

“Prince of Peace”
Isaiah 9:6

FCF: Longing for the restoration of “shalom”

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Because Jesus is the Prince of Peace,
(magnet) we have no need to fear and are freed to follow Him.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

(READ U2’s “Peace on Earth,” 1st stanza):

Heaven on Earth – we need it now

I’m sick of all of this hanging around

Sick of sorrow, sick of the pain

Sick of hearing again and again

That there’s gonna be Peace on Earth.

Those are lyrics of the Irish rock band, U2. It’s a cry for a binding of wounds, for a restoration, of longing. And the source of this longing is deep – from the fact we’re made in the image of God, in the image of a peace-intending, creating, cherishing, and restoring God. It’s why we ache to read of bombs, of murder, of strife, of nations and families tearing themselves apart. We weren’t made for it. We were made for something else. What does the Word of God say to us about this? How does it address these longings?

SCRIPTURE READING: [Isaiah 9:1-7](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

“Alexander” was to be the epic movie for the holiday season. It opened to rather mixed reviews. It’s a telling of the life of Alexander the Great – the King of Macedonia and conqueror of Persia, India, and Egypt in the 4th century B.C. Alexander was one of the greatest generals of all time, noted for his brilliance as a tactician, as a leader of troops and for the speed with which he could move across great distances. He was usually brave and often generous, but could be cruel and ruthless when politics demanded. He would destroy any opposition as he saw necessary – especially as a means of convincing his enemies both at home and abroad that his was a rule not to be resisted.

Our text this morning speaks of another king, One whose birth we just celebrated. And, clearly, He is far mightier than even the great Alexander. In fact, we would have to say His reign is of a whole different kind. All other kings engage in war to bring about their vision of peace. But this King brings about peace to do away with all war. Isaiah even tells us that His coming assures not just the end of war but the end of all causes of war. Thus far in our study of these names and titles in Isaiah 9, we have seen He is referred to as the “Wonderful Counselor” – One whose wisdom and insight is indeed a wonder. “Mighty God” – whose power and strength are more than just like God but of God as well. “Everlasting Father” – understanding and addressing our greatest needs with the assurance He will never give up on us. And now, finally, “Prince of Peace” – clearly indicating He has indeed come to rule and what form that rule will take.

Why is this important to hear? Think with me as to the context of Isaiah’s words. It is a time of war. A time when the northern kingdom of Israel was undergoing defeat and exile by the Assyrian army. A time when the safety, security, stability of the southern kingdom of Judah was in jeopardy. A time (and a place as well) that had seen such strife, such division, such tearing that the heart’s cry of God’s people was indeed for wisdom, for strength, for compassion. But for peace as well. And Isaiah came with these beautiful words of assurance that it was coming. For He is coming. There was no cause for despair. There was no need for fear. For the Prince of Peace was coming.

But what sort of peace is this? How far does it reach? This peace is more than just the absence of conflict. The word is “shalom” – a completeness, a soundness, a wholeness. There is a sense of rightness, “all is well,” of all creation settling upon and submitting to the Creator’s good rule and will. This is what Isaiah is speaking of.

I. BRINGING PEACE BETWEEN US

A multi-dimensional peace – beginning with a peace between warring parties.

A) Between Nations

A peace between nations – something alluded to repeatedly by the prophets.

1. Promise

A peace that was breaking into the world like the dawning sun and would one day come in full. We’ve seen this in chapter 9 (**READ Isaiah 9:5, 7**). Look at chapter 11 as well (**READ Isaiah 11:6-9**). What imagery! Who else could do this but the Prince of Peace?

2. Command

This is the King we follow. The beating you hear is not the drums of war but the drums of peace. And this is why pursuing such things – even now – is a good and noble calling.

B) Between Individuals

Yet not just between nations, not just at a societal level, but at an interpersonal level as well. After all, is that not where all conflict begins? Between individuals?

1. Promise

Think of what we read in the New Testament regarding the state of peace already created by King Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Paul writes of formally warring parties brought together in a wondrous way (**READ Ephesians 2:14-17**). We have been made one.

2. Command

And based on that, Paul goes on in Ephesians 4 to give some stirring commands (**READ Ephesians 4:1-3**). We are to pursue this peace, to live out what He has carved out, with eagerness. This is why the Prince of Peace declares (**READ Matthew 5:9**).

We need to hear this again and again. For the frustrations of pursuing such peace often bring such disappointment. And in time, given enough hurt, cynicism can settle in.

Illustration:

You get a sense of that very thing in the poem printed on the front of your bulletin, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.” It was Christmas of 1864 – towards the end of the Civil War, but still months before peace was finally to come. Longfellow’s eldest son had recently been crippled in battle. He was a grief-stricken father (**READ 3rd stanza**). But he goes on (**READ 4th stanza**).

Application:

The peace in Longfellow’s words – the peace between nations and individuals, on the battlefield or in our families or in our churches – is real. It was for this the Prince of Peace has come – to bring it about. And yet, not fully. We, the church, the people of peace, are a pilot project. A living demonstration of the gospel present and future.

It has come and yet has yet to fully come. This is why we see these promises and the commands in the Scriptures. Because living these things out can be so hard. Because there is so much working against it. Because it’s so easy to become disillusioned. But it is so vital we live these things out. There is so much riding on it. To live as though there was no Prince of Peace, to fail to follow His lead, is to negate any claim to the uniqueness of our message. It is to negate any possibility of its transforming power.

And so we fight for peace. For it has to be pursued. Unquestionably. But how?

II. BRINGING PEACE WITHIN US

Part of the answer has to do with another dimension of this peace, of the “shalom” Jesus brings – not just peace between us but peace within us.

A) *His Presence*

The peace of His presence – we’ve talked about this already in this series. Remember Isaiah 7 (**READ Isaiah 7:14**). Now look at John 14 (**READ John 14:27**).

1. Wherever we are
“Immanuel” – God with us. Wherever we are – whatever place, whatever situation.
2. Whatever we are called to do
In whatever He has called us to be or do. He is with us. Not that we will never face hard circumstances but that He is with us. He has placed us, prepared us, and will carry us.

Illustration:

Think of Mary. A young girl pledged to be married. Making plans, dreaming dreams. We hear the angel’s words from too great a distance and think only of their wonder. But Mary surely knew the hardship this would bring. “*You’re pregnant. And you have no husband. Right.*” The path for Mary would be one of disgrace and rejection. But how did she respond? (**READ Luke 1:38**) The peace of His presence.

B) *Our Obedience*

Yet there’s more to this peace within – the peace of our obedience. Look with me at Isaiah 26 (**READ Isaiah 26:2-4**). This is the rule of “proportional increase.” The more you see of one thing, the more you see of another. The more you eat over the holidays, the more weight you gain. The more you use your charge card, the more debt you amass. And the more you live according to God’s commands, the greater peace you will have.

1. According to what He has said
(**READ Isaiah 48:17-19**) These are the very words of the Author of life Himself.
2. According to how we are made
These are the words of the One who calls us to live according to how we were made (**READ Isaiah 48:20-22**). If you want to know His peace within, walk in His ways.

Application:

If you want to know this peace within, you need to stop trying to be God. You’re not. There’s not much sense in denying it. But we do. We insist on control of our circumstances or control of others around us. But it’s impossible. And so frustration is inevitable. What poor little gods we are! We want to call the shots and mess everything up when we do. Dear ones, let God be God. Rest in the care of the Prince of Peace.

Now, that’s much easier said than done. How is this possible? How can we rest?

III. BRINGING PEACE WITH GOD

By recognizing that, in Him, we can have the greatest peace we could possibly imagine – more than just peace between us, more than just peace within, but peace with God Himself. In fact, it is from this peace that all other peace comes.

A) *Why It Is Needed*

Now, you may be asking, “*Why do we need peace with God?*” Simply put, because we were born with a double hostility – we hate God and He hates us.

1. Our hostility to God
You see it Genesis. Our first parents did not trust God. They wanted only to be like Him – to be dependent on no one, accountable to no one. And we have inherited their folly.
2. God’s hostility to us

And their curse. For a just God cannot just ignore such spurning. A double hostility.

B) What Is Then Needed

1. Our hostility to be overcome

What then is needed? For our hearts to be changed, for us to see where we have been so blind and so foolish. For our hostility to be overcome.

2. His hostility to be overcome

And not just that but for God's as well. But how? (**READ Isaiah 57:15-19**)

C) Who Is Then Needed

And how does this healing take place? Who brings it about?

1. His initiative

Back to Isaiah 9 (**READ Isaiah 9:7b**). It's not left to us. It's not dependent on us.

2. His sacrifice

He steps in. Immanuel, the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace has intervened...as the Suffering Servant (**READ Isaiah 53:4-6**).

Illustration:

Consider the tribes of New Guinea. The Sawi people were headhunters who practiced cannibalism and lauded such traits as craftiness and betrayal. Yet their culture contained a custom that ultimately served as a point of contact for the gospel. When two Sawi groups were locked in conflict, they had a way to break the pattern of hostility. A Sawi father would offer his son to the other group as a "Peace Child." The other group would receive and raise the child. And as long as that child lived, past, present and even future grievances were considered resolved. And peace was restored.

Application:

King Jesus is our "Peace Child." Through Him we now have peace with God. Again, this is the foundation upon which all peace rests, the spring from which all others flow. Which begs the question – do you have it? And on what do you base your answer? I fear some of you here may well have a "false positive" reading. You feel as though you have this peace when you really have none at all. You know of God but do not actually know Him. Peace with God comes only through the Prince of Peace. So be careful.

But some of you may well be suffering from a "false negative." You know the Prince of Peace but you have no peace in your life. You worry too much about trying to do more things to please Him. You need to rest, to rest in Him. As with the false positives, you too need to rest in the peace this Prince has made. Trust and rest in Him.

CONCLUSION:

Dear ones, Jesus is our King. He has come to rule but His rule is not about domination, aggression, or bloodshed. It is a rule of peace – "shalom." Again, a restoration, a making right, sound, and whole all that has been torn and tarnished by the Fall. Which is so deep. So very deep. Which is why our hearts have such longings for such peace – not just at Christmas but throughout the year. And with the coming of Christ, of this Child, of Jesus the Prince of Peace, this peace has come. And is coming in even fuller ways. As deep as the brokenness of this world and our lives may be, the restoration and renewal He brings is far deeper still – with one another, within ourselves, and with God Himself. It's the cry of the angels over the fields of Bethlehem, (**READ Luke 2:13-14**). My prayer for us all is that we will grow in our longings both for this peace and the One who brings it in such profound and beautiful ways.

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Because Jesus is the Prince of Peace,

(magnet) we have no need to fear and are freed to follow Him.