

Advent 2024 - Peace

January 12, 2025

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. This week concludes our Advent series and focuses on peace. Thank you to Rhonda, Paul, Barbara and Don for being part of the service. The scripture reading is John 14 23 to 27. Happy birthday this week to Debbie.

Scripture Reading

John 14:23-27

So John 14, 23 to 27. Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him. Who who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own, they belong to the father who sent me. All this I have spoken while still with you. But the counselor, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. 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."

Sermon

Advent - Peace

Good morning, everyone. A happy Christmas season to all. Today we finish with our last Christmas Advent, and that is one of peace. And I was overwhelmed in scripture this past week, noticing how often peace is mentioned. And I believe with all my heart-- you probably do too-- that we want the world to be peaceful. And we must demonstrate peace and not just talk about it. So what am I doing? Talking about it. But even before the birth of Jesus, the Psalms talked of peace. In fact, many times in the Psalms-- 29 and verse 11 of Psalm-- the Lord gives strength to his people. The Lord blesses people with peace. Psalm 37. But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity.

And I just stopped to make the comment that here in Canada, we have overwhelmingly people of peace. Yes, there are difficulties in any land, any world. But in Canada, there is peace and there is prosperity. In Psalm 37 and verse 37, consider the blameless. Observe the upright. A future awaits those who seek peace. World War I, World War II, the Vietnam conflict, and wars that are still going on. Oh, how we need peace. Consider the blameless. Observe the upright. A future awaits for those who seek peace. And then in Isaiah chapter 14 and verse 7, all the lands are at rest and at peace. Won't it be wonderful when that actually happens? God promises that one day all will be well and peace will be throughout all the nations. We pray that this will take place soon.

Back in Isaiah's days, and Isaiah is a wonderful man, a brilliant man. He pictures the words so that we can see them in our mind. Chapter 26 in Isaiah, you will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast on God and trust in Him. And again in Isaiah, how beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace to all. And we want that today.

Many, many hundreds of years, thousands of years in the past. Even today, we desire peace. We want to be examples of peace. We want to show peace. Those who promote peace are a delight

and trustworthy. And then we get into the New Testament. Many, many words by Jesus. In Matthew chapter 5 and verse 9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." Conflict where someone can come in and mediate and bring about the fulfillment of peace. Particularly at Christmas, we remember the peace Jesus brings to us. Remarkable peace. His birth as a child, incredible. To an adult who turned the world upside down and still is.

With the demonstration of love, of joy, of peace, of patience, of kindness, of goodness, of faithfulness, and people of self-control. When war ceases and peace comes, we want it to last forever. So we celebrate peace and urge all of us to be peacemakers. In the book of James in chapter 3, he says, "Who is the wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom." And then in verse 17, "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure, just like Jesus. Then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy, easy to forgive, and the good fruit that he gives to us. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness. Peace at Christmas may it last all year."

So we'll just spend a couple of moments talking about this. If you will go with me back, experience this wonderful Savior of ours, Jesus himself at his birth. "When the time came for the baby to be born, Mary gave birth to her first son, a son, the first son, but not just the son, the son of God. And then an angel spoke--" we talked about this this morning in our Bible class. "Don't be afraid." That's easy to say, but imagine an angel here today. Imagine the angels surrounding us today. Scripture says, "Are not angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who inherit salvation? Peace can cure the world. Peace of God, the peace of Jesus, the peace of the Holy Spirit who is constantly at work trying to help people understand peace.

An angel appeared praising God, saying glory to God on the highest heaven and on earth, peace to those whom his favor rests. Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon who was a righteous and devout man. And the Holy Spirit told him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah." He did. And then there was a prophet called Anna. I want to spend a lot of time talking to her when we get to heaven. She was very old. She had been a widow for 84 years. So I'm not exactly sure how old she was. She never left the church. She never left the temple but worshipped night and day. She gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. The child, Jesus himself, grew and became strong and filled with wisdom. And I love this. "And the grace of God was with him."

You see, the grace of God is with us this very day. It's so interesting how Jesus allows us to be part of him. Peace with each other. Many wars have come and gone, and it's horrible. There's so many lives have been lost. So we continue to pray that peace will come to all nations. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the entire world became peaceful?

And there were shepherds living in the fields nearby, keeping watch over the flocks at night. "An angel of the Lord--" the angels are everywhere. "An angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone around them, and the shepherds were terrified. But the angel said to them, don't be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy--" listen to this-- "that will be for all the people." That's us. "Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah. He is the Lord. This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths lying in a manger."

I have to stop there. For many of us who saw our babies born looking into their eyes for the first time, holding that baby. Nothing better, nothing more precious. And then they learned to trust us. They know that they're going to be fed. They know that they're going to be loved. And we want to raise them well, talk to them, share with them.

This is the sign, the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign. You'll find this baby wrapped in cloths in a manger. And then this company of the heavenly host appeared, and the angels praising God, saying, glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth. Peace to those whose favor rests. Mary, I'm thinking confused and yet not. Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in our heart. Do you think she ever forgot any moment of that? Never. And then the shepherds returned. They were glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard. And they gave this man, this baby, the name Jesus.

Let's face it, Christmas can be a challenging time. But the Apostle Paul helps us with the word peace. God is very present in peace. The peace of God may transcend our understanding, but we know peace when we feel it, and when we see it, and when we give it. May we treasure peace. May all of us at Christmas demonstrate this peace and love.

Yesterday, for some reason, I turned to a channel on television, and it was a Billy Graham preaching time. And I'd forgotten. He'd been gone for a long time. What a marvelous sermon he preached. I was shaking. It was a remarkable sermon. He said these words in summing up the superiority of the Christian life over all other ways of living, we cannot overlook the advantage that the Christian will have for all eternity. What a wonderful future and hope we are given by Jesus Christ. And then he says to the thousands in the audience, I know where I'm going, and I have peace in my heart, and we will see each other again. And we will see the Lord face to face and Jesus himself. His peace floods my heart and overwhelms my soul. The storm was raging. The sea was beating against the rocks in huge crashing waves. The lightning was flashing. The thunder was roaring. The wind was blowing, but the little bird was asleep in the crevice of the rock, its head serenely under its wing, sound asleep. That is peace, to be able to rest serenely even in the storm in the midst of confusion, bewilderment, perplexity. The storm rages, but our hearts are at rest. We have found peace at last.

Henry Van Dyke spoke of peace. With eager heart and will on fire, I strove to win my great desire. Peace, oh, finally peace shall be mine, I said. But life grew bitter in the barren strife. My soul was weary. My pride was wounded deep. To heaven I cried, God grant me peace or I must die. The stars glittered, and there was no reply. Broken at last, I bowed my head, forgetting all of myself, and said, whatever comes, his will be done. And in that very moment, peace was won. Carrie Landry spoke beautifully regarding peace. Peace is flowing like a river, flowing out of you and me, flowing out into the desert, setting all captives free.

The wonderful song, Peace Perfect Peace, written by Edward Brookersoith, said, peace perfect peace in this dark world of sin, the blood of Jesus whispers peace within. Peace, perfect peace by thronging duties pressed, to do the will of Jesus. That is rest. Peace, perfect peace with sorrows surging round on Jesus' booz of naught, but calm if found. Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown, Jesus we know, and he is on the throne. Peace, perfect peace, death shadowing us and ours, Jesus has vanquished death in all its powers. And then these words, it is enough. Earth struggles, soon shall cease, and Jesus will call us to heaven in perfect peace.

The wonderful hymn attributed to St. Francis of Assisi called Instrument of His Peace. And we've sung this song many, many times. Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love. Where there is injury, pardon. Where there is doubt, faith. Where there is despair, hope. Where there is darkness, light. Where there is sadness, joy. Oh, divine master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console. To be understood, to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive. It is in pardoning that we are pardoned. It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Lastly, somehow just flipping pages. It's not a coincidence. Mother Teresa showed up. I hadn't read her book in a long time. And it just came. The Holy Spirit works a lot. Here's what she said. Let us thank God for his gift of peace. That reminds us that we have been created to live that peace. And that we've been created to live peaceful lives. That Jesus became a man in all things except in sin. And he proclaimed very clearly that he had come to give the good news. The news was peace to all people of goodwill. Something that we all want. Peace, she said, of heart. Our works of love. Our works of peace. Let us radiate the peace of God at this Christmas season. Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness. No strength known but the strength of love. May we gather under the banner of the Prince of Peace. Glory now and forevermore. Amen.

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