

“PEACE”**2nd SUNDAY OF ADVENT****I – CHRISTMAS PEACE:*****[Christmas Chaos]***

How can peace be one of the gifts of Christmas? It seems that this is one of the least peaceful times of the year. People are running around shopping, frantically looking for that perfect gift. A trip outside your home on black Friday will you show that chaos – not peace, starts the season!

Then you worry about how you’re going to fit in all the family meals, the friend gatherings. How can you find a time that everyone can be in one place at the same time? You worry about what to serve at the holiday meal and how to properly cook and serve it all. Let’s not forget the care you put into wrapping the gifts for under the tree or the way you drive yourself insane figuring out how to decorate the house. And I see very little peace on Christmas as the gifts are opened and the paper, boxes, and bows get strewn around the house, the dirty dishes pile up in the sink, and the relatives end up in some kind of disagreement.

Even the church seems to be in turmoil during this season of the year. There are numerous bulletins and inserts that need to be done. Special programs are planned for practiced and offered to the congregation for worship. Then there’s the extra services, special decorating, finding the candles from last year, and making room for all the special music and choirs as they want to be a part of the special worship we do at this time of the year. The secretaries can get a little surly as we work them harder than usual. And in all this you still want to find peace!

II - WHERE’S THE PEACE:***[Where’s the peace?]***

I want to know where the peace is that we keep reading and hearing about at this time of the year. In Isaiah’s prophecy we read last week it said that one of Jesus’ names would be “PRINCE OF PEACE.” As a matter of fact all the other names he is given comes to the climax of “Prince of Peace.” Where’s the peace?

Then in our reading from this morning the priest Zechariah is prophesizes over his son John, who will grow up to be John the Baptist, and he says that his son will guide the people to the “Path of Peace.”

These things happened over 2000 years ago and we’re still waiting on the peace. WHERE’S THE PEACE IN OUR WORLD!

III – TEXT:

Then I read the Christmas story from Luke and see the scripture that talks about peace on earth...

Luke 2:13-14 (NLT)

¹³ Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in highest heaven,

and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”

[Angel and shepherds]

As we approach these two verses in the Birth of Jesus story we see that the angel has just appeared to the shepherds in the field and announced to them the birth of the baby Jesus. Then it says

[Host of angels]

“suddenly” the armies of heaven, the host of angels who serve God, appeared in the skies over them and began praising God as they sang out these two verses.

They give God the glory and worship he deserves and then they pronounce, “Peace on earth to those with whom he is well pleased.” You’ll recognize the verse in the King James Version that says “Peace on earth, goodwill towards men.”

What peace? I’m guessing that if I’m a lowly illiterate, stinky, shepherd in the middle of a field watching someone else’s smelly sheep the last thing I’d be feeling as the armies of heaven appeared and started singing would be peace. I’m thinking it would be more of a scared out of my wits thing. Not peace – fear!

IV – PEACE DEFINITION:

[Dove of Peace]

To understand the gift of “Peace” found in the Christmas narrative and elsewhere in the Bible you have to change your understanding of the word “Peace.” It’s not talking about things being quiet, perfect, and chaos free. It means something different than what we think about when we hear the word “Peace.”

Both the Hebrew word Shalom and the New Testament Greek word used for peace, they are mostly used to mean a wholeness and well being – especially through the restoration of relationships, first between God and Humans and then between humans.

[Hearts of love]

Think of the two greatest commandments Jesus gave us, both of which started in the Old Testament. We are to love God with all our hearts, minds, and souls. And then we are to love each other the way Jesus loves us. This is at the heart of our peace.

[Jesus]

In the OT prophecy of Isaiah concerning the Prince of Peace he is talking about the coming of the Messiah, the coming of Jesus. It is a relationship with that Jesus that will bring the world peace.

In the prophecy of Zechariah, the path of peace that he is speaking about is a relationship with Jesus. That’s who his Son John will point people to. That is the path they must follow to find peace. Relationship with Jesus.

When Jesus healed people or interacted with them...When he had built a relationship with them he told them to “Go in Peace.”

And that’s what the angels were singing about in the sky over Bethlehem that first Christmas night. Peace will come to those who please God...those who acknowledge the gift of his Son who was born that night in the stable. The Son who came to earth to fix the sinful mess the creatures called humans had made of the Creation.

The gift of peace at Christmas is found by accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior...of receiving your Salvation...and then living accordingly. Then you will find the peace that passes all understanding as promised in the Bible.

You can have this peace, no matter what’s going on around you. And you can have it all the time...not just one night a year. With Jesus in your heart you will understand the words of “Silent Night”...”all is calm, all is bright” (I may sing the whole 1st verse) Jesus lights your way and calms the storms of your life. The Holy babe sleeps in heavenly peace...not earthly chaos. You can too. Amen

V – PEACE GIFT: Pastor Becky

[Share the gift of peace]

Pastor Becky will share with the congregation how to share the gift of peace with others and remind them of the straw manger.