

## **Advent – Peace (Isaiah 9:6, Luke 2:14)**

### **Read Advent Notes for Week 2: Peace**

As you keep in mind the words you have just heard for this week's advent focus, and we transition to our message for today, I want to begin by asking a question. *How does Jesus bring peace?* A few hundred years before Jesus' arrival, Isaiah said that the Messiah would be known as the "*Prince of Peace*" (**Isaiah 9:6, ESV**). Luke's account of Jesus' birth, and I want to read this from the King James Version says, "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men*" (**Luke 2:14, KJV**). This is couple of examples from the Bible that make it clear Jesus, through various means, continually works to bring peace to individuals and throughout the world.

Now, when we think of some of the ways in which peace can be achieved, most people initially consider two options.

Option 1: Peace through passivism. This is where people avoid confrontation or refuse to accept there is a problem of some sort. Those with this approach believe problems will eventually resolve themselves and as a result, by doing nothing, peace is accomplished.

Option 2: Peace through strength or show of force. If I present myself as bigger and stronger than you, then you will, out of fear, not challenge me. A powerfully strong military will prevent its enemies from challenging them and as a result, peace is accomplished.

The kind of peace we want to focus on during this season of Advent does not align with either of these options. Instead, Jesus brings peace by encouraging each of us to recognize when problems are real, address those problems openly and honestly, and work to heal and restore the things that divide us. Listen to His words as recorded for us in **Matthew 18:15-17**. The passive approach may work from time to time, but it's not the Biblical method for addressing conflict and therefore it is not the best method.

Speaking of conflicts... We live in a world filled with selfish ambition and pride. A world where conflict rages in many forms. Individuals struggle with internal conflicts every day. During the Christmas season, instances of doubt, fear, and depression increase because of undo stress related to not being able to live up to others' expectations. If you are one of the ones who create unreal expectations, do some self-reflection, recognize its danger, and make the decision to STOP! Wars rage among people because of interpersonal conflicts. Families war against each other. Co-workers cannot get along. Neighbors put up privacy fences. Crime, racism, political differences, etc., etc., etc. All these conflicts occur because we find it difficult to get along. And here's the kicker, some people enjoy it. Again, if this is you... do a little self-reflection, recognize its danger, and STOP! True "*peace on Earth*" seems unobtainable. War is nothing new. The threat of even more wars is constant, and over the past twenty years, the threats of terrorism have

become commonplace in our world. It's ironic that, the Middle East, the region of Jesus' birth, is one of the least peaceful places on Earth.

Given these things, I feel it important to present you with a third option, and I will even go as far to say, a much better option. Man, by nature, stands in conflict with God. We rebel against God, run from God, and allow sinful desires to rule our hearts and minds, and as a result, we do not have peace with God. Every person, professing Christians included, needs peace with God. Romans 5:10 describes sinners as "enemies" of God. Therefore, the first and most important way in which Jesus brings "peace" is that He reconciles all things to himself. He offers healing and restoration through love and forgiveness. Let's just read this great passage from **Romans 5:1-11**.

If you are here this morning and you are one of those who need inner peace, the first step is to turn your life over to Jesus. He already did the work necessary to turn God's just wrath away from you and made it possible for all people to accept His forgiveness and salvation. Jesus brings inner peace to those who believe by giving His Spirit to them. As the Holy Spirit works in the believer's life, He also gives you the necessary resources for managing all the internal conflicts. Paul reminds us of this in his letter to the Philippians. **Philippians 4:6-7** says, "*do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*"

Let me close by informing you that Jesus lives up to His title as "Prince of Peace" by providing the way for sinful people to have peace with God. His Spirit provides each believer all they need to achieve inner peace. He helps us become the kind of person who can live in peace with others. Even in moments of persecution, when the world hates us because of Him, every believer can still experience the peace of God because of Him. Remembers His words to the Apostles. **Read John 14:27**. And finally, this ties back into last weeks message on hope, when Jesus returns and sets up His new kingdom, the world will then be united in peace. Many people hope for world peace. Paul let us know in his letter to the Philippians when this will occur. **Read Philippians 2:9-11**. When Jesus returns, and only then, and only because of Him, will world peace occur.