

Willingly Waiting: Waiting for Peace – Isaiah 9:1-7

It's hard for most of us to fathom the all-encompassing nature of living through something like World War 2. The years of conflict, destruction, and loss of life that shaped every day. Because we haven't been through anything like that it's often hard to grasp the joy of the first few days after the surrender documents were signed by Germany and Japan and the war had officially ended.

People emptied into the streets and danced and sang. Parties were thrown and peace was celebrated and embraced. You would think that once people got a taste of the peace that comes after a devastating conflict like that, they would never want to go back to war again. But almost overnight the Cold War emerged and armed conflict picked back up again and has continued to this day. At this moment, there are 8 "Major Wars" happening around the globe. A conflict becomes major when at least 10,000 people died in it during the last calendar year. In addition, there are 9 "minor" wars where between 1,000 and 10,000 died last year.

Peace is something that most people throughout human history have wanted, but it should be clear by now that we humans are incapable of cultivating true and lasting peace on our own.

Today is the second Sunday of Advent and the theme for this Sunday is peace. As we think about peace and long for peace, we understand that we don't live in a peaceful world. Even if we aren't experiencing a major or minor war, division and conflict pervade our lives. There's fighting among families, co-workers, neighbors, and certainly online. I haven't even mentioned the political divisions that are ever present and have always been a part of human government.

We find ourselves longing for peace and waiting for it because it's not here now. So, as we celebrate Advent and consider our waiting, let's think this morning about how to wait for peace and what this means for your life and mine this week. Here's what we are going to look at this morning. **2 Requirements of a Life Spent Waiting for Peace**

1. Craving Messiah's Arrival and Peace

I've used that word "craving" this morning because it starts with a C. And, more importantly, because it gets to the gut level desire that I want you to see and feel. If you were living through World War 2 no doubt there would be an almost primeval craving for the war to end. It would energize and drive you to do things you wouldn't normally spend your days doing.

Messiah's arrival brings with it a lasting worldwide peace that will be unbelievably glorious. Anticipating that arrival and the peace that goes with should change how we live today.

To understand this, let's ask this question, are division and conflict a natural part of this world, or something parasitic that feeds off of the goodness of God's creation and sickens it and need to be eradicated?

The answer from the Bible is obvious. God creates the world in magnificent goodness. Listen to God's assessment at the end of His creational work. Gen. 1:31. This goodness meant that everything worked as it should and in harmony with everything else. All of creation pointed toward the same end goal and purpose and moved without friction together toward that purpose. What a delightful place to be!

Adam and Eve are placed in a garden and given all the rich blessings of God's goodness to enjoy and then can walk in perfect fellowship with God Himself and enjoy a relationship with Him and one another without hindrance or conflict.

But then sin entered the picture and broke the harmony of God's creation. The second that Adam and Eve chose to believe the lie of the serpent and distrust God's goodness, all of creation began to fracture. Adam and Eve hide from God and blame one another. Conflict between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman is promised. Creation will fight against humanity. Humanity will fight against humanity and humanity will fight against God. Nothing will be easy, and everything will be divided.

You see this played out through the OT. The first story we read after Adam and Eve are barred from the Garden is the murder of Abel by his brother Cain. Broken relationships. Murder. Conflict. God calls Israel to be His special chosen people to

be a light to the nations and to show them the peace and harmony that God plans to bring back to humanity. But what does Israel do? You can read from Genesis to Isaiah to find out, but here's a pretty good summary in Isaiah 1:2-4 of the centuries of Israel's sin. Their root problem and all of humanities root problem is the broken relationship with God. This causes all the other conflict and division.

But God loves His creation and His people and He was never going to allow conflict to win the day. He promises that peace will return to creation and to His people. Listen to Isaiah 2:2-4. How will this peace come? Listen to Isaiah 9:1-5. This is a message of harmony and joy for God's people in the future as their relationship with God is restored. How does this happen? Listen to Isaiah 9:6-7.

Throughout the OT the coming of God's messiah means the arrival of peace. Now, make sure you understand this peace. The word translated peace here is a word you probably know, shalom. Here's what it means:

The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call shalom. In English we call it peace, but it means far more than just peace of mind or ceasefire between enemies. In the Bible shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as the creator and savior opens doors and speaks welcome to the creatures in whom he delights. Shalom, in other words, is the way things are supposed to be. - Cornelius Plantinga

And how does Messiah bring peace? By restoring humanity's relationship with God through His death and resurrection at His first coming and then by restoring all of creation to harmony with God at His second coming and by His rule and reign. Listen to Romans 5:1. To be justified is to be declared righteous before God, which means I am back into a right standing with God and the barrier has been removed. We are justified by faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So, with the relationship with God restored and with the hope of perfect shalom for all of creation when Messiah Jesus returns, how do I wait for that peace now?

2. Cultivating Peace in the Present

Remember, this season of Advent is about mimicking the waiting of the Israel for the arrival of Messiah and it's about us learning to wait for the second coming of Messiah at His return. We live in between and must wait. And waiting is always shaped by bringing the future into the present. We know peace is our future destination because of the promises of Shalom associated with Messiah. But we already have peace with God through Christ and so we reach forward to the future and begin to live now in light of the peace coming.

So, we are people who cultivate peace now and this happens in two areas. Internal peace and relationship peace. Let's look first at internal peace and for this please turn to Philippians 4 and we are going to look at verses 4-7. Paul ends his letter to the Philippians with a series of short commands to help them live out what he has given them in this letter. Let's start in verse 4 and read through verse 6. It's easy and feels natural to live in anxiety in a world of division, strife, and conflict.

The way this is written in Greek means this was an ongoing struggle for the believers at Philippi as I'm sure it is for many in this room. How does Paul say to handle the ongoing anxiety that comes from living in a broken world? Look at the rest of verse 6. Essentially, he says pray and he uses three different words for prayer. First, the word prayer is simply describing the human approach to the divine. This is something you and I have access to because of our standing in Christ. Second, "supplication" focuses more on asking. Turn your worries into requests to God. Third, "requests" speaks of very specific items. Talk to God directly about what you are anxious about.

But don't forget that Paul says we should respond to anxiety by praying about everything. If anxiety is an ongoing struggle, build into your life the habit of talking to God about everything. Paul isn't promising that a quick prayer in a moment of worry will automatically turn off the worry like a faucet handle turned off. He's saying a life lived in dependence on God where we make our requests known to God shows our dependence on God and seeks to trust Him with all of life.

Anxiety comes from handling life through my own resources. The problem is that I never have sufficient resources to handle the brokenness of the world. But God does. And this is why the result of a life of prayer is what we read in verse 7.

Peace is the opposite experience of anxiety. And it comes to us from God because God is a God of peace. Look at verse 9. Do you think God is characterized by worry, fear, and anxiety? Does He get stressed about stuff on a regular basis? Of course not, because He has all the resources to handle anything.

So, why does prayer bring the peace of God into our lives? Because it connects us to God's resources and trusts that He will exercise His resources on our behalf, which he has promised to do. Prayer gives us access to the peace that God Himself has. One author put it like this:

The condition for experiencing God's peace is not that God grants all of our requests but that we have made known all our requests to God with thanksgiving. God's peace is not the result of the power of our prayers or the effectiveness of our prayers. Prayer is not auto-suggestion, a form of self-hypnosis that produces God's peace. Prayer is our openness about our needs before God, our emptiness in his presence, our absolute dependence upon him with an attitude of constant thanksgiving and complete trust. When we pray with that attitude, the focus is not at all upon what we are doing or will do, but on what God will do. God will do something supernatural beyond our best abilities and thoughts: the peace of God will guard us. "Peace is always the gift of God rather than humanly devised or achieved." -Walter Hansen

So, we cultivate internal peace, but we also cultivate relational peace because we are bringing the future into the present. Here's what I mean. Listen to Jesus's words in Matthew 5:9.

Those who make peace are called the sons of God because they are like God. As we've already seen this morning, God takes a broken, rebellious, sinful, and divided world, and He actively makes peace. And that's what this is calling us to and it's how to live as we wait for peace. In every area of life, you are a person who seeks to bring people together, to reconcile, to harmonize, and to make

peace. This doesn't mean ignoring sin or differences, but it does mean intentionally, purposefully, and actively making peace rather than causing division and strife.

Is this you? Or do you love the drama of a good relational conflict at work? Do you plan to participate in an online scrum this afternoon for kicks and giggles? So many Christians make it an everyday practice to get online and argue, fight, spread dirt, or perpetuate division. That way of living is impossible to reconcile with Christ's picture of the peacemaker as being like God.

Listen to Proverbs 12:20. Peacemaking brings joy and it makes you like God.

So, we've seen these two requirements today of a life spent waiting for peace. Crave the future and cultivate in the present a life of peace, both internal and relational. It's all made possible by Christ's peacemaking for us on the cross. Let's pray.

Sermon Reflection Questions – 12/7/25

- What are the most concerning divisions or conflicts to you in our country/culture right now?
- How do we know that God created the world without conflict or division?
- How does disharmony show itself after the fall into sin in Genesis 3?
- How does the history of Israel in the OT show estrangement from God?
- Explain Shalom in your own words.
- How does Messiah usher in shalom?
- What is the relationship between “peace with God” (Romans 5:1) and shalom?
- Why does Paul offer prayer as a key to battling anxiety?
- What is it about God’s character that gives us peace?
- Explain what it means to be a peacemaker.

- What's one area of life where you could more actively and intentionally pursue making peace?