

Advent: Peace- Isaiah 9:6-7
12/9/18

1 Peter 1:10-12

¹⁰ Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, ¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.

¹² It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

Like the expectation of a child, longing to open their Christmas presents, Peter says that the prophets of the OT who gave us these clues of the Messiah, longed to know and see what it that has been revealed to us. We are the recipients of the gift of the Advent: the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

4-week advent series. We want to transport ourselves back thousands of years, pre-advent to when the prophets received these glorious gifts, wrapped for us. And look with the eyes of a child at Christmastime right along with the prophets as we read the clues about the advent of Jesus Christ. Each week we will study a different theme of Advent: Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. **Today we will look at the theme of Peace.** Let's go again to Isaiah, as so much of the rich prophecy of the messiah was given to this prophet.

Isaiah 9:6-7

For 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.

(Title Slide) Read: World News headlines, Paris tries to clean up after 4 weekends of violent, widespread protests in the street. Cruelty of El Chapo's Cartel knows no bounds, beheadings by chainsaw, killing children and sexual assault, Shock and outrage followed when Doctors Without Borders announced that 125 women and girls had been raped over 10 days in South Sudan. In Gaza protests, Israeli troops aim for the legs, 6 Dead and more than 50 injured in Italian nightclub stampede.
 US Headlines- 3 shot in Miami suburb, suspect at large. Man who drove into Crowd convicted of First-degree Murder, Tillerson says President was Undisciplined; Trump calls Him "Dumb as a Rock",

Local- Controversial ban on loitering in Wilmington hits the headlines, Life for man who kidnapped, raped, tried to kill 4 year old girl in Pike Creek. Honestly, this was an incredibly mild week.

Which confirms what your Bible says- that the world we live in knows no settled peace. Not a lot has changed since Isaiah's prophecy. In fact, these headlines would have fit in well with the times of Isaiah. Isaiah prophesied during a dark and unsettled time in the history of the Jewish people. The Northern Kingdom had been conquered by the Assyrians, so many of their people were slaughtered and killed, the Southern Kingdom of Judah where Isaiah lived, was on the brink of disaster. They were surrounded by their enemies. And the leadership was less than ideal. King Ahaz, the King of Judah, was the fast-talking, political jelly-fish of his day, who made decisions based on self-preservation and expediency instead of values, and abandoned worship of Yahweh to appease his political allies...ignoring Isaiah and other faithful influencers of the day.

And into this context of division, hostility, and gloom he speaks of The One who will bring peace. And into our context today, God wants to speak of the One who brings peace. This peace will come in the least likely way- the birth of a baby. But not just any baby, A baby with four titles amazing titles. Let's look at these for a moment. **Wonderful Counselor**- speaking of how the Messiah's teaching and wisdom would fill people with awe and wonder. **Mighty God**- Speaking both of the power of the Messiah but also that he would be identified closely with God...of course the New Testament goes a step further and speaks of Jesus in the incarnation- God wrapped in flesh. **Everlasting Father**- referencing the eternal reign of the Messiah, a kingdom without end.

And then we get to the title **Prince of Peace**. The birth of the Messiah would bring about peace. And this is what the angels announced to the shepherds in the hills in **Luke 2:14 *Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.***

Now what does this title mean? The nation of Israel would have interpreted this as a king who would usher in peace through political and military power, conquering the enemies of Israel...bringing peace and prosperity. One of the reasons this was what they were expecting is because of **verse 6- *"And the government will rest on His shoulders."*** And this is why they ultimately rejected Jesus as the Messiah. Because this was their expectation. They so longed for this kind of peace and the destruction of their enemies that many ignored all the references to the suffering of the Messiah and that he would bring a very different kind of kingdom than they had imagined. Now before we are too hard on them. Do we ever long so much for something we want to do, or want to believe that we only read the parts of the Bible that support our desires and we don't read the parts of the Bible that don't support our desires...oh but that is a sermon for another time.

(Prince of Peace Slide) This was not the kind of peace that Jesus was going to bring...at least not yet. Why? Here is the crucial issue that they missed. **Before the Messiah could bring relational**

peace, societal peace...peace with one another...He first had to bring spiritual peace, peace with God.

See, even in the most perfect of Utopian circumstances, unity under a set of laws and beliefs, with a great leader, powerful military, prosperity...peace will not last. Wasn't that tested throughout Israel's history? David and Solomon... didn't last. Why? Because it doesn't address the condition of the human heart.

James 4:1-2 What causes fights and quarrels among you? (Well, it's because we have different political beliefs, it's because we don't have the same theological beliefs) Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight.

Our fundamental problem in the world is not that we don't get along...as obvious as that is, that is a symptom of a heart deep problem. That's like trying to say that the problem with your car is replacing a few belts when you've blown a head gasket. Humanity has Rebellious, sin-sick hearts that are not at peace with God. The Bible says that humanity is not merely neutral with God but is in active rebellion against his Kingship. Living as if God didn't exist and that we are in charge of our lives and destiny. As Romans 1 calls it, exchanging the Worship of the Creator for the Worship of Created things...most often ourselves.

One of the most prevalent and subtle rebellions against God's Kingship today in what I call "follow your heart" Spirituality.

Landmark book by Robert Bellah- Habits of the Heart, now 30 years old. Vast study of American culture, values and the outworking of individualism in society.

Sheila Larsen- *"I believe in God, I'm not a religious fanatic. I can't remember the last time I've been in church. My faith has carried me a long way. It's Sheilaism. Just my own little voice."* All you have to do is look inside. You will find Sheilaism all over the place. Let's not sugarcoat it- this is called rebellion and it takes all kinds of forms, even among those who say they are Christians...who turn Jesus into a genie in a bottle or simply a nice addition to their lives, but have no intent on actually submitting their lives to Him. See, rebellion is our real issue and peace with God is our greatness need. And because the human heart is dysfunctional in our relationship with God, we should not be surprised it is dysfunctional relationally and socially with one another.

How can we have peace with God? Well this is what Jesus, the Messiah came to address in his first advent. The baby born the Prince of peace came on a reconciliation mission.

Colossians 1:19-22

¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.

What does all this mean? **It means that Jesus is our peace offering.** Lots of religions have peace offerings. The Jewish people in the OT had this. When the people rebelled and sin against God, they were to bring a peace offering called an atonement, a blood sacrifice, to reconcile with God. Now you may say...time out. That's so archaic and strange and gruesome. We are modern people, sophisticated... You don't really believe this do you? But you make atonements all the time.

Have you ever sinned against your wife by saying something mean or belittling to your spouse or a good friend? Have you ever been harsh or critical? When we do this in a marriage or in a close relationship, it puts separation and distance between you. To restore the relationship it will require an atonement for the sin you committed against them. It will not be enough to just act like everything is OK and move on. Husbands, if you try to do this a good wife will not stand for it. She will call you out and require a "verbal atonement" for your verbal transgression. You will need to say you are sorry for what you did and ask for her forgiveness before there can be actual atonement.

With God, we not simply committed verbal transgression, we have committed cosmic, divine transgression. We have sinned against the divine law and against our creator. What can atone for cosmic, divine transgression? Only divine atonement. You and I are not able to atone for what is divine, only God can do that. All other religions and philosophies, even Sheilaism, say as in the world of John Lennon and Paul McCartney- We can work it out. Just look within, just look to good works, just look to self-sacrifice...But the Christianity says, Help! I need somebody, Help! Not just anybody. Just look to Jesus. This is why the deity of Christ, his sinlessness and his sacrifice are critical doctrines of Scripture. Only a divine, substitutionary atonement will restore our broken relationship with God, the thing our souls and our society need most. Jesus is our Peace Offering.

When we are at peace with God, all other kinds of peace we long for becomes possible. When we are at peace with God we can be at **peace with ourselves, emotional or internal peace.** We can be free from living in shame, guilt and regret, in self-pity and self-hatred. We get filled with the peace of Christ that rules our hearts. Knowing that we are more sinful than we ever dared admit and at the same time more loved and accepted in Jesus than we ever dared hope. We can accept ourselves because God has accepted us. Share example from my life.

When we are at peace with God we can be at peace with one another, **relational peace.** Now on one hand this happens supernaturally as we yield to the Holy Spirit who produces the fruit of Peace. But logically it makes sense that if we are at peace with God that we would be peacemakers in our world. Have you ever noticed that when your relationship with your spouse or best friend or parent, someone close to you is out of whack how it spills over into all your other relationships.. Nothing seems right. Well, when our most important relationships, our

relationship with God, is out of whack, it messes up all our other relationships. But when we are at peace with God. When we know we don't have to prove anything to him. When his peace is ruling our hearts our relationships with other people find their proper place. Other people's opinions are less important, you won't have to be right and win, you will be able to serve others out of the proper motives.

When we are at peace with God we can be at peace with our **circumstances, circumstantial peace**. We don't have to be controlled by anxiety, fear, trying to control our future. We can cast our anxiety on God because he cares for us. Peace that surpasses understanding.

(Peace Slide) While it is true that we can have peace with God, we can have peace with ourselves, with others and our circumstances...the reality is that we live in a world that is not and will not experience settled, lasting peace...Unity the Prince of Peace returns. When the Prince of Peace returns the lion will lay down with the lamb...a picture of the shalom that we talked about last week. And when I read the headlines we say, come Prince of Peace. When we see the hatred and anger in an increasing political divide, we say, come Prince of Peace. When we face anxiety about our children, our finances, our health we say, come Prince of Peace. May it create a steady longing for home, for the return of our Prince of Peace.

[Larisa on Piano] Are you at peace with God? Invitation