

**ADVENT #5
PRINCE OF PEACE**

The kids' program two weeks ago referred to this incident from WWI ...

On Christmas Eve, 1914 – you probably know this story from the great war; Christmas Eve, 1914 – candles were lit at various sections along the trenches of German and British forces facing one another across the wastes of no-man's land and carols began to be sung. Then when December 25 dawned, Christmas Day, cold and a frost lay on the ground, shelling and gunfire ceased, at least in a number of places along the western front, and soldiers of both German and British forces enjoyed a short-lived but welcomed ceasefire. Soon, the German troops had actually climbed from their trenches and calling to their enemies in English, “Merry Christmas!” they shouted. And then British soldiers began climbing out to meet them. In safety they were able to retrieve their dead; they even swapped gifts, sung carols together. Apparently, an impromptu football match – a soccer match! They played a soccer match! And for a few hours along the front peace reigned; war ceased. It stalled at least.

REVIEW

As we understand God's redemption plan, it will promote a response in us:

Let the joy of Christmas give you a 5 E focus in your life.
Exalting the Father
Embrace the Son
Equipped by the Holy Spirit
Encouraging His followers
Expressing the Good News of the Gospel of the kingdom

On the 8th we saw the First title – Wonderful Counselor

Then we saw the second couplet – MIGHTY God.

The Mighty wonder working God of Eternity came to us.. He came in the flesh for us.

Last week we looked at the third couplet – Everlasting Father

All of these titles tell us that God didn't send more prophets; he came from heaven to be born as a baby to bring Redemption and Restoration. Jesus, in his incarnation, laid aside the glories of heaven to be made like man.

Isaiah 9

v. 1-5 speak of the great light that will come upon the people who walk in darkness.

Then the restoring promise begins in v. 6

6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with judgement and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.

PRINCE

This passage gives us some idea of what the kingdom of the Prince will look like:

As PRINCE, there will be

A kingdom established with judgement and righteousness. 9:7

There is an echo of this in Isa 11:4-5

4 But with righteousness He will judge the poor,

And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;

The prophet is describing the remarkable transformation that takes place in the wake of the birth of Jesus Christ from a situation of oppression to a situation of liberation and righteousness.

He will use his power to make things right for the poor = downtrodden.

This Prince will take upon himself the burdens of his people.

Q. 26. How does Christ execute the office of a king?

A. Christ executes the office of a king, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.

This Prince of Peace calls out...

Matthew 11:29-30? "Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

There are two ways to live. Either your shoulders endure the staff of the oppressor and the yoke of the burden of sin and guilt in the sight of God. Or you come under the reign of the Prince of Peace and your shoulders bear the yoke of His authority. But we don't like coming under the authority of another, not even Jesus.

HOW'S THAT WORKING FOR HUMANITY?

When we live by our own terms and "freedom", we are slaves to our own sin. TRUE FREEDOM comes through taking up the easy yoke of Christ, who is gently and lowly of heart. He leads us to rest for our souls.

Because of the Prince of Peace, we can stop bearing the burden of trying to make the world according to our agenda. That can be so exhausting. Friends, we were not built to be God. Our shoulders are not broad enough to uphold the universe, or even our small world.

The counter intuitive truth is this: Bend the knee to King Jesus to find real Peace.

We can't really know Him as Counselor, Mighty God, and Father, if we don't know him as Prince and King. The baby in the manger did not come to give us a warm sentimental picture of the Nativity scene or give rise to a bunch of Christmas movies.

He came to destroy the works of the devil; he came to defeat sin and death. He came to rule and reign in our lives. Jesus didn't come to be an accessory or side item in our lives.

The call of Christmas is that our lives are not our own. Jesus was born to die, which means that we've been bought with a price.

In 1 Cor 6, Paul lays out several implications of the gospel for our lives and how we behave in our physical bodies. He concludes by saying, 1 Cor 6:19 *"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."*

The imagery that Isaiah presents is more than just making the world a little bit better by bringing an improved sense of peace or justice. He is going to get rid of all strife, evil, disease, and death.

EX: this is FAR MORE than "Are you better off than you were 4 years ago?"

Christmas shows us the lengths to which this king will go to identify with the downtrodden and those who

long for righteous judgment.

The INCARNATION is God with Us. He is not simply majestic and transcendent. He has come and He has identified himself with US.

O HOLY NIGHT

Long lay the world in sin and error pining
'Til He appeared and the soul felt its worth
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn
Fall on your knees O hear the angels voices.
O night divine O night when Christ was born

The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger
In all our trials born to be our friend
He knows our need, to our weakness is no stranger
Behold your King; before Him lowly bend

Christmas points us in the direction of a different value system – we value that which is eternal, not temporal.

** Jesus the Mighty God came and was born in a stable. That's NOT how the world would expect a king to arrive.

Jesus the Son of the Living God lived a life of a craftsman and then an itinerant rabbi. He had no home of his own. He was greeted with cheers and then betrayed by Judas and the people. He died on a cross between two thieves.

NOTHING ABOUT HIS STORY says, "This is how God saves sinners. This is how God changes the world."

Angels and religious leaders were mystified by this plan of God, as are the 'wise of this world' today. The gospel of Christ seems like foolishness unless God gives us eyes to see and ears to hear.

God's plan of salvation, i.e. Christmas turns the world's wisdom on its head...

The world's paradigm of success – the world says, "Look out for #1; get connected in the halls of power and influence. Make a name for yourself. You do you, show your pride and define yourself", etc.

Jesus says, "If you want to be great in God's kingdom, then be the servant of all." God says, "I am opposed to the proud but give grace to the humble."

Christmas points us toward the truth that God has intervened and has punched a hole in the wisdom of the world.

The more you are conformed to the mindset of the world, the more ridiculous Christmas looks. The world has always laughed at Christianity, but Jesus gets the last laugh.

What our hearts are yearning for – meaning, hope, peace, and true joy that is not dependent on our circumstances – is found in Jesus, the God man in the manger.

How does God do this? ISAIAH 11:1, 10

1 Then a **shoot** will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit....

10 Then in that day The nations will resort to the **root** of Jesse,

Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.

11:1, 10 Jesus is the shoot and root of Jesse.

The One who is the Creator became like us. That is the mystery of Christmas, the Incarnation.

Prince of **PEACE**

No end to the increase of his government or of peace.

Micah 5

2 But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah,
From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel....

4 And He will arise and shepherd *His flock* In the strength of the Lord,
In the majesty of the name of the Lord His God.

And they will remain, Because at that time He will be great
To the ends of the earth. 5 This One will be *our* peace.

Isa 2:4

"He shall judge between the nations," Isaiah says, "and he shall decide disputes for many peoples, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

Doesn't that sound great? Human history has been punctuated with almost constant warfare to some degree for thousands of years.

One day, the baby born in some sort of rented make-shift bedroom will see to it that wars end and peace reigns.

While we await that day, we can live in the reality of a different kind of peace – PEACE WITH God.
This is of greater eternal value than the end of war on this earth.

Christmas isn't like the religions of the world – Be good, try hard and you might find God.

NO, Christmas shows us that God came to find us.

While we were yet sinners, God sent His Son.

When this truth drops and become real to us, it melts our hearts AND it convicts us even while it draws us to the throne of grace.

Rom 5 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Col 1

For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Peace with God does not depend on the changing human conditions. Our Peace with God is guaranteed by Jesus, not by us.

One of the hardest things to remember about the Christian life is that our standing with God has nothing to do with what we do, but it has everything to do with what Christ has done.

Peace WITH God leads to the Peace OF God.

What are you basing your life on? What are you hoping will get you a sense of purpose, meaning, hope, and joy? What are you hoping will get you peace with God?

If it's anything other than Christ, it will fail you. If it's the wisdom of the world, it will let you down.

Christmas means that God has come to do for us what we could never do for ourselves.

O HOLY NIGHT – originally a French song

*Midnight! Christians, it's the solemn hour
When the God man came down to us,*

*To wipe away the original sin
And stop the wrath of His Father
The entire world jumped for joy with hope
To this night that gives Him a Savior
People on their knees, awaiting your deliverance
Christmas! Christmas! Here's the Redeemer!*

<https://www.frenchlearner.com/songs/minuit-chretien-o-holy-night-french-lyrics/>

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