

Advent: Peace

Isaiah 40:1-5; Micah 5:2-5; Luke 2:8-15; Isaiah 9:6; Romans 5:1-5; Colossians 3:15-17

Advent represents the anticipation of the birth of Jesus and all it means. We look to the prophecies of the Old Testament to try to understand the longing and hope that they provided to God's people. The birth of Jesus fulfilled these prophecies. They began the redemptive work of God bringing humanity back to Himself...but the work is not yet finished. Just like the Israelites, we have prophecies that provide us hope for the future fulfillment of God's redemptive plan.

We live in a chaotic and restless world marked by hurry, anxiety, conflict, and noise. Busyness is worn like a badge of status. The crazier your calendar is, the more important you appear.

Advent invites us to slow down and remember that peace is not the absence of chaos. It is the presence of Christ. I have learned something that I want to share: Because my life has been chaotic and unpredictable recently, I have had to learn to fully trust God to be my peace. Without Him, peace would not be possible. Peace is not the absence of chaos, but the finding of comfort in Him despite the chaos.

In the Wilderness:

God has a habit of speaking comfort to His people during chaotic times. Read Isaiah 40:1-5. Verse 3 says, *'A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD."*' The colon and quotation marks between *calling* and *wilderness* make it clear that the voice isn't calling in the wilderness. The message that the voice is sharing is to prepare a way for the LORD **while** in the wilderness.

We often think that when we get our lives together then we will serve God. However, even (especially!) when we are in the chaotic wilderness seasons of our lives, our mission is to prepare the way for the LORD: to share the hope of the Gospel and the peace of our Savior in the midst of the chaotic world around us. That includes preparing our hearts to fully receive His presence and peace.

Isaiah was speaking this prophecy to a people who were very much in turmoil. God was promising them comfort and peace. There would be a King who would come and level valleys and mountains (external obstacles and internal ones).

Advent is the echo of Isaiah's cry: Prepare your hearts because PEACE is coming. Preparation is not passive. It's a turning of the heart through repentance, re-ordering priorities, and making room. Before peace can arrive, peace is prepared for.

The Unexpected:

Last week we talked about the difference between a wish and hope. A wish is hoping for a specific and immediate thing. These are usually self-centered dealing with temporary items that are fleeting. Actual hope deals with something greater: something more cosmic and more permanent. For example, this could be hoping for a change in how the world works, or hoping for a change in others, or hoping for a specific good fate for creation itself.

It is easy to miss what we are looking for when it doesn't show up in the way we expect it to. Who would expect pure and lasting peace to come to earth as a baby born in a stable in a little town?

Read Micah 5:2-5. Long before the manger, God promised the Messiah would come from a small, overlooked town. Bethlehem represents God working through the ordinary, God bringing peace in unexpected ways, and God fulfilling every promise.

Jesus doesn't just *bring* peace; He *is* our peace. Peace is not a feeling that you can manifest. Peace is a **person** that you can trust.

The announcement of the birth of Jesus was proclaimed in an unexpected way too. Read Luke 2:8-15. Shepherds were in a field just doing their jobs watching sheep sleep. They weren't studying scrolls every day learning the clues to the coming of the Messiah like the Pharisees were. They weren't following the star trying to find the Savior like the Wise Men were. These were ordinary men just living their lives...and God picked them to be the audience for a private concert of the choir of heaven celebrating that peace had returned to earth.

Reconciliation:

Heaven declares peace not because circumstances changed, but because Christ entered them. Peace on earth is God's initiative; not ours. God breaks into our mess. He doesn't wait for us to clean it all up first. Peace is God stepping into our broken world in order to redeem it. Jesus is the key (the Prince of Peace).

Read Isaiah 9:6. He made a way for us to reconcile our relationship with God.

Read Romans 5:1-5. Jesus provided a way for us to experience true **peace** of being in communion with the presence of God. This gives us **hope** no matter what our circumstances are because "...the peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7). Therefore, our hearts are constantly filled with the **love** of God which fills us with unexplainable **joy**!

The deepest peace Advent celebrates is reconciliation with God through Christ. Peace isn't just emotional calm. It's restoration from estrangement into relationship. The Prince of Peace brings us home to God.

So "*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*" (Colossians 3:15-17)

Discussion Questions:

- Preparation is not passive—it is a turning of the heart through repentance, reordering our priorities, and making space for God. Before peace can arrive, it must be prepared for.
 - What does preparing your heart to fully receive Jesus's presence and peace look like for you?
- Sometimes God fulfills a hope or promise in a way we don't expect, and we can miss it because it does not match our assumptions.
 - What hopes are you carrying right now?
 - Is it possible that any of these hopes have been fulfilled in ways you didn't recognize because you expected them to look a certain way?

- How can you stay open to God's movement in your life without limiting your expectations of what His work "should" look like?
- Isaiah 55:8–9 reminds us that God's thoughts and ways are higher than ours.
 - How does this passage shape your understanding of fulfilled hopes and the peace God gives?