

Sermon for December 8, 2013

Second Sunday of Advent, Luke 1:26-33

BLESSINGS TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER, OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Peace—it can be shared, expressed, and offered in many various ways.

During our worship service today the word **peace** has or will be used at least **15** different times. We lit the **second** Advent candle, the candle of Peace, this morning, we **read** about peace in our Prayer of the Day and in our readings, we **sing** about it our hymns, I spoke with the **youth** in the children's sermon about it, I generally offer you all **blessings and peace** at the beginning of each sermon, each week we **shake hands and greet** one other as we offer the sign of God's peace to one another, peace is offered to us as we **leave** the communion table with the words, "*Now may the body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you—Go in His peace*", at the **end** of the service there is a final blessing which is offered where **God's** peace is expressed to us, and as we leave this sanctuary to **go out** into the world to face another week, we go in peace to bring **good news** to the poor. Words of peace are one of the **last** things we hear.

Oh, and one more place that I heard peace talked about which was **outside** of church. On TV the other night—according to a commercial I heard for KFC

where the tag line was, *'find some peace this holiday season'* apparently if you have some **squabbling** children you can put some chicken in their mouths and they will be quiet and give their parents some peace. **I guess whatever works.**

As I said, today we lit the **2nd** of our Advent candles. The candle of Peace. We heard a reading from Isaiah chapter 11 about **God's reign** of peace on earth. Peace, it is an important theme throughout the Bible. **One** way the Hebrew language conveys the concept of peace is through the word **SHALOM**, and although the history of the people of Israel is filled with battles, military conquests, and exile experiences, the prophet Isaiah names the **long-awaited** messiah the *'Prince of Peace'*. Jesus coming **to US** as the *'Prince of Peace'* is the **focus** in this Child of Promise sermon series today.

Peace—it is a **most** worthy, **ideal** concept, and **blessed goal** to strive for that is for sure. But what about when you are not feeling all that peace filled? This holiday season is said to be **6 days shorter** than usual because Thanksgiving came so late this year. **Buy** those gifts, **send** them off, **bake** those cookies, and **pack** all those holiday activities into **less** time. Rush, rush, rush. Hurry, hurry, hurry. Go, go, go. How will we get it **all** done? On my way to Orange County on Friday people on the freeway were **flying** by me like I was standing still—all in a **big** hurry to get somewhere I guess. Where does one find **God's peace** in that?

Peace—I read in the newspaper last week that **trust** in our neighbor is at an all time low. It said that only 3 in 10 Americans actually **trust** their neighbors, the political system and its leaders, and/or the health of the economy of the country, etc. Where does one find **God’s peace** in the anxious and fearful times in which we live?

In our 1st reading from Isaiah the people of that time were living in **turmoil** and **strife**. War was **raging** all around them—they lived in a time that was anything **but** peaceful. But the prophet offered to them a glimmer of hope and peace that they were looking for—they, the people who walked in darkness, had seen a great light-on them a light had shined-the light of God. Their joy had been increased, their yoke had been lifted, their burden had been broken, and the boots of their oppressors had been burned. All of these things happened because Isaiah says, ‘*A CHILD HAS BEEN BORN **FOR US**, A SON HAS BEEN GIVEN **TO US**.* (Each and every one of us.) *He is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. His authority will grow. Because of him there will be endless peace. He will establish His kingdom. He will uphold it with justice and righteousness for evermore.*’ **THE ZEAL** (the determination, the passion, the Spirit, the perseverance) **OF THE LORD OF HOSTS WILL DO THIS.** WOW!! How **awesome** is that?

Could you **imagine** being people who are living in an anxiety and fearful time hearing those **uplifting** words? God is **sending** someone who will take away **all** of our darkness, our burden, our oppression, and all the bad that has been happening and it will be burned as fuel for the fire. Hey, wait a minute—*aren't we ourselves living in anxious times? Aren't we living in a fearful world*—just turn on **any** news program and you will find that is true.

Maybe, just maybe, God, the Lord of Hosts is sending **TO US** this one and the same child that Isaiah spoke of. This one and the same Son which is given **TO US**. The one whose authority **FOR US** will grow as well. The one whose justice and righteousness **FOR US** will grow for evermore. Words written by the prophet Isaiah **more than 2,700 years ago** are just as welcomed and good news **FOR US** longing for some **peace** in the world as the people were way back then. We look **to** that very same *Wonderful Counselor, that Mighty God, that Everlasting Father, and that Prince of Peace* to guide our lives today. Don't we??? I know I can certainly use some good news and peace in my life which I know can only come from God through Jesus Christ.

Yet, these words ended up coming to pass through the life of **one** young woman. One in whom **God** had found favor. The Child of Promise was to be born to a young **teenage** girl. A girl who was nothing special really in the eyes of the world, a common person. Yet, she was a girl whose **heart** God knew. Could you

just **imagine** what must have been going through her mind when the angel Gabriel **came to her**? Fear, anxiety, questions, the passage says she was *'much perplexed'* and she *'pondered what sort of greeting this might be'*. The Son of God—God with us and God for us—was to be **her** son. She had been **chosen** by God to be the mother of the *Child of Promise* who was foretold about so many centuries before. A few verses later, before the angel Gabriel leaves Mary **this** is her response to him, *"I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said."* A seemingly quiet and peace filled response to God's **call** to serve.

If we could **all** go through our lives with such a calm, peaceful belief, and acceptance like Mary's of what God is **calling** us to do. *Where does one find God's peace?* It is something that comes from within. **Nothing** in this world can bring us the type of peace that **God** has to offer us. So my prayer for us all as we continue in this most blessed of holiday seasons is that, *"May the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep your hearts and your minds on Christ Jesus, the Child of Promise."* That is where God's **true** peace abides.

AMEN.