

Thought 6th December 2020

Last week we thought about Jesus being born to reign. That along with Jesus coming to save us as our saviour, Jesus came to reign in our lives as our King. We looked how Jesus as King could bring us hope. This week we are think about Jesus being the Prince of Peace from Isaiah 9: 6 where Isaiah describe the child born to reign as, “Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Now I don't know about you, but I could do with some peace, not from Gillian and Lucas you understand but from the turmoil, uncertainty and pressures that seem to come at me as part and parcel of Advent in our secular, materialistic world. I must admit running away to a Dessert Island to find some peace looked pretty attractive this last week. My desire to find peace reminded me of a story about this retired couple who became obsessed by the threat of war to the point that they undertook a serious study of all the remote places on the globe. Their goal was to determine the least likely place affected by a war—a place of ultimate security and most importantly peace. They studied and travelled, travelled and studied some more until they finally found the place. And so, in 1981, they moved to their new home - in the Falkland Islands. In case you have forgotten, their “peaceful paradise” became noticeably less peaceful in 1982 when Argentina invaded the Falkland Island and turned them into a war zone. Isn't this story emblematic of this worlds desperate and fruitless effort to find peace both within and without?

We are going to look at peace this morning particularly peace with God and the peace of God. To understand the difference between peace WITH God and peace OF God, we are going to try to define them.

Peace with God is a fact and not dependent on our feelings or even our opinions. It doesn't come from within us. It's not something we can obtain by our own efforts. It is something we are freely given. It is a gift from God — a gift given by Jesus when He saves a repentant sinner.

We know that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins on the cross, and when we repent and trust in Him, He is faithful to forgive our sins and save us. Jesus absorbed the

wrath of God that should have been ours. He made peace WITH God for us and He gives us that peace in our salvation. This peace with God is a fact, and it is true whatever our circumstances or feelings are. It is free and it is forever and can never be destroyed or even diminished. It is a secure peace with the Almighty God of all creation because of Jesus' finished work.

Romans 5:1 *"Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

The peace of God, unlike peace with God, is a peace that is commonly affected by our feelings, our opinions and our circumstances. We can, unlike peace with God totally miss out of the peace of God in our day to day lives. We experience the peace of God least when we trust our feelings, opinions and circumstances. However, we experience the peace of God most profoundly when we turn to Jesus and trust Him rather than our feelings, opinions and circumstances. This peace of God is a gift from God and our feelings, opinions and circumstance affect how we accept this gift. It is entirely possible have peace with God and completely miss out on the peace of God.

In our salvation, God gave us the Holy Spirit who is also called the Comforter. One of His many jobs is to continually offer this gift of the peace of God to us. The Holy Spirit moment by moment offers us the peace of God and we are challenged to trust Jesus and accept the peace of God. It is not always easy to accept the peace of God, I found it particularly hard this week. In fact I never experienced the peace of God at all this week as I was focused on my feelings, thoughts and circumstances.

When we keep our eyes on Jesus and rightly remember Who He is, what He has done for us, and who we are in Him, we experience the calm of resting in Him, we experience the peace of God. That is how we receive the peace OF God. It is a choice to keep our eyes on Jesus, our hearts devoted to Him, and our minds continually being renewed in His Word. Sadly, when we allow anxiety and fear to set in, we lose focus, we become disheartened, and confusion abounds. Then the flow of God's peace to us is blocked and our lives are diminished.

Paul warns against such worry that creates anxiety and he tells us that we are to come to God “with thanksgiving” in prayer to receive His peace.

Philippians 4: 6 - 7 *“Be anxious for nothing, 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 minds through Christ Jesus.”*

When we remember all that God has given us and give Him thanks, the peace of God is received, and we find rest in Jesus.

Jesus IS Peace! When we read the account of angels announcing Jesus’ birth to the shepherds, we read that they praised God by proclaiming, *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men”*.

The angels proclaimed peace, but not a condition of peace on earth as some say. This does not say “...and peace on earth...” in the sense that there will be no turmoil, strife, or wars. It says, “on earth peace” and when Jesus was born there was on earth, “Peace.” That “Peace” came in the form of a baby born in Bethlehem. The angels also proclaimed that “on earth” there was “good will toward man” and Jesus is that “Good Will” of God sent to seek and save the lost. His entering into our world was the greatest expression of God’s peace and good will toward us.

Jesus’ birth brought a true peace to our world, a peace in and of Himself, unlike any worldly peace. His presence was “on earth Peace” but not peace on earth. In fact, there was much unrest during Jesus’ earthly life. Jesus even told His disciples that He came not to bring an earthly peace:

Mat 10:34 *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.”*

Although He is the Prince of Peace from Isaiah 9: 6, Jesus knew that His presence would bring division and unrest. Throughout the centuries there has never been peace

on earth (at least not since the Garden). But in Jesus' incarnation, and by the indwelling Holy Spirit in believers, there was and is "on earth peace" in our world.

Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Jesus opened the way to peace WITH God and He desires that all God's children choose to receive the peace OF God. This Advent to receive the gift of the peace of God all we need do is to keep looking unto Jesus and we will receive comfort, rest, and the peace of God. A good place to receive the peace of God is to remember that our lives are not our own but belong to the King born to reign. I am going to finish with another story of a young man who found peace in surrender.

A young man was eager to grow in His Christian life made a list of all the things he would do for God. He wrote down the things he would give up, the places he would go to minister and the areas of ministry he would enter. He was excited. He took that list to the church and put it on the altar.

He thought he would feel joy, but instead he felt empty. So, he went home and started adding to his list. He wrote down more things he would do and wouldn't do. He took the longer list and put it on the altar, but still he felt nothing.

He went to a wise, old pastor, told him the situation and asked for help. The pastor said, "Take a blank sheet of paper. Sign your name at the bottom. Put that on the altar." The young man did, and then peace came to his heart.

The young man found peace only when he trusted Jesus with everything.

True peace is not found in striving for Jesus, true peace is found in surrender to the will of the Prince of peace, in trusting Him with everything, even when the world is in turmoil and uncertain and full of the storms of life.

I seem to keep going back to the Prophet Isaiah. Isaiah is a good place to finish this morning's thought. In 26:3 Isaiah writes of God, "*You will keep in perfect peace the mind that is dependent on You, for it is trusting in You.*"