

The Light of Peace

Last Sunday, we lit the first Advent candle, the candle of hope. Today, we lit the second Advent candle, the candle of peace. The candle of peace. It reminds us of the three-fold promise of Christmas: “You are loved. You are forgiven. You are not alone.”

How deeply we need this Christmas promise in our world today—a world filled with violence... from the tragic shootings in San Bernardino, Colorado Springs, and Paris, to the break-ins in Wolcott & Ontario, to the violence in our homes... A world filled with suffering, grief, and fear. And into this world... into our world... God sent his only begotten Son, Jesus, born in the stable of Bethlehem.

Let’s reflect for a few minutes on what this means for us, as we watch a beautiful video.

[Show: “Peace” <https://skitguys.com/videos/item/advent-worship-collection>]

Christ, our Savior, is born: “You are loved. You are forgiven. You are not alone.”

This is what God promised long ago, through the words of the prophet, Isaiah. It was a time of great violence & uncertainty in the small country of Judah, with its capital, Jerusalem. They watched as their northern neighbor, Israel, was overrun by the vicious power of the Assyrian empire. How long could Judah survive—not only the attacks from outside, but also the desperate poverty and injustice within?

But God promised: “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse...” (Isaiah 11:1) A king would be born... a descendant of Jesse, the father of King David, the first & greatest king to reign in Jerusalem. The royal family—which now seemed like a hopeless, dead tree stump—would someday produce an heir... not just any prince, but the Messiah, the

promised King, who would be filled with God's Spirit, who would rule with justice and righteousness forever, and establish the peaceable kingdom, where enemies would live together as brothers, and the wolf would dwell with the lamb. And a little child would lead them.

How we long for this peaceable kingdom today! The good news is that the little child has come, the promised Messiah has come... Jesus, God's own Son, born on Christmas morning. "You are loved. You are forgiven. You are not alone."

Advent... these weeks before Christmas give us the opportunity to turn our hearts to Jesus—especially in those times of fear, of guilt, of anger, of distress—again, and again, and again to remember that Jesus was born for us, to let his love and peace fill our hearts.

A pastor tells how recently he met a wonderful, skilled doctor, a woman from Nigeria, at a world-famous teaching hospital. He asked her name, and she told him the nickname that everyone called her by, but then he asked her birth name, her African name, and she answered "Omo-gba-kuro-ibinu." "What does it mean?" he inquired. "Child who takes the anger away." She went on to explain that her parents had been forbidden by their parents to marry. But they loved each other so much that they defied their parents and married anyway. Their families cut them off completely, but then her parents were expecting a baby, and she was born. When the grandparents held her in their arms for the first time, the walls of hostility came down. This newborn swept the anger away, replacing it with love and peace. "Omo-gba-kuro-ibinu." "Child who takes the anger away."

[Gordon MacDonald in *Leadership Weekly*.]

Jesus is our “Omo-gba-kuro-ibinu.” We turn to him, letting his love fill our hearts and his example guide our lives. That’s the gift of Holy Communion. As we come to the Lord’s Table, we know that the promise of Isaiah has been fulfilled, “A little child shall lead them.” And we echo the Christmas song of the angels, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among all people.” [Luke 2: 14]

You are loved. You are forgiven. You are not alone. Amen.