

Isaiah 9:2-7
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-20

Christmas Eve Sermon 2022

Moments of Peace on Earth

As we listen and reflect on God's word, we hear the prophet Isaiah proclaim the coming of a person who will bring in a time of endless peace. We hear a multitude of angels declare Jesus as this bringer of peace.

During this Christmas season we are invited to reflect on this promise of God's peace for our lives and for our world (**Image One**: nativity). We are encouraged to pay more attention to where God is at work in our lives revealing this peace to us. We are reassured through this promise that one day we will experience endless peace on earth.

Christmas is a time to reflect on God's peace revealed to us through Christ Jesus (**Image One**).

And yet, the Christmas season, the Advent season leading up to the Christmas season, can feel anything but peaceful. In fact, most of our days are pretty chaotic during this time of year (**Image Two**: crowded mall).

From wrestling through big crowds at malls and department stores trying to finish our Christmas shopping. To attending all the Christmas functions, we have been invited to. From trying to stay healthy as we face the three headed monster of respiratory illnesses this winter. To dealing with seasonal depression, anxiety, loneliness. From tackling the icy roads. To fighting off the brisk cold. From the mental preparation it takes to spend a whole week with the in-laws. To all the cooking, cleaning, and entertaining you need to do when your extended family arrives for the Christmas season. Sometimes Christmas can feel anything but peaceful (**Image Two**)

Look at Joseph and Mary's journey home for Christmas. Mary goes into labour on their way to Bethlehem. When they arrive in Bethlehem, they can't find a hotel room for Mary to give birth to Jesus. Instead, they have to settle for a stable, a cave, where animals feed and sleep. Jesus is born in a trough. Then Mary is visited by complete strangers. Who here would like strangers coming to visit them in the hospital after giving birth? Saying their Christmas experience is chaotic is an understatement. Sometimes Christmas can feel anything but peaceful (**Image Two**).

Then when we look beyond the chaos we experience during the Advent and Christmas season, we see that a war is still going on in the Ukraine. We see that people are becoming more and more polarized. We see the impacts inflation and climate change

are having on the most vulnerable people in our communities. We see the rapid rise in people who suffer from mental unwellness.

Sometimes our world, our lives can feel anything but peaceful (**Image Two**).

Well, as we reflect on God's word, we see that Isaiah prophesies about a time of endless peace to a community that is suffering in darkness, in exile. Their families have been ripped apart. They are disconnected from their land. They are impoverished. Life is anything but peaceful, and yet, here is Isaiah reassuring the people that God's promise of endless peace will come (**Image One**).

As we reflect on God's word, we see that the angels are proclaiming this same promise of peace to poor shepherds who are struggling through economic and social chaos. Hardly earning enough to get by. Being seen by others as a stain on their community. And yet, these angels are loudly proclaiming that a saviour has been born. A saviour who will bring in this endless peace to humanity (**Image One**). To all of God's creation.

Yes. Christmas can be chaotic to say the least. Our world, our lives can feel so far away from this promise of peace. As Isaiah says, sometimes we feel like we are living in great darkness. But, Isaiah, Jesus, we as the church, keep proclaiming this promise that God's peace on earth will happen (**Image One**).

In our worship, we keep preaching it, we keep singing it, we keep praying it, we keep believing it. We do so, because even in the midst of the chaos of our lives we bear witness to moments of God's peace on earth. We bear witness to moments of God's peace in our lives (**Image One**).

From seeing the look on our child or grandchild's face when they open up our special gift to them. To sharing a special moment with friends at a Christmas function. From experiencing the care of your loved ones when feeling sick. To feeling supported by these loved ones when your mental health is struggling. From finding yourself standing in a moment where the snow is coming down like a classic Christmas movie. To enjoying the warmth of a sparkling fire around the fireplace on a cold winter's day. From experiencing the reconnection that can come with going home to see family that you have not seen maybe this whole year. To taking a moment to look around and see all the laughter and joy around your home as you play host to your family. Sometimes we do experience a moment or moments of God's peace during the Christmas season (**Image One**).

For God's people, they will experience a moment of peace when Persia comes into Babylon and invites the Israelites back to their homeland in Jerusalem.

For the poor shepherds they find new hope in God's promise of peace as they bear witness to the angel's testimony of the baby Jesus (**Image One**).

For Mary and Joseph, they share in a moment of peace when the Shepherds proclaim what the angels had said (**Image One**).

Tragically we have people who are dying in the Ukraine. But thankfully we also have many Ukrainian families that will experience some peace as they gather with people who have welcomed them into their homes this Christmas season. Giving them refuge from the war.

Though we see more and more people not getting along with each other, we also see people with all their diversity coming together to work towards peace, harmony, in our world. People of different faiths, denominations, political views. There are organizations and groups out there that are offering bridges for us to walk on.

Though inflation and climate change are impacting our most vulnerable people, we are seeing people working hard to help these vulnerable populations find support.

Though we are facing a mental health crisis, we are also, seeing more and more organizations investing money and time into creating supports for people who struggle with mental unwellness.

In our worship, we will light our candles, light up our devices, find a dark place, and sing silent night as we reflect on experiencing God's peace in the midst of the chaos of our lives. As we reflect on the moment of peace Mary experiences when she finally has time to ponder everything that has happened. When she finally has time to reflect on the peace this baby will bring to her life and to the world.

Sometimes we do experience moments of God's peace in our world, in our lives (**Image One**).

And so, hear the good news of Isaiah, of angels singing, of shepherds proclaiming. A saviour is born, Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.

Let us pray, gracious God, sometimes our lives can feel so chaotic as we wrestle with all life's expectations. Especially during the Advent and Christmas seasons. Turn our eyes to see where your peace is at work in our lives. And help us reveal this peace to others. In Jesus name we pray, **Amen**.

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