

FBC Service Advent 2 Peace Sunday December 8, 2024, Luke 2:8-14

Suddenly, in what was the quiet darkness of a Bethlehem night, amidst the humble surroundings of a stable, a message of peace was proclaimed—a message that would forever change the world.

The angelic chorus, in one resounding moment, brought both a declaration and a promise: “Peace on earth.”

This wasn’t a peace in the way we often understand it. It wasn’t simply the absence of conflict or a cessation of wars. No, this peace—the peace heralded by the heavenly host—is the peace of God Himself coming into the world in the form of a tiny baby.

The peace spoken of here is the reconciliation of humanity to God, made possible by the birth of Jesus Christ.

For many of us peace can seem elusive, because our world is filled with noise, division, and turmoil, and even our personal lives are often marked by internal struggles, anxiety, fear, regret, or grief.

Yet in the midst of all this, Advent invites us to take a moment and remember that peace has already come—not as a distant hope, but as an immediate reality through Jesus.

The angels proclaimed peace *"to those with whom God is well pleased."* This isn't peace for the proud or self-sufficient, but peace for those who recognize their need for God's grace.

It’s a peace given freely to those who open their hearts to the Saviour, who trust in His presence and promises.

It’s a peace that transcends understanding, a peace that guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

This Advent, as we wait and prepare for Christ's coming, let’s allow His peace to reign in our hearts.

In a world that often feels divided and restless, the peace of Christ offers us something profound—a deep assurance that God is with us, that His love is stronger than any fear or trouble, and that His presence brings wholeness to our fractured world.

On this second Sunday of Advent, we’re looking at the candle of Peace. And what better place to begin than the angel’s pronouncement of Peace to the shepherds on that first Christmas Eve.

Peace. Just five little letters, yet so powerful it can change the world.

We even sing about it in one of the most peaceful and loved Christmas carols ever written: “Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright. Round yon virgin, mother and Child, Holy Infant so tender and mild, sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.”

We all long for peace in our lives, and yet peace is sadly lacking in our world. People are full of worry and anxiety. Relationships are full of conflict and stress.

But that’s where Jesus comes in. Because he’s not only our Hope at Christmas, he’s also our Peace.

That's what the Advent Candle of Peace is all about today. Part of the Christmas story, part of the Christmas message that Jesus brings us peace.

Peace With God. Peace With Self. Peace With Others and Peace on Earth.

How often we forget that the reason we celebrate this season, is because of the proclamation of angels--that we can be at peace with God through His son Jesus Christ.

Most of us prefer to live our lives at peace with our world. And yet the greatest relationship of our lives, a personal relationship with Almighty God, is often the last one we give consideration to.

It's so easy isn't it, to sing songs like "Angels from the Realms of Glory", and "Hark the Herald Angels Sing," and miss the message of these songs because of their familiarity.

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah proclaimed peace with these words:

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (NIV)

That's the proclamation of Peace - that in Jesus Christ, you and I can have peace with God.

What do you think of when the word peace is mentioned? A baby sleeping under a warm blanket? Two enemies laying down their arms and embracing each other? A beautiful sunset on a beach?

What does peace actually mean when used in the passage before us?

Peace is something we all want and need. Yet peace remains for most people an elusive goal.

One little girl was diligently working on a school assignment when her father came into her room and asked what she was doing.

She told him she was working on a plan for world peace. Her father asked if that was not too big a task for such a small girl.

The girl replied, "Oh no, don't worry dad, there are two other girls in my class helping me with it!"

That girl and her friends had high hopes and were to be commended for it.

But she was not aware that statisticians have discovered that in thousands of years of recorded human history, less than 10% of that time has there been real world peace - and during that time thousands of treaties have been made and broken by various nations.

What about peace? Can we really experience it? Does God's peace mean world peace or just personal peace? Is either realistic?

Biblical peace is not the absence of struggle, for there is nothing the devil likes better than to rob the believer of peace.

God's peace doesn't mean closing our ears to the cries of the hurting and lost people of our world.

Jesus had perfect peace in His heart, but He was moved to tears by the crowds of people whose lives he wanted to touch, but they turned away.

In other words, peace does not mean the absence of a burden.

God's peace doesn't mean we're to sacrifice His truth and principles on the altar of getting along with the world, and watering down the Gospel, and those things we hold dear as foundational truths.

Let's look at what the Bible means when it speaks of Peace.

In Christ we discover Upward Peace

Upward Peace is the basis of all true peace. Upward peace is the peace one needs and receives when Jesus Christ is accepted as Lord and Saviour. Romans 5:1 reads;

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Clearly the peace we need most, comes through a relationship with God brought to us only through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Why is it that everyone who puts their faith in Jesus finds peace with God?

It's because of what Jesus did at the cross. Jesus was born into this world to die on the cross so that our sins could be forgiven, and we could be restored to a right relationship of peace with God.

When we become Christians, we're granted peace with God. That is what we can call "saving peace."

The Advent 2 candle reminds us that God sent His Son into this world to open the door of peace to our hearts. He gives us a peace you can't find anywhere else. He forgives our sins and He prepares us a place in Heaven. We have a peace which passes all human understanding!

The greatest need for peace in our world today is an upward peace - peace with God. But a second truth about true peace is.

In Christ we discover Inward Peace

Once we have peace with God, we're ready for real peace within. In John 14:1, Jesus said ... *"Do not let your heart be troubled."*

There's an important element in this sentence which is often overlooked. Jesus used the word **"let"** when referring to a troubled heart.

The problem for the believer is that he **"lets"** his heart be troubled.

This indicates this is something we do in ourselves, something totally unnecessary, which causes us to lose our peace.

A man told his psychiatrist, "Every night when I get into bed, I think someone is under it. I then get up and look but there's never anyone there.

When I crawl under the bed and lie down, I get the idea that there's someone on top of the bed. This goes on all night, up and down, up and down. It's driving me crazy. Do you think you can help me?"

The doctor said, "I think I can. All you have to do is visit me twice a week for the next two years, and I think I can cure you. It will cost you \$200 per visit or just over \$20,000." The man said, "That's pretty steep for a working man like me. I'll talk it over with my wife and let you know."

The next week the man called the psychiatrist and said, "Thanks doc, but I won't be coming back. My wife didn't like your price per visit, so she just solved the problem." The doctor asked, "How did she do that?" **The man said, "She cut the legs off the bed, so there can't be anyone under it!"**

God wants to saw the legs off our worries and anxieties. We're not to **"let"** our hearts be troubled.

Isaiah 26:3 reminds us; *You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.*"

This is a fascinating verse of Scripture. It's beautiful to read, lovely to learn, and even more wonderful to embrace. This verse states that God will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, trusting in Him.

The word **"keep"** literally means to guard, protect, hide and conceal. Don't miss the importance of this one word.

We're not kept from trouble, but we're hidden in the One who walks with us through trouble. Jesus didn't keep the disciples from the storm, **but He was with them in the storm** and kept them from any harm caused by the storm.

Remember that Jesus said ...

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

Jesus repeats His peace twice in the same sentence - He says, *"Peace I leave, my peace I give you."*

This is God's Great, Perfect Peace.

There is however a condition to obtaining this peace. There's saving peace and there's living peace, and living peace is somewhat different.

Living peace is the tranquility of the heart and soul in the midst of life's adverse winds.

Living peace is the serenity of the mind despite the stabbing pangs of fear, doubt, depression, temptation, and all other attacks to our emotional well-being.

So, what's the condition that must be met in order to have living peace?

The text states that the mind must be steadfastly fixed on Him.

When our minds are fixed on Him, **we have the God of peace to keep us in perfect peace!** This kind of double peace is beyond understanding. That is exactly what the Bible says. It cannot be explained, but it can be enjoyed.

There's one other word in Isaiah 26:3 which is very important and that's the word **"trust."** It means to lean upon the Lord. without fear or doubt. When I sit down in my chair at home, I never do so with reservations. I don't sit down slowly, as if I think the chair may give way.

Paul wrote to the Philippians and spoke about a peace that goes beyond understanding. A promise to guard our hearts and minds with His peace when we lay up our requests before God with thanksgiving.

I know that for some people, Christmas can be a hard season of the year, especially when things have not worked out the way they hoped they would. **Broaden Here!**

Not for a moment would I minimize the sadness of life, but Philippians 4 reminds us of a truth that is both deeper and higher than the disappointments of this messed-up world

Try as we might, peace often eludes us. That's because peace has a great price. You can't demand it; you can't purchase it; you can't invent it or concoct it.

What is worrying you today? What is causing you anxiety.

Our Lord came on that first Christmas to grant us Upward Peace and Inward Peace but that is not all.

In Christ we discover Outward Peace

The third kind of peace we need to be aware of is peace with people around us. We're called upon as Christians to be peacemakers. God is not asking us to do the impossible. There are some people, even Christians, who will not let you live at peace with them. And we must not sacrifice truth for peace.

In Hebrews 12:14-15 we read ...

"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."

We should make every effort to live in peace and to avoid allowing roots of bitterness to grow up between us and others.

When your heart is not right with someone with whom you should have a right spirit and relationship, you will not enjoy full peace with God or yourself.

We read in Romans 12:18, *“If it’s possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”*

We are responsible for peace in relationships as far as it depends on us. But not peace at any price!

There are some people, no matter how hard you try, will never allow you to have peace with them. Somehow, they know how to push your buttons, get under your skin and rob you of inner peace.

Our duty is to do our part to create peace with others, though not everyone will accept us or desire peace with us.

In the fourth and last kind of peace we see.

In Christ we have Onward Peace

Yes, there’s an onward, everlasting peace. A peace that assures us when our race on earth is done, we have the promise of Jesus that he will take us to a heavenly home he has gone to prepare for all his people. This is the great hope of every Christian!

But in the meantime, we’re to keep our lamps trimmed and be ready for the Lord’s return.

In the midst of our busy lives, don’t forget this promise of peace. Who among us has not longed for quiet moments, for respite from all those things that would rob us of our peace?

Remember true peace is not found in external circumstances; it’s found in our hearts, in our relationship with God.

As we journey through Advent, let’s reflect on the meaning of Peace. Let’s consider how we can cultivate peace in our own lives and in the lives of others.

I pray that all of us here have accepted the Upward Peace of a life in Christ.

I pray that all of us here have accepted the Inward Peace of a mind stayed on Jesus.

I pray that all of us here have accepted the Outward Peace of a heart that beats for God.

I pray that all of us here have accepted the Onward Peace of a soul united with its Creator.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.