

12-6-2020 Second Sunday of Advent Worship Devotion



Welcome:

In the busyness of the season, in the unpredictability of the COVID restrictions, we welcome you for a time to worship God, to experience His presence in profound ways. I pray God will grant you peace deep within you. Leave your To-Do Lists at the foot of the cross; this is a sacred space God has created for you.

<https://youtu.be/pk0UGCb9Jcw> ***Blessed Be the God of Israel***

Opening Prayer:

Compassionate God, we come into the stillness of this place to sit before you knowing that you are the source of all our peace no matter is going on in our lives. Dear God, some of us feel anxious and afraid that we will be next to get the COVID virus. Keep us and our loved ones safe and bring us your peace that only you can give. Some feel scattered, with worry, with loneliness. We search and search for peace within, down whatever path life throws our way, yet we come up empty. Quiet us to hear your voice; still our spirits to feel your touch. Give us the peace that surpasses all understanding and empower us to give that peace to others in need. Am

<https://youtu.be/fjD3RO2hfqU> ***Light the Advent Candle 2***

Imagine now our Advent Candle Lighting – Candle of Hope (May your memory of Candlelighting in the past fill your remembrance.)

Advent Candlelighting – Candle of Peace

L: Last Sunday we lit the first candle in our Advent Wreath, the candle of hope. We light it again as we remember that Christ, who was born in Bethlehem, will come again to fulfill all of God's promises to us. (*Light first candle.*)

The second candle of Advent is the Candle of Peace. Peace is a word that we hear a lot, but often peace is so illusive, whether it is peace within or world peace. Yet, it is one of the things that we hope for. Christ brought peace when he first came to us and he will bring everlasting peace when he comes again.

P: The prophet Isaiah called Christ “the Prince of Peace”. When Jesus came he taught people the importance of being peacemakers. He said that those who make peace shall be called the children of God.

L: We light the candle of peace to remind us that Jesus is the Prince of Peace and that through him peace is found. (*Light the second candle.*)

Peace is like a light shining in a dark place. As we look at this candle we celebrate the peace we find in Jesus Christ. Let us pray:

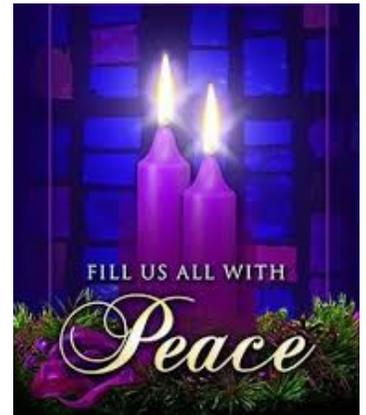
ALL: Thank you God for the peace you give us. We ask that as we wait for all your promises to come true, and for Christ to come again, that you would remain present with us. Help us today, and every day to worship you, to hear your Word, and to do your will by sharing your peace with each other. We ask it in the name of the One who was born in Bethlehem. Amen.

<https://youtu.be/LXOwOlr9a-I> **O Day of Peace That Dimly Shines**

Scriptures:

Hebrew Scriptures
Gospel Lesson

Isaiah 2:1-5, 9:6-7
John 14:27



Message: “The Gift of Peace”

When I think of *peace*, there are many scripture verses that come to mind; however, the words from a hymn kept coming into my mind as I was thinking of (*It is Well With My Soul*). You know the words: “*When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul.*” God’s peace has a way of coming over our hearts and calms our souls. No matter what is going on in our lives, when God’s peace enters into your hearts, you are no longer anxious any more.

The baby Jesus lying in the manger – that is an image of peace – for that matter, any child sweetly sleeping in bed is an image of peace. But, God’s peace has a way of tenderly sweeping over us like a warm blanket covering us with contentment, comfort,

and a sense that we don't have to worry because God is in control! I'm sure you have images of peace, too. What brings peace to your soul? Maybe places you can go to in your mind, perhaps places in nature that brought you calm. You can picture them in your mind and go there any time, to bring on peace to your whole being. It helps lower blood pressure! It's called guided imagery, or guided meditation. So, in those moments of tension and stress, go there in your mind and pray to God to bring you His peace.

While this year has been far from bringing moments of peace to our soul, if we are wrapped in God's blanket of peace, we are in the arms of divine peace that no one can take us away from those moments of peace, even when the uncertainty of COVID knocks on your door or on those we love. While other storms may ravage our existence, God provides us His continual faithfulness of never leaving us alone.

Each Advent season, we set up the Advent wreath is up with the paraments hanging down with the words: Hope, Peace, Love and Joy. You see them every year – what do they mean to you? Now that we cannot physically see them in person, can your memories of past Advent seasons remind you of the gifts that God gives, which we celebrate each year? And because they are gifts, in order to have them, we have to accept them. Like the present under the tree with your name on it, it doesn't do any good for it to lay under tree. You have to take it and open it. In the same way, these gifts from God, you have to take them and open your heart to receive them. So this week, be amazed at the ways God brings peace into your life.

We call him "Prince of Peace" – this tiny baby in the manger - but what does that title mean to you? As I was researching through my devotional books about peace, what struck me was that the topic of "Prince of Peace" showed up in March/April – during Lent! So, we have to look to the ending of his life story to come up with reason for this title.

In fact, we go to Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. We would call it Palm Sunday. A prince is usually identified with privilege, rank and power. But, Jesus,

Prince of Peace, comes into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, a symbol of lowliness. The promise of peace for a people plagued by war and strife was wonderful news – that’s why they were joyously praising God for him. But, when we look closer and deeper into the imagery, we see that the donkey/ass was the beast on which kings rode when they come in peace; only in war did they ride upon horses. He was claiming to be King, rightly so; but King of peace. Jesus deliberately refused the role of the warrior Messiah and claimed, instead to be Prince of Peace. He was appealing for a throne - but the throne was in the hearts of men. It is as if he was saying, “Will you not, even now, accept me as your Lord and King – I come in peace and love – will you not enthrone me within your heart?” He was offering them love, God’s love – that’s what he wanted them to know about God, his Father!

Peace and love – it is why God came into the world in the person of Jesus. To show us love, divine love – *“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”* And to give us peace – our verse from John states: *“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world give. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”* Doesn’t your heart just melt when you hear those words: *“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”*

All of this is a reminder to us that the babe in the manger is God – showing us His love for all of humanity. God came to earth to be a bridge builder, a reconciler, to redeem the people from their sins – all for the love of his prized creation: humans.

You may have heard of the story of George Frederick Handel. Christ brought peace to his anguished spirit. He was frustrated with himself, cut off from other people, at odds with God. He was sick, his eyes were beginning to fail him. He was out of money. He felt empty, dejected, lonely, hopeless and miserable. Nearing the age of 60, he felt for certain that his life was over. He went home one night to find a large package at his door. He literally clawed open the seal to find inside the box, words to a

new sacred piece of music and a letter from Charles Jennes, asking Handel to write the music for it.

Still in despair, he began going through the pages, and suddenly his eyes fell upon a passage that captivated him: *“He was despised and rejected. He looked for someone to have pity on him, but, there was no one – neither found he anyone to comfort him.”* Handel resonated with those words. Those words were written originally about Jesus; but, it actually described what Handel himself was feeling at that moment – despised, rejected, and alone.

With a growing sense of kinship, Handel read on: *“He trusted in God and God did not leave him. . . God gave him rest.”* Now the words began to come alive for Handel. It stirred his soul and warmed his heart. Then he read: *“I know that my redeemer liveth. Rejoice. Rejoice. Hallelujah!”* That started the creative juices in him and he started to write the musical score for one of the greatest and most beloved pieces of sacred music ever written: Handel’s *Messiah!*

So, what happened to Handel? What had made that dramatic change? He experienced Christmas! He received the Messiah! Christ was born afresh in the manger of Handel’s heart, and it made him a new person! Christ stilled the storms in his life that were tearing him apart. Strife turned into peace – fear had turned into courage. And where there had been emptiness, now there was incredible creativity.

That is the way it works. Christmas is the dramatic reminder that Christ came into this world to redeem us and to bring peace to our troubled souls, and to a troubled world. If in faith you will accept it, Christmas has a great gift for you – the gift of peace! The intertwining of the Holy Spirit in our lives brings us peace; and we can, as God’s people, give that peace to others as the evidence of God’s transforming power in our lives, as we live in community with each other and with those in our wider community.

Yes, we are imperfect people; and we make mistakes. Sometimes we are insensitive to the needs of others. But, then God rescues us from ourselves, and uses us as instruments of peace in the world. God is the source of all peace. But, God's peace doesn't simply exist where or when people stop fighting each other. It thrives when people come together in unity and harmony. We do not offer peace to our neighbors by ignoring them. We offer peace by giving a bit of our time when a helping hand is needed, or when a bit of our resources can be used for a better good. And sometimes just a kind smile or a friendly wave is enough to share the gift of peace. Looking to Jesus, we also must find ways to rest in God's peace, and to bring peace to troubled hearts, especially in times and situations when there seems to be no peace. That is our challenge, for Christ sends us forth to practice peace, to be peace, and to give peace to all whom we meet.

<https://youtu.be/jVcZBUP63qw> ***Star-Child***