

Series: Advent 2021- On earth as it is in heaven

Week 2: The Peace we've been given, and the Peace we give

✠ To us a Child is born

- 1741, German-British composer Georg Handel completed most famous work, *The Messiah*. It was performed for first time in Dublin on April 13th, 1742, and went on to become one of the best-known and most performed choral works in all of western music.
- What most people remember from Handel's *Messiah* is the famous Hallelujah Chorus. A little less known is the Chorus taken from Isaiah 9- "For unto us a Child is born."

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7a *The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.*

- **In Verses 6-7 we find the prophecy of Messiah's birth, the Messiah's ultimate and eternal reign... and in the center, the Messiah's identity.**

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

- **Church- Of all the things scripture proclaims the Messiah would be and accomplish, one of the greatest themes is that He would bring PEACE.**
- **This is the miracle that the GOD OF PEACE invites us- and has made it possible for us- to experience the PEACE OF GOD. AND, in keeping with our theme of this entire advent season, we will come to KNOW and EXPERIENCE God's peace on a more profound level as we are BRINGERS of God's peace to others.**
- **LAST WEEK we saw how in Matthew 6, Jesus taught us to pray that His Kingdom and His will- His authority, nature, goodness, and purpose- in INCREASING MEASURE- would be realized here on earth, as it is in heaven.**
- **And if we look at this through the broader lens of the NT, we see the great story of God working to bring about his will- IN THIS CASE, HIS PEACE, here on earth as it is in heaven- and he is doing so through the lives of people just like you and me.**
- **As disciples of Jesus, PEACE is one of God's great gifts to us... and one of our greatest callings is to be peacemakers. THIS SAID, I need to confess...**

✠ An honest struggle

- **I REALLY wrestled with this message. I joked with Kent that it doesn't look good if a pastor is stressed out over his message about peace!**
- **ONE thing is that there is SO MUCH in scripture that speaks to the concept of God's peace- and the idea of peace itself can be approached from many different perspectives- I struggled just what to say.**
- **Another thing is it can be hard to talk about peace of God when seems to be so little peace in our world.**
- **People are desperate to find it, but many don't. Meanwhile, a 15 year old boy this week shoots and kills three classmates. Fear is the real epidemic in our country, and the media thrives on making it seem like we are all just out to get each other.**
- **Of course, this is nothing new. Human condition has always been the human condition, even though the setting changes. Be it in time of the first believers, or in America today, we look around and it's so easy to just think... "PEACE? Really God? Where? How?"**

- *But hear! When we are honest about life as it really is, and we also honestly look at the lives of Jesus disciples - especially in the days leading up to Jesus' arrest- we start to see something very encouraging. COUNTER-INTUITIVE, but encouraging. It is THIS:*

† Counter-intuitively encouraging

- *Jesus said his greatest and clearest statements about HIS PEACE at precisely the same time the disciple's world was collapsing around them.*
- *John 13-17 is John's famous 'upper room' narrative, as Jesus was gathered with his disciples for the Passover meal. He would be arrested that night.*
- *During this evening, Jesus predicted his betrayal, predicted Peter's denial, and said things like 'I'm going away, and you can't follow me'*
- *THEN, knowing everything that would happen in the coming days, Jesus said this:*

John 14:27 *Peace I leave with you; 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.*

- *Think of that! The coming days would be the most difficult in the disciple's lives. Their entire world was about to come crashing down, and they would experience a fear and grief they had never known.*
- *AND RIGHT ON THE CUSP OF THESE EVENTS, Jesus said...*

John 14:27 *Peace I leave with you; 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.*

- *If I had been there, the only word I would probably have heard was LEAVE. Leave? Your leaving? JESUS! MY HEART IS TROUBLED, and I AM AFRAID.*
- *A little later in the evening Jesus came back to this theme...*

John 16:33 *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

- *Jesus words here are a gift. He acknowledges LIFE CAN BE DIFFICULT! We don't have to pretend otherwise. Pernicious myth that if we just do enough of right things, say right things, pray right things, and work hard enough, we can avoid hardships of life.*
- *PROBLEM with this thinking is- first, it's simply not true- but even more, this is what Jesus meant when He said "I do not give to you as the world gives."*
- *The phrase "the world" simply means human nature. What is our default mode for trying to find peace?*
- *WE TRY TO FIND IT! Seek to achieve it by controlling our circumstances. We think "If I can structure my life so things are PeaceFUL, then I'll have peace."*
- *NOW, make no mistake! Nothing wrong with seeking peaceful circumstances! If a country is NOT at war, things are better for its people than if it were at war!*
- *If our marriages are healthy, we aren't covered in debt, and we're living in honesty and integrity, THINGS WILL BE BETTER! We will have much more peace than we would otherwise.*
- *If you think about it, THIS is why God hates sin! SIN DESTROYS PEACE. This is why there is so much ethical teaching in scripture, and why we are called to HOLY LIVING- because a*

life increasingly conformed to the goodness and character of God will KNOW GREATER PEACE.

- *BUT HERE'S THE THING. As much as peaceful circumstances are desirable, life isn't always like this! Be it through our own mistakes, the actions of others, or the large scale events of society completely beyond our control, there will be times when- IF WE LOOK TO OUR CIRCUMSTANCES for peace and security, there will be no peace to be found.*
- *That night with disciples, Jesus knew any peace they could derive from circumstances was about to be stripped away. He said "In this world you will have trouble"- could have said, "THIS VERY NIGHT you will have trouble" AND YET, Jesus went on to say...*
- *PEACE I leave with you. MY peace I give you. IN ME you will have peace. So- in the midst of the storm, when everything is uncertain, painful, and you realize you have no control over what is happening- TAKE HEART! For I have overcome the world.*
- *DO WE HEAR! Scripture resounds with chorus that IN CHRIST we may know a peace greater than our circumstances, flowing from a source that does not fail us, even when life itself seems to fail us. And the source of this peace is CHRIST HIMSELF.*

2 Thessalonians 3:16 *Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.*

- *SO, what does this LOOK LIKE? How does this become real in our experience of LIFE as it really is?*
- *The biggest answer to that question is "By the Holy Spirit"... if you go read the context of John 14, you'll see Jesus speaking about the promise of the Holy Spirit. In Galatians 5 we are told that PEACE is a fruit- an inevitable result- of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. WE will know and experience the PEACE OF GOD as BY FAITH we increasingly live in a relationship of love, trust, and dependence with the GOD OF PEACE.*
- † The peace of God and the God of peace
- *To use Paul's language, we come to experience Christ's peace as we walk- live- by His Spirit.*
- *REALLY, everything in the Christian life comes down to this.... Could talk about that a lot more...*
- *But now want to shift focus to a few practical and specific ways the Spirit will lead us into a greater experience of God's peace.*
- *The first comes from Philippians 4:4-9. Incredible passage we reference all the time, because it is so incredibly relevant and powerful.*

Phil 4:4-9 *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*

- *What do you see there? Rejoice. Choose to look at life through the lens of JOY (next week). GENTLENESS. CHOOSE for the primary ethic of our lives to be gentleness and kindness.*
- *IN ALL THINGS, with a heart of GRATITUDE, bring all of our heart- thoughts, worries, desires- before God.*
- *KEY! Point isn't that we will have peace when God answers our requests way we would like Him to... rather, we come to experience PEACE OF GOD as we trust him- honestly- with all concerns, details, of life.*

⁷ *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

– **And then, we see the great NT theme of how we choose to SET OUR MIND.**

⁸ *Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.* ⁹ *Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*

– **Think about Paul's last phrase there. Whatever you have LEARNED, received, heard, and seen... PUT THESE THINGS INTO PRACTICE, and we will know God's peace.**

– **This brings us to the theme of this Advent series. Just like the gift of HOPE, God's gift of peace isn't just something we experience ourselves, internally. It is a CALLING we have received to BRING TO OTHERS. To bring into the world around us.**

† **In Christ, we have been given peace- and through Christ, we are called and equipped to be bearers of peace.**

– **Church- May we hear what scripture is saying to us.**

– **Right now, in the midst of our culture and the events that continue to unfold around us, many sincere believers are finding themselves deeply concerned and upset about many things.**

– **In some cases, the response we see is frustration, defiance, and anger. It reminds me of the famous scene of the 1976 movie "Network", when the news anchor Howard Beale screams at the camera "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore!"**

– **Hear! There are times when the Spirit will lead us into righteous anger and action at the brokenness and injustice in our world. JESUS DID THIS.**

– **AND YET, as we consider how we respond to the events of our day, be it politics, covid, cultural issues, or personal conflicts- WE MUST consider our words and actions in light of our CALLING to be bringers of PEACE.**

– **LISTEN AND CONSIDER these passages...**

Romans 12:17-18 *Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.*

¹⁸ *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

2 Corinthians 13:11 *Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.*

Titus 3:1-2 *Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.*

Hebrews 12:14 *Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

– **CHURCH! We are called to be people OF peace, and people who BRING peace. Who WAGE PEACE.**

– **I want to give just one example of what this can look like- something that has been big on my heart for some time. One way we WAGE PEACE is by...**

† **Waging peace: the power of listening and considering.**

- *Over the past year I've spoken about importance and power of listening. Purposefully listening to the stories, the point of view, of people different from us. As the church, we continually want people to listen to us, but we have a bad track record of listening to others- truly considering what they say, where they are coming from.*
- *Over the years learned many people who are upset simply want to be HEARD. When we LISTEN and CONSIDER what people say, we validate a person's humanity, their inherent worth. And when we LISTEN, make it easier for people to hear the gospel, for they see in us someone who genuinely cares for them, not just someone talking- or yelling- at them.*
- *Another thought about the word 'consider'. When a person speaks to us about a hot button topic- politics or otherwise- VERY OFTEN our first thought is "do I agree or disagree". Someone makes an assertion that challenges my beliefs or my political leanings, and its SO easy to immediately think "I don't agree", and then just write that off and move on.*
- *Humbly, let me suggest that before we say "I agree or disagree", we need to insert the step of "I'll consider this". I'll take the time to really think through this issue you bring up. Rather than my only goal being to DEFEND MY OWN position, I'll take the time to consider yours.*
- *Of course, this takes time! It takes effort. It's much easier to just say "I'm right, you are wrong". BUT PEACE TAKES EFFORT, and it is WORTH IT.*
- *Not only does listening and considering work toward peace, we may actually experience the blessing of- shock and awe, I know- learning something we didn't understand, and maybe even changing the way we think, for the better.*
- *COME BACK FULL CIRCLE. On the night he was arrested, Jesus said "my peace I give to you". Here's a question...*

‡ **Was Jesus ever not at peace?**

- *Lots of stories where Jesus is under duress, in very intense situations. But even in the Garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus literally sweated blood and prayed "Father, is there any other way?".... even there, Jesus didn't lose his trust in His father- he didn't lose his source of peace.*
- *But there was one moment when Jesus lost his peace. It was when he bore upon himself the sin of the world, and for a moment- a moment that probably felt like an eternity- Jesus was separated from His source of peace, as he experienced separation from His father.*

Matthew 27:45-46 *From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. ⁴⁶ About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").*

- *We make much of Jesus physical suffering through the cross. But THE GREAT pain- THE great sacrifice, was when Jesus willingly allowed himself to experience the true crushing evil of sin- separation from the love of the Father. Separation from God.*
- *AND CHURCH! Jesus willingly surrendered His peace SO THAT through faith in him, we may come to KNOW HIS PEACE.*
- *DO YOU KNOW THE PEACE OF GOD? Even more importantly, DO YOU KNOW THE GOD OF PEACE?*

EDWARDS ONLY

– **Lead us now into the celebration of communion. Today specifically, a time for us to remember the SOURCE OF OUR PEACE**

✠ Communion: Remembering our source of peace

– **In Ephesians 2, we see a powerful description of what Christ accomplished, on our behalf, through the cross. Here Paul is describing the enmity, the dividing wall of hostility, that existed between the Jews and the Gentiles. Between these two groups there was only hope of peace- the provision of what Christ accomplished through the cross.**

Ephesians 2:11-14 *Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)—¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*

– **As we come to the table, may we listen- may we consider- to how the Spirit is at work in our hearts- for how we ourselves would receive and experience God’s peace... and how, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we may be bearers of His peace to others. COME TO THE TABLE**

1 Corinthians 11:23-25 *For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”*