

Advent 2024: Peace - Isaiah 9:6-7

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[0:00] Good morning, everyone. I'm thankful to open up God's Word with you today to focus on peace.! Please bring it back.

And I was just looking back on the last Advent sermon that I did on peace, and it actually was 2020, like right after COVID had started. And so it was like another tumultuous time that I actually had to speak on peace.

But this is the Advent season long ago in ancient times, God preparing and promising to send a Redeemer. However, as we've said, Advent really just means coming or arrival, and also to focus on the birth of Christ and His first Advent, but also the second coming, which we greatly look forward to.

Christ has come. He is our hope. He is our peace. And today, that is going to be our focus, Advent peace. And when you're learning to preach and to teach God's Word, a lot of the times some guys just kind of run straight to a text and begin to read it and walk through it.

Another way to do it is actually to kind of create the problem first, and then through God's Word, show how God meets that particular need.

[1:42] And I just find it fitting to first talk about why there is an absence of peace in our personal lives and in our world. We can't find it.

So the opposite of true spiritual peace, as most of us are aware, is anxiety. If our elders could count how many times we talk to people in our church, that anxiety is in those top two or three things that always come up of members in our church, godly people who are just struggling with anxiety.

And the definition of anxiety in the Scripture, the word, just hurts to even hear it.

It means to be inwardly divided, to be inwardly torn in different directions, so that you're fracturing basically from the inside out.

You felt that? Like just different things pulling on you in your heart and in your soul, dividing you so that you're fracturing spiritually, and then physically following that.

[3:02] Very real. All of us have dealt with it. Some are eating up with it more than others. But anxiety is a very real and present thing. It's the opposite of peace.

And we have an absence of personal peace, family peace, national peace, international peace. We're missing this in our world.

There's been a lot of political unrest and national strife. Back in 2020, as we remember, we were struck with COVID-19.

And for the first many months, none of us had any idea what was going on. And it was the first little disruptor, I guess, to our normal, comfortable lives.

And it changed the world in many ways. One historian calculated that in the last 3,500 years, there's been less than 300 that could be actually roughly referred to as peaceful.

[4:09] That's not a lot. Basically, there's peace in the world just for enough time for both sides to stop and reload for the next thing. Do you want to think of it that way?

In the last four to five years, we've watched a lot, a lot unfold before us. We watched the botched, disastrous, non-strategic withdrawal from Afghanistan that a lot of our members in our church and other men that I know were sort of the 9-11 generation over the last 20 years.

There's just all of that disorder fall apart, probably worse than Saigon, leaving many people behind and many others dead. We watched the first major war ramp up since Vietnam, which would have been Russia invading Ukraine.

The CCP in China, saber-rattling to conquer Taiwan and in many places the world. And about a year ago, in October, we witnessed the evil, wicked, demonic atrocities against Israel on October 7th.

The slaughter and mutilation of innocents and hostages taken and the war in Gaza that followed. Iran firing hundreds of rockets and missiles and drones at Israel.

[5:39] We live in a world without peace. And many of my military friends scattered all over the place say they get briefed on war to war, world war ideas with China and other superpowers regularly.

If this does happen, here's going to be our response. A world without peace. And on a domestic level, we witnessed crime go up in major cities and small communities.

We witnessed LGBTQ ideology crammed down and enforced in our schools and our society. And for the last five to four years, there's been just great unrest.

And it's hit you personally, if you're listening to this, from January 2021 to October 2024, this past October, the Bureau of Labor reported that the overall household expenditures were up by 20%. Groceries up 21%. Energy up 29%. Auto insurance 57%. And rent up 23%.

[6:55] All in the last few years. Many lost jobs. Many of you are still struggling to find work, changing jobs, cutting hours, working multiple jobs just to put food on the table.

But all these different things expose a reality that there is a lack of peace in ourselves, in others, and in the world.

It doesn't look or sound very peaceful. It's exposed it. Because for many years, we just had it so well, we thought. And it just revealed this false sense of security that we possess.

And so the absence of peace leads people like you and I to search for it. Because we all long for it. We want to attain peace in our communities, our families, and the world. We want to be free from trouble, free from strife, free from fear, free from anxiety and conflict.

[7:56] And we long for true peace. We all do. Every human does. It's a relentless search. And we do it in different ways. Many of you do it with vacations and escapes.

You just think, if I can escape the context I'm in and go have fun and disconnect. But the problem is, sin follows you wherever you go, and it's waiting for you when you get back.

Others, you've sought peace through financial stability. I can just build that bank account up enough. But we know, particularly in the last four or five years, how that just drops.

And I can't tell you how many men in our church I've talked to who have lost jobs, had to work multiple jobs just to provide. Others, by diversion.

Alcohol, drugs, entertainment, online shopping, take your pick. Others in relationships, you just find that this person is strong and capable.

[8:58] If I just lean into that person, they will be the one who gives me peace. But then they turned out not to be Jesus. And then they crack and let you down.

And in the process, you end up crushing them as well by putting that kind of hope in them. A lot of people search through peace by health. They just think, if I just eat right, work out, exercise, if I do the right thing, like, I will be ready for whatever comes.

But yet, sickness still finds the most healthy of us. And others, by boosting up your own protection, security cameras, firearms, ammo. But you have found that, like, the bunker can never be deep enough.

And there never can be enough ammo in the shelf. You're going to the next gun store and looking at the next gun. The next, how many ammo, how much ammo can you store away and et cetera.

But even after you have all that, there is a lack of peace. It's not there. True spiritual peace cannot be found. It eludes us.

[10:03] So, why can't we ever be at peace in ourselves? And why can't we be at peace with those who are around us, others? What's burning your soul?

What is it? I probably, if I named it, if I didn't name it, what is it? What's tearing your soul apart from the inside out? So, many people see Christmas and the holiday season as a pleasant distraction away from the burdens and cares of life.

But food, family, fun, that idea, gifts, presents. The worldly view of Christmas, the, you know, cheer up. It's Christmas. It'll all work out.

It's the season to be kind to each other and nice to one another. Be extra kind to everybody. But that warm, fuzzy feeling doesn't really help us with, like, how broken our world truly is.

The worldly view of Christmas cannot patch up the world that has been wrecked by sin. No man-made, superficial peace can actually do that.

[11:07] So, if you're going to figure out why there's a lack of peace, we know there's a problem. But with any good doctor, you try to find out, like, the source of that problem, not just the symptom.

The symptoms are we have no peace. What causes that? What is the true condition? And Scripture is not bashful about telling us that.

But the reason we can't have peace within ourselves, with others, around the world, are they're just symptoms of a spiritual condition. That symptom is, or that source is, that we all have sinned and rebelled against God.

We all have turned away from the God of peace and made war on Him. Sin causes an absence of peace in an individual soul, collectively as people, than a lack of peace in our world.

It's just a trickle-down effect. Sin has caused us to rebel against God directly and indirectly. Hey, those days that we just ignore God, don't think about Him, don't give Him first in our lives, those are days that we rebel against God.

[12:18] It isn't just the atheists out there shaking their fists. It's the times that we ignore Him and count Him as little and insignificant. And we have no peace because our sin has made us enemies of God, our Creator, that we were meant to know and enjoy and worship and have a relationship with.

All have sinned and fallen short of His glory. James says that we all have turned against God and we love sin. He says, You adulterous people, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?

Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. This is a picture of spiritual unfaithfulness to God, holding the things of this world in a greater affection than the one who made them.

That if you find that your life revolves around things, stuff, everything else, it exhibits that this is being controlled by those things.

Know that God says here that He is jealous for the Spirit He created in you. A holy jealousy. He made you. You belong to Him, but yet you give it to other things.

[13:35] We have turned against the Creator and worshipped the things of creation. George Whitefield, the great awakening preacher, he basically, I remember I'm paraphrasing him, but he said, How can you ever dream of peace when God is your enemy?

You cannot be at odds with the sovereign, good, glorious, almighty God and have peace. You can't be at odds with Him. Isaiah 57, verse 20, very familiar.

The wicked are like the tossing of the sea, for it cannot be quiet, and as waters toss up mire and dirt, there is no peace, says God, for the wicked.

God cannot give us true joy and true peace apart from Himself. There's just no such thing. So, if you need to be reminded of that reality as a believer today, or if you're hearing that for the first time, know that until your own soul is made right with God, you will have no peace or anything else.

So, the true meaning of Christmas that we celebrate, even though it's stressful and busy, and boy, I get drowned in that a lot, I just want to slow down.

[14:59] But like, it just seems like there's this inevitable current that you get into, and you just take off, and you're just along for the ride for a lot of that stuff. But, it is an opportunity to pause and elevate our souls to a higher place.

It's good for God's people, particularly, to put their mind and their heart on the true meaning of it, and to rediscover what it means to have true inner peace with God.

Just really quickly, Scripture calls God, God the Father, the God of peace. Hebrews 13.20 God the Son is the Prince of Peace, which we'll look at in a moment.

Isaiah 9.6 And God the Holy Spirit is referred to as the Spirit of Peace. So, He is a God of Peace. So, how can we know that God of Peace? But really quick, let me define roughly what peace means as we see it, like in the Scripture. Ready?

[16:02] Peace is the inner confidence, rest, and trust in God's wise, sovereign control of our lives, resulting from being restored to Him through Jesus Christ.

Peace is the inner confidence, rest, and trust in God's wise, sovereign control over our lives, resulting from being restored to Him through Jesus Christ.

kind of a spin-off of our Old Testament word, shalom. In essence, a desire for completeness, a wish for contentment, a blessing for satisfaction.

In short, a blessing that all that is good from God would flow into your life. I wish all that is good would come upon you.

That satisfaction, completeness, and contentment. New Testament word, *irene*, where we get *Irene*, the name *Irene* from, really means a tranquil state of the soul.

[17:11] A soul that is at rest. A satisfied soul. We can have that by being made right with God through Christ. Augustine, one of the earlier guys that I was reading in my journey to Reformed theology, his famous quote in prayer to God, God, you have made us for yourself.

Oh Lord, and our hearts are restless until it rests in you. Very true. So, let's look at three things today.

Jumping into God's Word. Peace promised. Peace arrives. And peace experienced. First of all, peace promised.

Turning your Bibles to Isaiah 9. Isaiah 9. We will start in verse 6. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.

The government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end.

[18:31] And on the throne of David and over His kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness, from this time forth and forevermore, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Sounds awesome. So this was a foretelling of peace. 700 years before that instrument of peace, Christ actually arrived on the scene.

God would bring salvation to His people. And if you notice that last part, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this, that's a short way of saying that nothing is going to stop God from doing this. Like, nothing is going to prevent God from bringing this salvation and this peace to His people. He is going to accomplish it. So long ago, He spoke through Isaiah, a child is born, a son is given. That son, as we are aware of, is the embodiment of Emmanuel, God with us. Isaiah 7, Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign.

[19:41] Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call His name Emmanuel. So the Messiah's character being tied to God proves His divine origin and His character.

He is the wonderful counselor, the one who makes good and wise plans and has the ability to execute them on behalf of His people. He is the very might of God, the everlasting Father, a kingly, noble ruler, the powerful one who will lovingly embrace His people as a Father, the King who also is our Father.

The birth of Jesus, the Messiah, has come already. He's establishing His kingdom and when that happens, it won't just happen temporarily. You study history, you're going to see kingdoms and empires just go from the greatest ones.

We haven't even scratched the surface here in America if you read anything about Rome or anywhere else. Christ's kingdom will last for all eternity. That's what it says right here. This government, His throne, will last forevermore.

You know me, I'm always feeling around with some kind of history something. Picked up an old book a good many months ago on King Arthur who's part history, mostly legend.

[21:15] And, as you're aware, Arthur was born in humble circumstances and became the rightful king. And, as many people don't really know this, he

was more of a British, Celtic king from Wales.

He wasn't like an Anglo-Saxon king. So he was Welsh. The Welsh would be very offended if you said he came from somewhere else. And, he was born of humble means and he was born the rightful king possessing Excalibur.

And, his rule was to both rule over and unite the people of the British Isles to bring about unending peace and prosperity to the British Isles.

And, Arthur sacrificed himself by dying in battle to secure his kingdom. On and on the parallels, right? But, Jesus is the true born king who rules by right and power, not our consent.

Jesus will unite his people and he will bring about an unending kingdom of peace. As Arthur died on the battlefield, Christ died on the cross to secure his kingdom.

[22:37] Jesus is called the prince of peace. His noble reign will last forever. Boy, that will be great. I hate to shock you, but there's no president, no matter who you voted for, they're not going to be the prince of peace.

It doesn't matter who you voted for. Only Jesus is going to bring about everlasting, perpetual peace to the nations. This is what God's word says.

Believe it and be satisfied. Messiah will rule with perfect justice and righteousness. Man, that's something that we have been missing in our world. The mark of his kingdom that will have no end. So yes, there's going to be, between now and then, conflict and strife in the world. But, that doesn't deny or disprove that Jesus is the prince of peace.

It only really shows why he came and the need for him to come, to bring about that perpetual peace. So this was peace promised, again, 700 years roughly before Christ came.

[23:38] This brings us to point number two. Peace arrived. So, we have just a couple places for you to look at, but look at Luke chapter 2. Our very familiar, what we refer to as the Christmas story or Nativity story, whatever you want to call it.

Some country people call it the Nativity story. We will look at Luke 2 verse 8. This is peace arrives. And in the same region, there were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flocks by night, and an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

And the angel said to them, fear not, for behold, I bring you good news, gospel, of great joy it will be for all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ, the Lord. And this will be a sign for you, you will find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laying in a manger. And suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude, the heavenly hosts, praising God and saying, glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace among those with whom he is pleased.

[25:00] Underline that last part. So, if you're an outdoor person, you've been out in the wilderness, out in the mountains by yourself, and particularly like when the sun goes down, very calm, how quiet it is.

And imagine, like all of a sudden, there are angels there talking to you, the shock that they must have felt. But Christ came here, he humbled himself to be born in Bethlehem in a stable to poor parents, humble accommodations, not five-star hotels or castles.

He came as shepherds, as his witnesses, not religious elites, the humble magi, not powerful kings, and all of it just to frame the mighty God who came here to save us with humility.

Christ took on himself flesh and came to save the world that he created. Just get your head around that. Angels announces arrival to these lowly shepherds.

And Jesus, our Messiah King, arrived. Notice, glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace among those whom he is pleased. Note that God's peace isn't just a general goodwill to everybody.

[26:28] It's not a reward. God's peace is not a reward to those who have good will. That's not what this says. Rather, it's the gift of God's sovereign grace, his good pleasure, namely towards his redeemed people, those who would trust and give their lives to the Messiah.

And so, a beautiful picture here of Christ arriving. Just for sake of time, I'd like to just keep reading more, but we'll just stop there with the arrival of peace.

This is the first advent. Right? This leads us to point three. Peace experience. So, not only can we have peace, right, we can experience that peace.

How do we do it? It's out there. It's available. How do we have it? Look at Romans 5. Go over to Romans 5.

One of my favorite explain the gospel to somebody passages. Romans 5, verses 6 through 10. Just read verse 1 with me.

[27:39] Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. There's your summary verse.

Okay? If you want peace, you have to have peace with God. And the instrument of that peace, the conditional part, is through Christ. Not anything else. Like, you can't fill in that blank.

It's just Christ. Alright? Then you jump down to verse 6. For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

So, our gospel is not God helps those who help themselves. We are weak. ungodly. Verse 7.

For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die. But God shows us his love for us, and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[28:38] Since therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. for if we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

So many good things in there, but look at the words that scripture uses to describe us before we were in Christ. They're not great words. Weak, helpless, ungodly, sinners, enemies.

Those are not things you want to be described by, of those who are outside Christ. In Celtic history, Scotland Irish, Welsh history, a lot of you know the pagan Druids would consider the mistletoe to be a sacred plant.

And when enemies met under the mistletoe, hanging from the sacred oak, they would lay down their weapons in their arms and they would embrace peace. The kiss of peace under the mistletoe wasn't a romantic idea at that point.

It was the way enemies would make peace with one another under the mistletoe. God has graciously brought a means of peace to us by us kissing the sun at the cross.

[30:02] Underneath the cross of Christ we can have peace through him Jesus to reconcile all things to himself, all things whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Colossians 1.20 So God is basically saying, yeah, though you've rejected me, though you've rebelled against me, though you've given your love, your money, and your time to other gods, you've spurned my rightful rule over your life, by my grace, I have made a way for you when you couldn't make a way to me.

I've offered you peace through the blood of my son. Many of us are aware of Psalm 2, the prophecy of the coming king Jesus.

What does it say at the end, kiss the son, lest you perish in the way. We are to kiss this Messiah and make peace with God through him.

So Christmas is a chance for us to celebrate that idea that God sent his son in order that we might not have strife with him, but have peace with him. No longer enemies, but friends and sons.

[31:18] We can have peace knowing that Christ died in our place and suffered as we just read. Not soft words, saved us from the wrath of God.

You will have no peace if the wrath of God is still over you. But knowing that Christ bore your punishment, shed his blood so that you could be made right with him.

That word justified is mentioned many times in this passage in Romans, but shorthand to be made right, to have right standing with God, only to be done through Jesus who reconciled us to himself.

I was thinking of the hark the herald angel sing, glory to the new born king, peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.

You will not be experiencing peace if you are not reconciled to God through Christ. Great gospel in our Christian hymns for Christmas, so eat those up.

[32:23] And we can experience that true inner peace by having this divine part in being reconciled to God through what his son has accomplished. He was born for this purpose. And we can experience this peace, it's not just like, yeah, I can have peace with God, but you actually can know it

and experience it.

Jesus said to his disciples, we were reading in John 14 earlier today, and John 14, verse 25, telling his disciples before he is going to be arrested and beaten and crucified, he said this to them, these things have spoken to you, to his disciples, while I'm still with you.

But the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all these things and bring to remembrance all that I have said. So there's a good one, the Holy Spirit helps us remember what Jesus said, not just tells us anything all the time, remember God's word.

Then Jesus says, peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not as the world gives do I give to you, let not your hearts be troubled nor let them be afraid.

So peace is not just the absence of strife, conflict, and turmoil. There's not a single place in the Scripture that peace isn't mentioned outside of craziness.

[33:48] It's always in the context of something going on that's like not awesome, a lot of strife, a lot of conflict. This idea that our souls, we can say all is well, right?

that true spiritual peace manufactured, not manufactured by human hands, but by God himself we can possess. Jonathan Edwards once commented about this passage.

He said, the believer's peace is both the strength, beauty, and dignity of the saint. The beauty and dignity of the saint.

It's like this garment we put on that makes us stand out in a world full of strife and conflict. The beauty and dignity of the saints is the peace that Christ gives.

The settled confidence that your soul is not at war with God anymore. It is right with God through what Christ has accomplished. It's a possession and a privilege that he has given us as saints.

[34:55] The world can't have this. It all comes only through Christ. We read this earlier today. Again, we don't get peace by not facing the facts and turning around and trying to push the negative thoughts out of our life, but rather turning in God to help us overcome those realities.

I've learned it. Not just the absence of danger, but it's also feeling protected. And no matter what's going on around you by a sense of God's real presence with you, God's peace with you, regardless of what's happening out here.

Isaiah 26 that we read earlier, you keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you because he trusts in you, trusts in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock.

I wrote that verse in my whiteboard in the hospital back in my recovery days of early transplant. I had those three, four month stays in the hospital. My mind was not at peace.

I was trying really hard to remind myself of that reality. But it's peace in the midst of the storm, not the absence of the storm. They can exist simultaneously.

[36:10] And a lot of people here will be able to tell you many stories of having the peace of Christ when everything else is burning down around them. Paul wrote to Timothy, Now may the Lord of peace himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance.

The Lord be with you all. 2 Timothy 3.16 So a good reminder for us is that Jesus never, never promised his followers anything would be easy and comfortable.

Not one promise in the scripture says that. Never promised security and comfort in this world. Christ doesn't want you to be comfortable in this world.

To the contrary. He doesn't want you to get comfortable in this world. He wants to shake you up to remind you that this is temporal and fleeting and we need to put our minds on eternity. But he promises something great to his people.

I'm going to close with this. John 16 33. Jesus said to his disciples, I've told you these things so that in me you may have peace.

[37:22] In this world you will have tribulation, trouble, trials. But take heart, I have overcome the world. So as long as we are united to Christ, we also will overcome.

come. So just a reminder to use this season, and I'm preaching this to myself, that we can have and experience that real peace with God through what Christ has accomplished.

And ending on a jolly note, Spurgeon at a Christmas sermon, he says, feast, Christians, feast. feast. But in your feasting, think of the man in Bethlehem.

Let him have place in your hearts. Give him the glory. Think of the virgin who conceived him. But think most of all of the man born, the child given.
I will finish again by saying a happy Christmas to you all. Let's pray together.