



Sermon Series: Looking Forward to Christmas

To be used with Session 1: Looking Forward with Hope

Sermon Title Possibilities: “No Jesus, No Peace; Know Jesus, Know Peace!”

Scripture: Isaiah 8:20-22; 9:1-7

Connection To Unit Theme: A common message heard throughout Advent season is the idea of, “Peace on Earth.” While many of us have had our peace repeatedly interrupted, the reality is that all of us desire peace in some fashion. While the story of Advent ultimately leads us to the Birth of Jesus Christ, one of the sub-lessons of the story is the fact that Jesus is indeed our primary source of peace. And unlike things on earth, there’s nothing temporary about peace from our Savior.

Introduction: Think about the people that you know in your life. Who do you consider a friend and who do you consider an enemy? Who brings joy to your life and who creates strife? Who do you consider a safe space and who do you avoid at all costs because you know that they mean you no good? The reality is that different people bring with them different things into our lives, and vice versa. However, there is somebody that we all need to know in order to experience lasting and perfect peace. (Isaiah 26:3 says, “You will keep them in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him, because they trusted in Him.” Perfect peace cannot exist without a perfect being. Likewise, perfect peace cannot come from imperfect things.)

The prophet Isaiah once again addresses the children of Israel in an attempt to both discourage them from sinning, as well as encourage them to trust and honor The Lord in all that they say and do. Moreover, he emphasizes to them that anyone who desires peace, but doesn’t desire The Lord is seeking an impossible outcome. In setting the stage for the forthcoming Messiah, God uses Isaiah to prepare the audience to receive and acknowledge Him as their true Savior and Lord. Failure to do so would prevent any type of lasting or meaningful peace.

1. Isaiah 8:20-22 The Right Way to Handle Darkness!

Legendary R&B artist Keith Sweat had a major hit in 1987 entitled, “Right and a Wrong Way.” In it, he asserts, “there’s a right and a wrong way to love somebody. While Keith was speaking in the context of a romantic relationship, the fact is that there is indeed a right and a wrong way to love somebody. Additionally, there is a right and a wrong way to handle situations in our lives, at the list of which is something that all of us encounter at some point and time— darkness.

God uses the prophet Isaiah to warn the children of Israel that when darkness comes, there’s a right and a wrong way to handle it. There are things that we do that extend and add to our darkness. Moreover, turning away from God is the equivalent of seeking darkness. The children of Israel continually disobeyed God, ignored God’s commandments, and attempted to do things

their own way, thus landing them in many dark situations. This is a lesson to us that while some dark seasons are just the difficulties of life that all of us must face at some point, there is some darkness for which we have no one to blame but ourselves. While the words of verses 20-22 may seem grim and hopeless, the reality is that peace was and is possible, but only through God. This is why the passage begins with the words, "... if they don't speak according to this word, there will be no dawn for them." In other words, if we ignore God's word, we are enabling our darkness to continue and handling our darkness in the wrong fashion. God's word is our only option.

2. Isaiah 9:1-5 The True Eternal Flame!

If you visit the graves of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and President John F. Kennedy, you will notice a very distinct feature that most graves don't have: An Eternal Flame. An eternal flame is a fire display that is set up in a such a way that the fire continually burns. This is symbolic of the message and legacy of the deceased, in this case a trailblazing Civil Rights Leader and history making U.S. President, both of which were taken from us at the hands of an assassin. In order for the flames to remain lit, they need to be maintained and set up in the right way. Conditions such as weather and changes in construction of the area must be taken in to considered in order to ensure that the flame truly remains intact.

Every flame that has been labeled, "Eternal" has gone out at some point or another. Any flame created by human hands is liable to eventually burnout. however, there is one eternal flame that is truly eternal, has never gone out, and will never go out. this is why Jesus says in John 8:12, "...I am the light of the world. anyone who follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." The Israelites were very much in self-imposed darkness; however, God uses Isaiah to encourage them that their darkness didn't need to last forever. There was light available. This is a word for all of us today, because if we are still living, we don't have to remain in darkness. Light is available, and Jesus is that light. That's why the hymn-writer once said, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace."

3. Isaiah 9:6-7 – Big Things Come in Small Packages!

With Christmas time right around the corner, it's natural to think about what gifts to buy and now to wrap them under the tree. Most people get excited when they use large packages, because they assume that the bigger it is, the more amazing the gift is. Likewise, several individuals tend to look at smaller packages and not expect much at all. However, as the saying goes, "big things come in small packages." The size of something doesn't necessarily denote its significance, or lack thereof. This is a lesson both for our natural lives, as well as our spiritual lives.

God uses the prophet Isaiah to tell of the coming of Jesus the Christ, and Isaiah specifies that He will come as a baby. Given how Jesus is described as, The Messiah, The Prince of Peace, and a source of both Greatness and Peace, most people wouldn't expect all of that from a child. However, this is exactly what Isaiah says will be coming in verses 6-7. Think about it, the B-Clause refers to this forthcoming Messiah as, "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace." Essentially a matchless ruler with no equal or competition, and yet He will arrive in a small package. While most people love babies and enjoy dreaming of what they can potentially accomplish as they get older, rarely does one look at a baby and assign such

powerful attributes to them. However, Isaiah makes it clear that just because the package is small, doesn't mean the contents of the package are small. Many babies had been born prior to Jesus, and many more have been born since. Yet not a one of them has done anything close to what this baby ended up doing. And guess what, the impact of that little baby is still around and still doing big things.

Conclusion

Do you want the peace of God? If you truly desire it, it is available to you. However, there is only one way to get it: Through Jesus. There's a reason why God used Isaiah to emphasize to the Israelites that the peace that they so desperately desired was available, but they were only hurting themselves by searching for it in the wrong places. Money can't bring it. Popularity can't bring it. Sex can't bring it. Power can't bring it. Material possessions can't bring it. As nice as those things are, they are all fleeting and have a shelf life. However, Jesus has absolutely no shelf life, nor is there any limit to His Power or the light that He brings. The songwriter said it like this, "it's good to know Jesus..." Isaiah's message in this text is both an encouragement that true peace is possible, but a warning that seeking anywhere other than with God is a foolish and doomed endeavor. In short, family, no Jesus, no peace! know Jesus, know peace!

Author Bio

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