

Advent 2022: *Prince of Peace*

Isaiah 9:6

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Isaiah 9:6 (ESV) 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Tomorrow we will all be waking up running to the tree to open up gifts and presents we have received from friends and family while they enjoy watching the look on our faces as we sparkle with joy over our new toys and gadgets. I remember as a kid running into the family room on Christmas morning and seeing all those presents under the tree and opening each one. After I grew older and had kids of my own, I then had the joy of watching my sons open gifts. The thing that got me about my sons was how they would open a gift that I spent my hard-earned money on and play with the box the gift came in.

This is really a picture of us today. We have a gift from God that was wrapped in humanity, and we have thrown the real gift aside and have focused more on the stuff surrounding the celebration of his birth.

As we celebrate this Advent season, this celebration of the coming of Christ, we have to see that God who calls us to live generous lives, gives us an example of ultimate generosity by giving us his son, yet the fan fair around this gift shows we really don't see and appreciate what God has done for us in the gift of Jesus. In the midst of our celebrations, we can't lose the best gift ever given.

The passage we are looking at is in the book of Isaiah. Isaiah chapters 1-6 deal with God's retribution on the members of Israel. Isaiah basically gives an indictment on Judah for their fowl living and their straying from the Mosaic law for which was their connection with God, the symbol of their holiness, their set apartness. But because of God's covenant with Abraham, He promised to restore them. Their restoration would only come after they suffered turmoil of other nations coming in and pressing them back into the presence of God.

After bringing to Judah's attention their sinfulness and wayward living. God speaks through Isaiah his plan for their deliverance. And Isaiah prophesies in chapters 7 thru 12 of their deliverance. In chapter 9 he more specifically describes the deliverer for which He would accomplish His plan.

As you read through the book of Isaiah, you get the sense that Isaiah has a very high reverence for God. He sees God as one though set apart and greater than His creation, He is still involved in and cares about what He has created. We see this in Isaiah chapter 6 where Isaiah says, I saw the Lord high and lifted up...and later in the same chapter he describes how a seraphim grabbed a piece of burning coal and purged his lips and declared that his sins are forgiven, showing that God cares about us personally.

When we get to chapter 9, Isaiah begins to describe God's deliver by saying, ESV | Is 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

The implication is that this child that would come to be the messiah, would be of the nation of Israel. Israel was looking for Him to come back and reinstate their prosperity and blessedness. In addition to the promises of Israel and the future implications of His arrival, Jesus came to be the savior of the world. As John the Baptist states in John 1:29, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Every human is born in sin. We have an inherited sin nature that no matter how good you are, you cannot be good enough, do enough good to pay for the debt of sin that comes with you when you are born. And many people live their life searching for answers and fulfillment trying to satisfy the emptiness that is in their life until they come to know Jesus. Jesus is the gift that answers those questions. Isaiah unwraps and unpacks this gift in chapter 9 verse 6.

The text tells us up front that the government will rest on his shoulders.

Israel has been under terrible rule by horrible leaders and their confidence and trust in their kings have been diminished. Israel aligns with pagan nations and attacks Judah, their own relatives. At this time Judah was under an ungodly king, Ahaz, and are faced with war and exile. A picture of Ahaz's character is shown when he gets mad at God for losing a battle and offers sacrifices to the gods of the army who beat them...to which the prophet Isaiah lets them know and lets us know through this passage that the Messiah will be different. The Messiah will be a competent ruler. The description here of the government resting on his shoulders is the figurative picture of a kingly robe worn to show kingship and a representation of his authority.

As Judah had experienced lack luster leadership we have a history of leadership shortfalls, but it is important to remember the Messiah that we serve is in charge now and will be in charge when he returns to establish his kingdom. We need to live as if he is in charge as if he is in control. In the face of fallen stock markets and lost jobs it is important to see the Savior that is in charge of everything.

We have learned that he is a Wonderful counselor and in Jesus we have a counselor or an advisor, one who can devise a plan in a way that is beyond human capabilities.

Isaiah goes on to name him as Mighty God. This was a strong statement because the crime that eventually gets him crucified is His claim to be God, but here Isaiah makes it plain that the prophesied messiah is God and a Mighty God at that, one who understands my pain, and also has the power to mightily overcome it.

We learned he is the Everlasting Father. The benefit of having a Savior who is the Everlasting Father is that not only can he rule you as King, not only can he advise you as Counselor, not only can he handle your problem as a Mighty God, but he can see you through to the end. He knows the beginning from the ending, that means he directs you now for the outcome later.

In this time of chaos, Israel needed to know that God still saw them and that he would provide peace in the midst of their panic and confusion. Isaiah prophesies that a ruler is coming that not only can cause peace but is the prince of peace. A ruler that can cause peace on all levels. There are three points I'd like to bring attention to about this Peace we receive from the Messiah, Jesus the Christ...

1. Peace with man.

I found these statistics that were published by the Moody Bible Institute's Today In The Word, June, 1988, that since the beginning of history being recorded, the entire world has been at peace less than eight percent of the time! It goes on to state that of about 3530 years of recorded history, only 286 years saw peace. And with over 8000 peace treaties made--all were broken. In a world plagued by war and fighting, where do we find peace?

Peace for some people is simply that brief moment that you pause to reload.

Now I want you to understand, Peace is not the absence of trouble but the promise of God's presence in trouble.

One writer says Peace is not the absence of conflict. Peace is the presence of righteousness and godliness.

James 3:17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

First pure then peaceable.... you can't have peace if you don't do what is right. Peace is not the absence of dealing with issues it's allowing the righteousness of God and the obedience to God's word to invade the situation so the issues are brought out and dealt with.

Peace is not made until the sin is admitted and brought before God to make it right. When there is disobedience to God's word, there cannot be peace.

One writer says True biblical peacemakers will not let sleeping dogs lie, he will not save the status quo. He will not say I know the person is doing wrong but I just want to have a peaceful situation. I just want to keep the peace. He says that's a cop-out.

Hebrews 12:14 says pursue peace with all men... But we forget to read the rest of the verse.

Heb 12:14 Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

If sinful action and disrespect are not called out and dealt with then you really don't have peace, you just have a cease fire a chance to pause and reload.

A huge part of preaching the truth of the gospel is that when you press for truth, you will arouse the crowd.

John Mac Aurther says this about preaching the gospel : you have to get them mad at you before you can get them happy with you. You have to upset them before you can make them better. You have to make them feel bad before you can ever make them feel good. First the sword falls ...and out of the sword can come peace because it is the sword that is purity and righteousness.

When you deal with truth, you will divide, you will offend, you will ruffle feathers, but peace cannot come without it. True peace cannot happen with business-as-usual pretending there are no issues. Letting things go unaddressed. True peace is found when you shuffle the dust find the root and apply the axe to uproot the issue. Then there will be peace.

But people don't want to hear about the peace that God offers because there is too much truth in it.

My sons hate taking medicine, because they say it taste bad. The medicine is not like candy or soda, sometimes its bitter and hard to swallow, but I had to teach them, that I know this taste bad, but in order for you to get your healing, you have to take this medicine, in order for your body to find peace, you have to take this bad tasting liquid that in the long term will give you all the peace you need.

You see Peace involves bringing the truth into the situation...righteousness...honesty.... then by allowing the strong taste of the truth to be brought out and to then deal with it not ignore it ...then the healing that is necessary takes place. Peace with your fellow man does not mean pretending that everything is ok. It means admitting there is an issue and having the courage to address the issue. To Speak the truth in love praying for the other person and yourself to see God in the situation.

Jesus, the one who said peace be still and the storms calmed down, Jesus, the one who said my peace I give to you also said things like you brood of vipers... You hypocrites... Woe to you religious people... Because he knew that in order to find peace you have to address the truth...

And the response to Jesus' peace was them putting him on a cross. The truth was too much for them to bear.

But he could endure the consequences of truth because he knew that in order to see the crown, the cross had to come. In order for him to provide us with peace he had to go to the cross.

Because without the cross, I couldn't have righteousness, but because Jesus died on the cross, I can have righteousness through his blood through his work, and because of his righteousness applied in my life, I can have peace in the midst of the storm.

In order to have peace with man, the truth in love must be applied so that growth and progress in the relationship can be accomplished.

Jesus came so that we can have peace with man, but he also came so we can have peace of mind.

2. Peace of mind

The word used in Isaiah to describe the Prince of peace is the Hebrew word Shalom. This word “Shalom” stood for --wholeness, health, security, well-being, and salvation---it wasn’t just a clear mind—it included a clear mind,... but the mind could be clear, because of the complete nature of this kind of peace.... My mind can be clear because God can make me whole...my mind can be clear because God can heal...my mind can be clear because I am secure in His arms...my mind can be clear because I know God cares for my well-being...my mind can be clear because God provides salvation from the enemy of sin and from the enemies I encounter everyday...knowing God is able in so many areas, allows me to have peace of mind because there is nothing I will encounter that its outside of His power to control...he is the Prince of Peace.

In the midst of chaos and confusion we have to appeal to the one who can provide supernatural peace. Philippians 4:7 says “And the peace of God which passes all understanding will guard your heart and mind through Christ Jesus.”

Jesus can provide peace that passes all understanding, a peace that stands still when everyone else is falling apart. A peace that sings praise songs when the company is passing out layoff slips. A peace that keeps giving when you don’t know where the money is coming from.

That’s why Phil 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

This Peace speaks of rest, tranquility it’s the idea of having an exemption from the havoc of war.

It says Peace will guard your heart and mind, this is a military term that describes soldiers assigned to watch over an area. This tells us that the holy spirit produces in us a peace that has the ability to march around our mind guarding it, protecting it so that it can rest easy, knowing God is in control.

Worry and peace cannot occupy the same space.

Worry says, I don’t know what I am going to do, peace says, I know God knows what to do.

Worry says, I don’t have answers to my questions, peace says, I know God has answers to every question,

Worry says trouble is on every hand, peace says, weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning,

Worry says, I don’t know where the money is coming from, peace says, I know God who owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

Worry says, stay up all night, peace says, go to bed and let God handle it.

Worry says, cry yourself to sleep, peace says God will wipe away every tear from your eye.

Worry says, your life is out of control, peace says, God is always in control.

I don't have to worry because I have peace.

Paul tells us, this peace is possible because of the blood of Jesus on the cross. – “Through Christ Jesus”

You see, I can have peace, I can have rest, because Jesus has paid the price of peace for me. So that now that I have to go through, I can rest in knowing who is in control.

Jesus came so that we could have peace with man, and peace of mind, which is only possible if we have peace with God.

3. Peace with God

Isaiah 9:6 begins by saying for unto us a child is born, a son is given. John 3:16 - for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.

In John 14:27 Jesus says this peace I give is not as the world gives. Jesus says, this peace that I give is not from the world, the world gives a false peace. The world tries to have peace without righteousness, but the world cannot experience nor offer peace because the world doesn't want to deal with righteousness. The fact of being right with God.

When truth is applied, peace has a platform, because it only comes through righteousness.

What I've noticed is that the longer you stay away from God, the more easily you find yourself at a loss for peace. That's why you have to stay connected.

One of the phones I had was always running out of batteries half-way through the day it was already weak and needed a charge, then I found this phone case. The case is a battery itself so that as long as the phone is connected to the case, it could be connected to a battery source all day long. The case worked so the phone never had to go without being plugged in.

You see for the believer, you have to understand, God has given you a case called the holy spirit and the holy spirit works so that you can stay plugged in all day long.

When you allow the spirit to take over your life, you don't have to wait until Sunday to get refueled, you can tap into the power that lies within you.

When you allow the spirit to take over you can have peace Sunday through Saturday.

When you allow the spirit to take over, when you walk by the word of God, when you put your trust in Jesus the one who died for you, no matter what day of the week, no matter what the

circumstances, no matter what life throws at you, you can have peace, a peace that passes all understanding.

If you have not given your life to Christ, then true peace is impossible for you. The only way to experience this peace we have been talking about is by putting your faith alone in Christ alone. By accepting that Jesus is the son of God, the Messiah Isaiah teaches us about. When you find the peace that comes through faith in Jesus, you will then have an anchor that holds and keeps you grounded, no matter what circumstances of the world come at you.

A little while ago we had a bad storm and I woke up and saw all the neighborhoods patio furniture turned upside down and blown all over the place, but one man's furniture looked like nothing ever happened. I had to ask sir how is that everyone else's stuff is flipped and thrown all over the place and your furniture looks like nothing ever happened...how is it your furniture found peace that I couldn't understand...he said well if you look a little closer you'll see...just looking at it from a distance...its looks like all other furniture, but when you come closer you will see I tied it with stakes to the ground...Its tied to a firm foundation so that no matter what blows this way, my furniture has peace.

When you put your faith in Jesus, and trust Him to guide your life...when the storms come you can stand without stumbling...others will look and wonder how are you able to stand...you just tell them ...look a little closer and you will see I am grounded in the Prince of Peace...I am grounded in the presence of God...so that no matter what comes my way...I can have peace because I am a child of the Prince of Peace.

God shows us that when we are done playing with the box and are ready for the real gift then He can help us.

The wrapping paper was pretty, the bow was cute, but when God opened his hand, his son came Into the world.

He gave his son because he knew you would need someone to go to when your world begin crumbling around you.

He gave his son because he knew that the pain would be too much to bare on your own.

He gave his Son because he knew that the loneliness would be too much by yourself.

He gave he son because he knew the financial situation would be more than you could handle.

He gave his son because he knew that you would exhaust all your options and have no one else to turn to

When it seems your world is full of chaos, Jesus comes in and says, I'll be here to give you peace.

Amen!