

Isaiah 9:2-7 & Luke 2:1-20 – December 24, 2024

Take a moment right now and listen. <pause> Do you hear that? Nothing. It's quiet. It's peaceful. There's not a lot of that in the Christmas season. I don't know about you, but shortly after this service, my house is going to full of people for about a week. And there will be nothing peaceful about it.

Oh, it's great having the family together for Christmas. With all the parties and the presents and the food and the Christmas movies and the Christmas music. It's all great. But it's not exactly peaceful. Especially if you've got young children in the house. At that point, it become downright deafening.

And that is just the temporary, seasonal chaos. It doesn't include all the other forms of chaos in our lives. There are so many people in our congregation who are going through circumstances that anything but peaceful.

They're dealing with painful, debilitating health problems. Cancer. Infection. Crippling back pain. Horrible migraines.

They're working through financial struggles. Work stress or unemployment. Family tension. Marital strife and divorce. Rebellious children. Aging parents.

They're drowning in depression. Anxiety. Fear. Sadness. Loneliness. Loss. Grief.

You didn't come here to think about all of that, though. While the rest of the world searches vainly for peace in all the wrong places, you came here, to this church. And you probably thought that maybe, just maybe, I'll find some peace here.

Maybe you'd find peace singing Silent Night by candlelight. Maybe you'd find peace in the quiet prayers of the church. Maybe you'd find peace in the soothing sounds of an organ playing your favorite Christmas carol. You looked around at the chaos and pain and stress of life and thought, "Maybe I'll find some peace at church this evening." I hope you're right.

Just remember, the peace you'll find here isn't at all like the peace the world gives. Jesus himself said those exact words, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.*" Jesus does give peace. He promises to leave us with his peace. But it's a different sort of peace than we're used to.

Throughout this Advent season, we've been looking at the titles that Isaiah gives to Jesus. Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father. And, tonight, Prince of Peace. Jesus gives peace.

And that's a truth that is repeated time and time again throughout scripture. David tells us that Jesus will bless his people with peace. Micah says that Jesus will be our peace. Zechariah says that Jesus will speak peace to the nations. And the angels outside of Bethlehem proclaimed peace on earth among those with whom God is pleased.

Jesus is very definitely the Prince of Peace. He rules with peace over his people. He commands peace to the ends of the earth. "*Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end.*"

And yet, if Jesus rules over his church with peace and brings peace into our lives, why do we need to search so hard for it? I mean, most of you here are baptized believers. You're members of the congregation or, at least, you were at one time. And even if you've moved away and joined other congregations, you're still Christians with faith in Christ. You're part of his church. And you're wondering, if Jesus is the Prince of Peace, why is there so little peace in my life?

Well, there's a couple answers to that question. The first is, what kind of peace are you looking for? Because, like I said, peace comes in all shapes and sizes. And Jesus is very clear that the peace he gives is different than the peace the world gives.

The world gives peace that makes us feel good. Peace that makes us feel calm and happy and free of conflict. Which, at first glance, you might think is a good thing. After all, I rather enjoy feeling calm and happy and free of conflict. And the world does a good job of telling us that these are the things we should be living our lives for.

There are just a couple problems with that. First, that can lead to a rather selfish way of living. To live in the pursuit of my wellbeing – my own calm and my own happiness and keeping my own life free of conflict – often means trampling others in the process. My peace and happiness becomes paramount. How others feel is irrelevant.

So as we consider what it means for Christ to be the Prince of Peace, consider that when Christ took his throne, it wasn't to rule over others. It was to serve them. To sacrifice for them. To die for them. Christ's throne was the cross. And he rules as the Prince of Peace from the cross. And he calls us to bear our cross as we serve others. As we bring peace into the lives of others. So perhaps the question you should be asking yourself is not, "Why don't I have peace?" But instead, "Why haven't I been spreading peace?"

Second, the world's way of looking at peace glosses over the importance of our peace with God. The world wants us to be at peace with our flesh. To do what our flesh wants and live how our flesh wants to live. But our flesh is sinful. Our flesh is an enemy of God and of God's Law. To be at peace with your flesh means to be at war with God.

And so you might be calm and happy and conflict free, even as you walk the primrose path to death and hell. The two are not mutually. The two go together quite nicely, in fact. Very often we are at our calmest, our happiest, our least in conflict with ourselves or the world around us, when we are sinning.

And then we turn to God and we read his Law and it doesn't feel peaceful at all. It is at war with everything sinful inside you. Because it is giving you the truth when you would rather hear a lie.

Which is actually another reason why there is so little peace in our lives. There is a liar in our midst constantly telling us not to listen to God's Word. Satan, the Prince of Liars, wants nothing more than to pull us away from the Prince of Peace and tell us to find peace that the world can give. He tells us the same lie that he told to Adam and Eve. That they would be like God if they ignored his Word. That they would have God's peace if they believed his lie.

There is no peace in the lies of the devil. But we listen anyway. Because it's a lie we desperately want to be true. We want to believe that we will have peace with enough money and enough sex and enough power and enough prestige and enough of... well... whatever sin the world is peddling to us today. We want to believe that we can find peace in ourselves.

But there is only one source for peace. And it is the prince of peace. It is in His cross. His death. His resurrection. It is in baptism into his name that we find peace. And it is not a peace like the world gives. Because it's peace with God. It's peace in the forgiveness of sins.

It's the peace that comes from knowing that the war with God is over. You are no longer his enemy. You are his child. And he loves you. He wants the best for you. And so he has promised you a kingdom that will never end. He has promised you a future that doesn't end in death and hell. He gives you peace by giving you hope in his work for you.

He has taken on the chaos of our lives. The chaos of being the son of poor parents. The chaos of being born in a stable. The chaos of a sinful world. The chaos of conflict with Pharisees and Sadducees and priests and scribes and Roman soldiers and Roman governors. The chaos of whips and thorns and nails and a crowd shouting for his crucifixion. Jesus has born all the chaos this world could throw at him.

And yet, on the third day, he brought peace to the grieving hearts of Mary and the women. He brought peace to the fearful hearts of his disciples. He brought peace to a world that believed there was nothing that could defeat death.

He is the Prince of Peace. And he brings his special divine peace to every situation. The peace that only the creator of the universe could bring. For he takes a broken world and makes it right again. He makes all things new. Including you, body and soul.

Tonight you probably came to church looking for peace. Peace in music and carols. Peace in prayers. Peace in the story of Jesus' birth. But the peace Jesus gives you is the peace of sins forgiven. It's not just the peace of Christmas night, but the peace of Easter morning. The peace that comes from knowing that Christ is risen and he will come again. And because we have that hope, we are at peace. Amen.