



His Name Shall Be Called Prince of Peace

Advent 2015

Isaiah 9:6

David Sunday

December 20, 2015

Let's read Isaiah 9:1-7 as we worship the living God:

But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

² *The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shined.*

³ *You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.*

⁴ *For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.*

⁵ *For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.*

⁶ *For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

⁷ *Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,*

*to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

Thanks be to God. Amen. Let's pray.

Come have Your way among us. We welcome You here, Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace. We pray that You would rule and reign in our hearts as Your Word is opened to us today. Amen.

Back in 2010, a few days after Kate's surgery to remove her lung at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, we were presented by her sister with an album full of cards of precious encouragement to read. One of them was from my mom. Her words really spoke to me then, and I remember them to this day.

She said, "One of the things I've been praying a lot for Kate, David and everyone involved with them is that they will have peace beyond understanding." She then quoted one of her favorite hymns:

There's a peace in my heart that the world never gave,
A peace it cannot take away.
Though the trials of life may surround like a cloud,
I've a peace that has come here to stay.
Constantly abiding, Jesus is mine;
Constantly abiding, rapture divine.
He never leaves me lonely, whispers, O so kind:
"I will never leave thee"—Jesus is mine.

[Constantly Abiding by Anne S. Murphy, 1908]

We have in Jesus peace that passes all understanding. But if we're honest, at Christmastime not many of us would describe our inner feelings and disposition with "peace" near the top of the list. Words like frantic, frazzled, nutty, stressed, discombobulated—they come to mind during the days before Christmas.

Even though we are here to celebrate the birth of the Savior, we can easily chase after hollow fantasies, kind of a vague "Christmas spirit," and move Christ to the margins of our minds and hearts. Scotty Smith wrote a prayer for those who are feeling splintered and scattered in seasons like this. I like the way he put it.

There's a big school of little piranha nibbling away at my focus and energy. I'm not feeling tempted to do something crazy; I'm just feeling a bit crazed. It's hard to sit still. It's hard not to think about the next thing and the thing after the next thing.

I think all of us can identify. So I want to invite you to come like a little child, to sit on your Father's lap, to listen to His heart, to rest in His embrace, to receive the calm and quiet confidence that even the wind and waves obey Him, to hear His voice saying, "Peace, be still," and to believe that word (Mark 4:39). I want to invite you—and me—of little faith to look to the Prince of Peace today and to experience His *shalom*.

Shalom is a rich word in the Bible that can't just be translated with one single English word. A man named Darryl Dash captures the full meaning of *shalom* this way:

It's the condition of everything being set right. It's about fulfillment, completion, maturity, soundness, wholeness, harmony, tranquility, security, well-being, welfare, friendship, agreement, success, prosperity. It's about the total well-being of the person and the community. It's one of the deepest longings of the human heart.

Who wouldn't want a little more *shalom* this Christmas? Who wouldn't want what's being described here in this wonderful word? It's one of the deepest longings of the human heart, and it's what Jesus gave His disciples in His last will and testament. . He gave His clothes to the soldiers who were crucifying Him. He gave His mother to His beloved disciple John. He entrusted His soul into the hands of His heavenly Father. He gave His body to Joseph of Arimathea to be buried.

But what did He give His disciples who had left everything to follow Him? He gave them His peace. He said, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid*" (John 14:27). Jesus gave His peace to us as well. How are we doing living under the control of that peace?

I want to break down this wonderful name of Jesus—Prince of Peace—in three ways. I take this from a sermon outline of the Puritan Thomas Boston. It was just a sketch, but I think it nails it. I'll give you the three points, and then we'll meditate on each of them:

1. Jesus is peaceful in His disposition.
2. Jesus is peaceful in His actions.
3. Jesus is peaceful in the state of His Kingdom.

As we focus on these three points, let your soul be like one of those instruments that flies above a hurricane, looks down into the core and reports the conditions inside the eye of that storm. As those "flying eyes" look down into the core of the storm, what they see is perfect calm, serenity, tranquility. But outside the eye there is fury, tumult, chaos and destruction.

So fix your gaze for a few moments on Jesus, the Prince of Peace. As you trust in Him, let your soul be calmed and quieted by an understanding of Who He is for you and me.

1. Jesus is Peaceful in His Disposition

Jesus is peaceful in His disposition, His character, His attitude and His inner being. He's a peaceful Savior. Think about how peaceable Jesus is to His enemies, how He makes them friends. Remember that *"while we were still sinners, Christ died for us....For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life"* (Romans 5:8,10).

Think about the way He loves His enemies and makes them His friends, and then think about how peaceable He is to those who've become His friends. "He bears long with His enemies and He bears much at the hands of His friends," Thomas Boston said.

Think of the disciples—how often they misunderstood, how frequently they failed Him, how they all forsook Him and fled from Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. In the hour of His greatest extremity, they all left Him. Yet He's a Friend to sinners. How about us? Jesus has been our best Friend in 2015. He has been faithful, faithful, faithful, closer than a brother. He gives His life for us. How have we returned the favor of Jesus' friendship?

I love the old hymn by John Newton that says:

One there is, above all others,
Well deserves the name of Friend;
His is love beyond a brother's
Costly, free, and knows no end.
They who once His kindness prove
Find it everlasting love!

[One There is, Above All Others by John Newton, 1779]

Then later on in the hymn he says, "Could we bear from one another what He daily bears from us?" Have you ever thought of that? He says, "Yet this glorious Friend and Brother loves us though we treat Him thus." How do we treat Him? "Though for good we render ill, He accounts us brethren still."

He's peaceful in His disposition. He's easily accessible to poor sinners. He says:

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30).

So having such a great High Priest, Hebrews 4:16 says, *"Let us then...draw near."* Let us get close to Him. Let's not stay at a distance. He's accessible to us. We can come to Him. He's

ready to forgive us, even as He did the woman caught in adultery. He said to her, *“Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more”* (John 8:11). But if we do sin, John tells us, *“we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world”* (1 John 2:1-2).

Jesus is very friendly with us. He says in John 15:

You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you (John 15:14-15).

He takes no pleasure in hurting us. He bears our griefs and carries our sorrows, and *“like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth”* (Isaiah 53:7). *“When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly”* (1 Peter 2:23), because He is peaceful in His disposition.

This is our Savior. This is our King. When we live under the influence of His peaceful reign, we find serving Him not only to be a duty but to be the delight of our souls. We find ourselves filled with admiration and love to One Who is so kind and peaceable toward us. Jesus is peaceful in His disposition.

2. Jesus is Peaceful in His Actions

What is the chief action that Jesus did to make peace with us? What’s the main thing Jesus did to bring peace? Colossian 1:20 says that through Jesus, God *“reconciled to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”* That was the great eternal peace offering we celebrate when we come to the Lord’s Table. Through that blood, Jesus has made a covenant of peace with us that He will maintain and keep secure forever and ever.

This is the covenant that was spoken by Isaiah the prophet in Isaiah 54:9-10, where God says:

*“This is like the days of Noah to me:
as I swore that the waters of Noah
should no more go over the earth,
so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you,
and will not rebuke you.
For the mountains may depart
and the hills be removed,*

*but my steadfast love shall not depart from you,
and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,”
says the Lord, who has compassion on you.*

So Jesus made the peace, He will keep the peace and He will perfect that peace in our lives. Because of His blood shed on the cross, He brings us peace with God. *“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God”* (Romans 5:1). We stand in a state of reconciliation. It’s not dependent on us keeping our sins all confessed. It’s dependent on the blood that was shed once for all, for all who trust in Him. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Those of us who have peace with God, those of us who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, now have peace with one another too. It’s a peace we can only have when we put our trust in Him. But for those who do, Jesus Himself is our peace. Alienation, hostility, the dividing walls that separate us from one another have been removed, and He has made us one. He has preached peace to us.

There’s a beautiful illustration of this from Christmas Eve, 1914. World War I was raging throughout Europe and in Belgium there was a place of heavy firing across two trenches, where the British and Germans were going at each other. But on Christmas Eve night, the Germans lit a candle in their trench, decorated a tree and began singing Christmas carols.

When the English heard the Germans singing, they started singing English carols. Before long, as they listened to one another sing of Christ, the Prince of Peace, they laid their weapons down, left their trenches, drew near to each other and shook hands. Before long, they were exchanging gifts with one another. They were even playing football with each other the next day and they were cutting one another’s hair that Christmas Day.

Historians call it “The Christmas Truce of 1914.” But Jesus does not just bring a temporary truce. Jesus unites us as one body with Him as the Head, in a living, loving, lasting union. The only way you can know peace with one another is by first having peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

I’m not very fond of clichés, but there’s one I do like. It’s the one that says, “No Jesus. No peace.” If you don’t have Jesus, you don’t have peace. But then it says, “Know Jesus. Know peace.” If you know Him, you know peace. There’s no peace without faith in Him.

I read a beautiful new poem that’s been put to music. Listen to how it describes the action Jesus took to bring us peace with God and with one another:

Under the baby’s head she held
Love, love, sing Emmanuel.

Lending at His birth, peace on all the earth
See His mother Mary weeping love, love, love.

Over the shepherds, angel tell
Joy, joy, called Emmanuel.
Born in Bethlehem, good will unto men
Bend before His cradle singing joy, joy, joy.

Down from the throne of heaven He fell
Light, light became Emmanuel.
Covered in our flesh, swaddled in our dress
Wise men see His coming chasing light, light, light.

Onto the ground His blood He spilled
Peace! Peace! cried Emmanuel.
Sinners dark and vile, God to reconcile
Spilling love and joy and light and peace, peace, peace.

[New Jerusalem Music by Isaac Wardel]

The effect of having righteousness by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is peace, quietness and confidence forever. Jesus died to bring us peace with God, with one another, within our own minds and hearts.

3. Jesus is Peaceful in the State of His Kingdom

We heard Isaiah writing in a time of gloom and darkness, warfare and bloodshed. But he speaks of a great light in Isaiah 9:2. Then he speaks of burdens being lifted, rods being cast down and all wars being ended (verse five). He envisions a great bonfire to celebrate the end of all wars and peace reigning on earth. He says, *“For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.”*

What’s the cause of this worldwide peace? “A Child is born. A Son is given. The government will rest on His shoulders. His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace—and His government and its peace will never end,” Isaiah says.

His reign began at His birth, when angels worshipped Him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And His reign will never end. It’s not just for a thousand years at some point in the future. It endures for eternity. It’s not just localized in Jerusalem. Jesus’ reign will expand and grow until every tribe, tongue and nation bows before Him—because He asked of His Father, and

the Father gave Him the nations as His inheritance and the ends of the earth as His possession (Psalm 2:8).

So this is what we have to look forward to. I love this quote by Ray Ortlund:

This is what we're waiting for. The Kingdom of Christ, forever ascending, forever enlarging, forever accelerating, forever intensifying. There will never be a moment when we will say, "This is the limit. He can't think of anything new. We've seen it all." No, the finite will experience ever more wonderfully the infinite, and every new moment will be better than the last.

Doesn't that sound good? Isn't that what we're looking forward to? Now, if you are looking around at the world we're in right now, that might just seem totally dissonant. Jesus is reigning? Really? He's the Prince of Peace? Really? Is this just some mirage? Is this just some myth that we're talking about? Is this for real?

Well, look at what Isaiah says at the end of Isaiah 6:7: *"The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this."* He will accomplish this. I love the way the New Living Translation translates verse seven: *"He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity."* And listen to this: *"The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!"*

So I ask you, is this the future you envision? Is this the vision that controls your heart and mine? What's more real as you go into 2016: the fact that the Prince of Peace rules and reigns forever—or—who's going to get elected next November? What are you thinking about more? What grips your heart more? This is good news. This is better news than who will be the next President of the United States of America. His government and its peace will never end. The Prince of Peace will rule and reign forever. Now, it takes faith to believe this and live in the light of this.

A young friend of mine, Will Franco, said: "Faith is believing in advance what will only make sense in reverse." It's letting this future reality control the way you think now. It's only going to make sense in reverse. When we're on the other side, when we look back on all that has happened in history, then it will make sense. But right now it takes faith to believe that the Prince of Peace will rule and reign forever.

Justin Taylor told the story on his Gospel Coalition blog of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, On Christmas Day, 1863, sat near a church in Orange County, Virginia—the New Hope Church. His son Charlie was nearby, having just four weeks before suffered an almost paralyzing, almost fatal wound while fighting in the Civil War. A bullet had passed through his shoulder blade and

grazed his spine. It missed the place of absolute paralysis by one inch. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was sitting near that church waiting for his son to recover, knowing that there was a long battle ahead. The nation was in turmoil, fighting with itself.

Just two years earlier, Longfellow had lost his beloved wife in a tragic accident. Henry was taking a nap and her dress accidentally caught on fire. He awoke to the sound of his wife, on fire, fighting for her life. He took a rod and tried to put the fire out. When that didn't work, he surrounded her himself. He was so severely burned that he was unable to go to her funeral a few days later. He grew a long beard to cover the scars on his face.

So here he is, two years later, this 57-year-old recently widowed father of six children, the oldest of whom is fighting for his life in a nation that is just embroiled in civil war. And he listens to the church bells ringing the good news of a Savior born. He feels this dissonance in his heart. How can this be true—of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end? Justin said that the turmoil in Longfellow's mind was so intense at times he feared he would have to be sent to an insane asylum.

But he took his pen to paper that morning and wrote a poem that describes how the truth of the birth of the Savior brought him from gloom to light, from despair to hope. We know the hymn, the poem, through the popular carol:

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

I thought how, as the day had come
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along the unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

'Til ringing, singing on its way
The world revolved from night to day
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South
And with this sound the carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good will to men

It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent

And made forlorn the households born
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head
“There is no peace on earth,” I said
“For hate is strong and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men!”

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
“God is not dead, nor doth He sleep
The Wrong shall fail, the Right prevail
With peace on earth, good will to men.”

We hear the bells in a world of ISIS, San Bernardino, political turmoil that’s ugly, school shootings that never end, death, grief, cancer, estrangement, broken relationships, broken hearts. None of that will change on December 26th. Yet the Prince of Peace reigns. He reigns over the world. He reigns over the hearts of those who bow to His kingly authority. He will come again and of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end.

If you trust in this Prince of Peace, if you say to Him, “I am a sinner. I need You to make me right with God. I believe that Your blood was shed on the cross for my sin to bring me peace with God,” He invites you now to come to this Communion Table. A poet named Betjeman’s asks:

And is it true? And is it true
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window’s hue.
A Baby in an ox’s stall?
The Maker of the stars and sea
Became a Child on earth for me?

Is it true? Is it true? Yes, it is!

No love that in a family dwells,
No caroling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare—
That God was Man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.

So we come now to His Table in faith, believing in advance what will only make sense in reverse, proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes again, and experiencing peace—not as the world gives—peace that passes all understanding.

Let's worship Him.

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