

Scripture:

Isaiah 11:1-10

Matthew 3:1-12

John 14:27

“A different kind of peace.”

“There is but One
 whose name is peace
 One whose heart is peace ---
 whose soul is peace ---
 whose mind is peace.
 And the world knew him not.

And so they killed him
 because they didn't want
 to share their bread
 and their wine.

Today the world is covered in blood,
 but still the Prince of Peace
 calls to us: Follow me.

There is but One
 whose name is Peace.
 Those who believe
 in the midst of violence
 in the midst of torture
 in the midst of war --- war ---- war
 have no choice
 but to shout from the rooftops:
 Peace on earth!!

I believe in peace on earth.”

There is but one whose name is Peace ---- by Ann Weems.

Like Weems ----- I too believe in peace on earth --- but a different kind of
 peace --- and on a different timeline.

And like Weems I too believe there is only One whose name is Peace.

But in a very real sense --- it's almost impossible to believe in true peace --- world peace.

Does anyone actually believe in world peace?

With all that is going on in the world ---- can we actually hold on to the idea that one day there will be peace on earth?

No war --- no conflict --- no disagreements --- but peace.

It's hard --- almost impossible to imagine world peace.

A couple of weeks back we looked at a passage from Isaiah that shared similar lines from Isaiah's passage for today ---- images of peace --- almost impossible to imagine actually happening kind of peace.

“The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.
The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

The infant will play near the cobra's den,
and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.
They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.”

This dramatic image of peace is almost impossible to envision.

Imagine being at ease ---- being at peace watching a child play near a cobra's den --- and being at peace watching a child put their hands into a viper's nests.

Being at ease --- at peace watching wolves and lambs lying around together -
-- calf's and lions side by side.

It's almost impossible to imagine these things actually happening and it
being peaceful.

Peace on earth --- no more war --- or conflict or greed ---- no more
disagreements ---- it's hard to imagine this actually happening the world
over.

Peace on earth is very very difficult to imagine --- impossible perhaps even.

When I think of peace on earth ---when I think of the peace of Christ ---- I
really only imagine it happening when He returns.

Until then ---- there are glimpses of His peace -- moments of His peace ---
but they don't really seem to last.

And I'm not just talking about personal peace or inner peace --- although
they're part of it ---- and they're important.

But the kind of peace Isaiah and John are talking about today isn't just about
one person or one situation it's peace for everyone --- global --- all of
creation kind of peace --- the hard to imagine kind.

The concept of Peace on earth that isn't fleeting and isn't just limited to
certain parts or certain people is hard to comprehend --- impossible even ----
----- without also Jesus Christ standing in our midst --- in the middle of it all.

The peace of Christ is something completely different from anything else we
can ever imagine.

“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 be afraid.”
Jesus says in John's gospel.

We are given --- according to this passage ---- the peace of Christ --- by
Christ Himself.

And this peace is totally different from anything the world gives ----- “I do not give to you as the world gives.”

One day this peace will truly come ---- and instead of just glimpses and passing moments of this peace ----- it will be eternal --- lasting --- and for everyone.

Many of us have no doubt had profound experiences of divine peace ---- but before long the pressures and realities of everyday life come back and creep in ---- and it is only ever fleeting and passing peace.

But one day it will be different ---- gone will be the pressures of day to day living that drown out and muffle the peace of Christ ----- there will no longer be the pain --- the fear ---- the doubt --- that press in on us.

This is the peace that Isaiah points to and that John helps us prepare for.

Divine and everlasting peace --- and not just the ephemeral – temporal ---- and often watered down sentimentalized peace of this world.

There are some great stories about how different people describe peace ---- we all likely have our own version of peace ---- this is one of my favourite’s.

A tiny little bird --- perched on a branch singing a beautiful little melody.

And then step back --- pan out.

And we see that the branch is jutting out of a cliff --- the roots barely hanging on ---- and below a thunderous waterfall crashes --- the mist of which continually eats away at the cliff where the tiny branch hangs ----- daily is the threat to the branch ---- at any moment it might lose its slender root system and go crashing below bouncing off the rocks and into the swirl of water at the foot of the falls.

For some that’s peace --- the tranquility of the bird amidst the crashing chaos of the falls.

And in truth --- that’s what earthly peace looks like --- a moment of beauty and clam amidst the harsh realities of life crashing around us.

For others peace is easy chairs --- no worries --- all threats of discord removed --- feet up --- drink in hand.

But even there we know it's not lasting for at some point we have to return back to "real life" --- work --- responsibilities --- oil changes ---- hydro bills --- dirty dishes ---- and so on.

Whatever image of peace we come up with --- it will always fall short of the kind of peace Christ has in mind and in store.

"I do not give to you as the world gives." --- Jesus says.

"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 be afraid."

"I do not give to you as the world gives." --- partially means --- you'll never truly experience the full force of my peace in all of its power and influence - ---- in this world ----- this side of the grave.

In the mean time ----- "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

In the meantime we have nothing to be afraid of.

That's what Jesus is talking about when He speaks of peace.

That's what God means by peace.

Something coming ---- Christ coming.

Something ---- someone coming who puts all our fears and troubles to rest.

And of course that's what we're hoping for --- and waiting on --- and anticipating --- and preparing for --- and yearning --- and longing for.

And of course as we heard about last week --- and know to be true --- we know not when this will finally happen --- only God knows when Christ will come again.

Christmas yes --- December 25th ---- we know about that one --- but Christ coming again and ushering in His peace --- when this will happen no one knows.

And so we wait.

And we wait ----- and we anticipate.

And we sometimes grieve --- and we sometime hurt.

And we sometimes celebrate.

And we wait --- and we wait.

And we wait --- until Christ comes again.

Our Prince of Peace --- the Prince of Peace.

The tomb breaker --- and cross crusher ----- the famous little manger baby -
-- Jesus of Nazareth ----- the Son of God --- the Messiah --- the chosen -----
anointed ----- and long awaited One.

That's the Advent --- the coming ----- that we celebrate and prepare for.

As for me ---- I believe in peace on earth ----- but I don't believe it will ever
happen until Christ comes again in all His glory at the end of time as we
know it.

Yes we may have moments of peace ---- deep and profound and life giving
moments of peace --- glimpses and experiences that provide us with great
comfort --- peace ----- but they are fleeting ---- and the peace that Jesus is
truly about is not just fleeting it's eternal and everlasting.

And so until that everlasting peace comes.

Until then ---- we wait ---- and wait ----- and we anticipate.

We yearn.

We celebrate.

We sometimes grieve and mourn.

We long.

We worship.

We wait.

We take eat and do this in remembrance of Him.

We pray.

We gather --- we eat.

We wait.

And we wait --- and wait because we are wise enough to know that you can't hurry providence.

You can't rush God's timing --- or hurry it along --- it just doesn't work that way.

The story of the Bible ends with --- "To be continued."

That's what Advent reminds us --- ah yes -- God's story --- is ----- "To be continued."

It continues everyday yes --- but --- we await the final ----- the last chapter --- Christ's return.

That's what we're waiting for ----- anticipating ----- yearning and longing for.

That's where the church year begins ----- waiting --- yearning ---- longing for ----- preparing for --- Advent --- celebrating and remembering the --- "To be continued" ---- nature of God's story.

The church year begins with us thinking about ----- not yet --- soon to come --- "To be continued."

And for today the focus is on the peace that is not yet --- soon to come --- part of the --- to be continued story of God's love.

And so we wait ----- we prepare --- we anticipate.

We bear witness to.

We testify.

We celebrate --- we sometimes grieve and sometimes mourn.

We pray.

We worship.

We take eat and do this in remembrance of Him.

And we wait.

And anticipate.

And yearn --- and long for.

Moses never did enter into The Promised Land.

He led the Israelites there ---- they entered in --- but he never did ---- Moses himself never entered into The Promised Land.

Remember he just looked up over the crest of the mountain --- into The Promised Land --- and then died.

Go to Deuteronomy the last few chapters or --- 34 in particular ----- Moses climbs Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah across from Jericho ---- and from there he can see the whole of the Promised Land from Gilead to Dan --- and then he dies.

Right there --- at the threshold of the Promised Land he dies ----- and never enters in.

The first time I read that ----- I found it so sad --- my heart sank.

How could this be?

Moses the one who endured so much and worked so hard --- convincing doubtful people to keep going --- leading the whiney --- complaining ---- weak willed ---- fickle Israelites ---- telling them ---“Come on now keep on going --- don’t give up --- we’ll get there -- God promised.”

At first I found it so sad that he --- the champion of the cause ---- the one that worked the hardest ----- the one that stayed the truest and most faithful - -- dies just as they arrived.

Why would God do that to Moses --- I thought.

And then I realized.

God didn’t just have an earthly promised land in mind for Moses He had the eternal one ----- and so He called Moses home right then and there.

Forget about this Promised Land --- God said to Moses ----- come here --- come home to me now.

I had put the earthly plan ahead of the whole plan.

I had put Moses, part front and centre --- forgetting that there was so much more going on as well.

Now I find great comfort and peace and hope in the fact that Moses never entered into The Promised Land --- the earthly Promised Land.

And that instead God called Him home to the eternal Promised Land ---- a far grander and more beautiful place than just an earthly land.

As beautiful as it must have been ---- God clearly had something even greater in store --- Moses got to see all that he and the people longed for and then in an instant God took him into something even more beautiful.

That’s Advent Hope and Advent Peace in a nutshell.

Moses looking over all that he had worked and longed for --- and God taking him from that into something even more beautiful and peaceful.

Moses worked a lifetime to get there --- and in an instant God said ----- forget about it --- I've got something even better in store ---- come home my child.

And so until then ---- we wait.

We anticipate.

We prepare.

We yearn --- we long for.

We sometimes grieve --- and sometimes mourn.

We celebrate.

We worship.

We pray.

We do this in remembrance of Him.

And in the end all that we wait for --- and anticipate --- and prepare --- and yearn and long for --- is far far more beautiful and true --- and holy ---- than we ever imagined.

It's a different kind of hope.

And it's a different kind of peace ---- that Christ gives.

In the meantime ----- "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

His day is coming --- He is coming.

And He does not give as the world gives.

And so we wait.

And wait.

And wait.

And wait.

That's Advent ----- that's life in Christ.

Amen.