking peace. It’s a hopeless dream.”

Sometimes we’re inclined to think that if only we could somehow control our circumstances, *then* we’d have peace. But Jesus—the Prince of Peace— never promised that our life circumstances would always remain favourable or ideal—at least not on this side of his second coming.

The passage we read in Isaiah says that the reign of the Messiah will indeed bring an increase of peace on earth, but it’s important to understand that there is a *now and later* aspect to the peace Jesus brings. It’s progressive, and will one day be comprehensive, universal. But if in the here and now you’re expecting Jesus to provide you with peace based on the absence of all conflict or trouble, peace will remain for you a hopeless dream, as it did for H.G. Wells.

What kind peace, then, does Jesus— the Prince of Peace— offer us in the meantime? I’d like for us to consider **three dimensions of peace** that Jesus was born into this world to bring us that we can begin to live into right here and right now. First and foremost, Jesus offers us:

1. Peace with God.

The central event in the life of the Prince of Peace doesn’t exactly bring to mind the kind of images that we would call peaceful. Nevertheless, what Christ accomplished through his death on the cross is the very heart, the core, of his peace-making mission. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas, we must always keep in mind the primary reason he came to earth—to die on the cross. The Bible says in Colossians that:

... through him God reconciled
everything to himself.

He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth
by means of Christ's blood on the cross.³

The fact that God sought to make peace with us through the shed blood of Christ presupposes that there was a deep rift in our relationship with God—something had come between God and us.

Indeed, this Colossians passage goes on to say that:

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour.⁴

The problem described here is sin. Sin is turning from God's way—ignoring God—and going my way. It's saying that in the end, I know better than God; that the way I choose for myself is better than God's way. Sin is our tragic, futile, and ironic attempt to find life apart from the one and only Author of life. In Romans 3, the Bible says.

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.⁵

Which one of us even comes close to living up to the standards of our own conscience, let alone the standards of an infinitely holy God? It's not just that we've made a few mistakes in life. Rather, sin has become within us a deep and desperate systemic infection that separates us from God, both now and potentially forever. And we're utterly powerless to save ourselves from it.

That's where the good news comes in. In Matthew chapter 1, an angel speaks to Joseph about his fiancé Mary:

"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save the people from their sins."⁶

The name Jesus, you see, means *God saves*.

Jesus saves us from our sin and its consequences, making it possible for each one of us—if we so choose—to have peace with God. As the Bible says in Romans:

³ Colossians 1:20

⁴ Colossians 1:21

⁵ Romans 3:23

⁶ Mathew 1:21

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.⁷

What has Jesus done for us? Romans 5 goes on to say:

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.⁸

While we were still sinners, Jesus died for us, so we might have peace with God—so that our relationship with God, broken because of sin—could be reconciled, put right.

Friend, can you say with confidence that you have peace with God? Have you put your trust in the work that Jesus—the Prince of Peace—accomplished on your behalf through his cross and resurrection, so that you can be saved from your sin?

His saving work on the cross does not just apply to you automatically. To have peace with God, you have to embrace Jesus as your Prince of Peace. You have to respond to him, to receive him, to welcome him into your life as your Saviour, as your Lord. “How do I do that?” you may wonder.

You must respond to God's invitation to **repent and be baptized**. A large crowd once heard the Apostle Peter proclaiming the good news of God's forgiveness in Christ, and it moved their hearts. “What shall we do?” they asked Peter. He replied:

“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and all who are far off—for all who the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38).⁹

Is God calling you to repent and be baptized so you can have peace with him?

To repent literally means to turn around. In your sin, you've turned your back on God, but when you repent, you turn back to God—you do a 180, acknowledging that you're a sinner in need of a Saviour.

⁷ Romans 5:1

⁸ Romans 5:8

⁹ Acts 2:38

If you've never done so before, and would like to have peace with God today, would you allow me to lead you in a prayer of repentance? Just open your heart to Jesus, and as I pray, you can make this prayer your own:

Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God
That you left the glories of heaven
Were born here on earth
As one of us
To give your life for us
To rescue us from sin and death
And restore our broken relationship with God.
I acknowledge that I'm a sinner in need of a Saviour.
I now give my life to you.
I receive your forgiveness
And ask you to take your rightful place in my life
As my Saviour and King.
With your help, I will follow you all my days.
Help me to grow in my relationship with you each day.
In Your Name I pray, Jesus.
Amen.

If that's the first time you've sincerely prayed such a prayer—a prayer of repentance to embrace Jesus as your own Saviour, as your own Prince of Peace— then you've just received the best Christmas gift possible. You've received God's gift of Jesus into your heart and life.

If you're with us online and you just made that prayer your own, let us know by clicking on the "raised hand" icon that says, "I just prayed to receive Jesus!"

To have peace with God, the Bible says we must repent... and *be baptized*.

www.cornerstonechurch.ca/baptism

Baptism is a vital first step of obedience in your new life with Jesus. It's the means God gives you to express both to him and to others that you have died to your old life, and have risen to new life in Jesus:

For those of you who need to act on that, our next baptismal service is scheduled for Sunday, February 6th. To learn more and to sign up and start getting prepared for that, please visit the web page you see on the screen, and a pastor will be happy to follow up with you.

Next, here's the second dimension of the peace that Jesus was born into this world to bring us:

2. Peace with each other.

Have a look at the cross for a moment. It has a vertical beam, and a horizontal beam. You could say that the vertical beam represents the fact that through his death on the cross, Jesus makes peace with God possible for us. And you could say that the horizontal beam represents the fact that through his death the cross, Jesus reconciles people to each other.

Through his death on the cross, Jesus joins different people groups together into one family. He unites us. In Ephesians 2, the Bible says:

Christ brought us together through his death on the cross. The Cross got us to embrace, and that was the end of the hostility. Christ came and preached peace to you outsiders and peace to us insiders. He treated us as equals, and so made us equals. Through him we both share the same Spirit and have equal access to the Father.¹⁰

In its original context, this passage was referring to how Jesus united Jews and non-Jews (called Gentiles) together into one family—the church—God's family. In those days, Jews and Gentiles were about as deeply divided as any two groups could be. But through the cross, Jesus made reconciliation between these two enemy groups possible.

In fact, the point of this passage is that the walls that tend to divide and separate people—be they walls of ethnicity or race, age or gender, or social and economic status—are done away with in Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

All those who become followers of Jesus are united into God's one family as equals, regardless of background. One of the reasons I love pastoring at Cornerstone is the rich diversity of this church. It stands as a testament to the fact that Jesus, the Prince of Peace, was born into this world to bring diverse peoples together in loving unity.

But the unity we share also comes with responsibilities. We are one in Jesus, but it is up to us to live into that oneness. We have peace with each other through Jesus, but it is up to us to live into that peace. This is what the Apostle Paul has in mind later in Ephesians, when he writes:

¹⁰ Ephesians 2:16-18 (MSG)

I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ¹¹

Each one of us who is part of this congregation needs to hear these words, and ask, "Have I made every effort to preserve the unity of this church family? Or of my immediate family at home?" Jesus died to make us one, and again, it's up to you and me to live into that oneness. As the Bible says in Romans 12:

Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. ¹²

Have you done all you can? How is God calling you to make every effort to live at peace with others? May God give you his grace and strength to do so in the days to come.

Next, the third dimension of peace that Jesus was born into this world to bring us is:

3. Peace in the midst of life's troubles.

Long ago, a man sought the perfect artist's rendering of the concept of peace. Unable to find anything satisfactory, the man announced a contest to produce such a masterpiece. The challenge stirred the imagination of artists everywhere, and paintings arrived from far and wide. Finally, the much-anticipated day came for the paintings to be revealed and judged. After careful deliberation, the judges had narrowed the field of entries down to two final paintings. The first painting was unveiled, and a hush fell over the crowd of onlookers. A mirror-smooth lake reflected lacy green birches under the soft blush of the evening sky. Along a grassy shore, a flock of sheep grazed, undisturbed. Surely, this would be the winning entry.

But then, the man who had announced the contest uncovered the remaining painting himself. The crowd gasped in surprise. A tumultuous waterfall careened down a rock precipice; you could almost feel its cold, penetrating spray. Dark storm clouds threatened to explode with lightning, wind and rain. In the midst of this inhospitable scene, a spindly tree clung to the rocks at the edge of the falls. One of its branches stretched out over the torrential waters. A little bird had built her nest in the elbow of that branch. Content and unmolested in spite of her stormy surroundings, she rested on her eggs. With eyes closed, and wings ready to shelter her little ones when they hatched, she manifested a peace that transcends all earthly turmoil.

¹¹ Ephesians 4:1-3

¹² Romans 12:18

This describes another dimension of the *shalom* that Jesus, the Prince of Peace, was born into the world to bring us. What did Jesus say to his disciples in those terribly distressing days leading up to his crucifixion?

“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.”¹³

And in the chaotic days that followed his death, the disciples again encountered their now-risen Lord. What did he say to them?

“Peace be with you!”¹⁴

Then he showed them his pierced hands and side, because he purchased their peace—and ours— at the awful price of his own life.

Therefore, for the Christian peace is not a shallow emotion based on feelings or circumstances. It is a deep confidence in God’s goodness and love based on the victorious work of Christ on the cross. This is the kind of peace that can abide even in the face of life’s troubles. How can we experience it? The Apostle Paul tells us in Philippians chapter 4, where he writes:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.¹⁵

You may already be well-familiar with this passage. If not, it’s worth jotting down the reference—Philippians 4:6-7—and committing the passage to memory. The primary way we embrace Jesus as our Prince of Peace from day to day is through prayer. As we bring our requests to God in prayer, God will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus with his peace, which transcends understanding. What that means is that it’s a peace that isn’t based on circumstances. It’s a peace that can abide even in the midst of life’s troubles.

Our job is to turn to God in prayer *in any and every situation*, as the passage says. It’s by keeping the prayer channels open to God all the time that we find his peace in the midst of life’s troubles.

¹³ John 14:27

¹⁴ John 20:19

¹⁵ Philippians 4:6-7

Peace in the midst of life's troubles comes through staying open to the presence and companionship of Jesus. And we do that through prayer. Prayer isn't magic. It's the means by which we open ourselves to the presence of the Prince of Peace.

Can we pray for you? If you have a prayer needs, feel free to share them with us at the link you see on the screen, and our prayer team will be sure to pray for you:
www.cornerstonechurch/prayer.

Now it's time for us to celebrate communion—the Lord's Supper. For those of you worshipping with us at home, please make sure you have your communion elements ready.

To prepare our hearts for the Lord's Supper, I'd like to share an Advent communion liturgy written by Rev. [Michelle Torigian](#) that I've adapted.

The Christmas story tells us that the Christ child whose birth we anticipate
Will one day sit at tables with strangers and friends,
Building relationships of peace for us—peace with God, peace with each other, and
peace within ourselves. And that one day he will set the whole creation right,
bringing peace on earth, forever.

We see this as he fed the multitude,
Turned water into wine,
And ate with dear ones the night before his death.

He took the bread, blessed it, and broke it.
Eat in remembrance of me, he said.

He took the cup, and reminded them
that when they sipped from the fruit of the vine
To drink in remembrance of him.

Jesus. The Christ. Emmanuel – God with us.
Light of the World. The Word of Life. Prince of Peace.

May his Spirit fill us as we feed on him today...

Let's eat and drink at this time.

- For those with us in-person, the instructions for the pre-packaged communion packs on the screen.
- If you would like a pre-opened package, just raise your hand and an usher will be happy to bring one to you.