**Advent 2 2024: Peace**

The second Sunday of Advent is about peace. The first was about hope, and there are two more after this: Joy and Love. Then it is Christmas, when we celebrate the birth of our saviour Jesus the Christ.

Today we remember that Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

Prophesied by the Prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 9:6 *For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.*

Announced by the angel to the shepherds at the birth of Jesus.

Luke 2:10 *But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” 13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.”*

And declared by Jesus himself

John 14:27 *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid*.

Jesus Christ is called the Prince of Peace because He restores our relationship with God, and every broken relationship, providing a well-ordered and balanced life, and offering the assurance of eternal life.

Jesus is identified with peace. His birth was heralded by the angels who spoke of peace on earth. In the Beatitudes he gives his blessing to the peacemakers.

But in Luke 12:51 the Prince of Peace says an apparent contradiction.

*51 Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! 52 From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; 53 they will be divided: father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”*

How is that so? It seems to be counter to what is claimed that he is the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 11:1–9 shows that even in the final period of peace, the Messiah, enabled by the Spirit, will exercise judgment.

Luke is stressing the element of crisis, both immediately and at the Lord’s return. During this time his disciples must be prepared for a break in their family relationships if others do not agree with their decision to follow Christ[[1]](#footnote-1)

And Jesus came to rattle the cages of the Jews, who self-righteously thought they were right with God despite their activities.

Jesus’ stance on what was righteous and who was righteous caused outrage among the leaders.

Jesus was saying I bring peace, but I fear you do not want to hear this.

And as it turned out he was right. They killed him after a mock trial on trumped up charges. They thought they had won and had silenced this fly in the ointment of their cushy lives.

Think on Jesus’ parable about the feast. Luke 14:16 Jesus replied: “*A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. 17 At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ 18 “But they all alike began to make excuses. …21 “The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’2 2 “‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’23 “Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. 24 I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’”*

Jesus laid out who was eligible for the kingdom of God, and it involves division.

Luke 17:34-36 *I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left.*

So, whilst remembering that following Jesus may cause division between those who believe and those who do not, let us turn to what this peace celebrated this second Sunday of Advent is all about.

What is this peace that Jesus brings?

1.Jesus brings peace between us and God

Romans 5:1-*2 therefore since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*

In our sinful state, we are enemies with God (Romans 5:10).

*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us* (Romans 5:8).

Because of Christ’s sacrifice, we are restored to a relationship of peace with God. This is the deep, abiding peace between our hearts and our Creator that cannot be taken away (John 10:27–28) and the ultimate fulfilment of Christ’s work as “Prince of Peace.”

As the Prince of Peace, he reconciles us to God; he is the Giver of peace in the heart and conscience; and when his kingdom is fully established, people shall war no more. The government shall be upon him; he shall bear the burden of it. There is no end to the increase of its peace.[[2]](#footnote-2)

2.Jesus initiates the peaceful Kingdom of God

Romans 14:17 *For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*

As Matthew Henry so eloquently put it: He is the prince of peace. As a King, he preserves the peace, commands peace, nay, he creates peace, in his kingdom. He is our peace, and it is his peace that both keeps the hearts of his people and rules in them. He is not only a peaceable prince, and his reign peaceable, but he is the author and giver of all good, all that peace which is the present and future bliss of his subjects.[[3]](#footnote-3)

3, He brings peace into this world among his followers

2 Thessalonians 3:16 *Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all.*

Sadly, we have not always grasped that peace as the thing to do, even at Christmas time. In the past Christian denominations have battled against each other over the site of the birth of Jesus for the right to be in control of that place. Sadly, they had forgotten the words of Paul to the church at Corinth

*1 Corinthians 14:33 for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.*

Christ is the reason we as Christians should be at peace with one another.

*2 Corinthians 13:11 Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.*

Paul reminds us that Jesus made Jews and non-Jews one people. We were separated by a wall of hate that stood between us, but Christ broke down that wall. By giving his own body, Christ ended the law with its many commands and rules. His purpose was to make the two groups become one in him.

Through the cross, Christ ended the hate between the two groups. And after they became one body, he wanted to bring them both back to God. He did this with his death on the cross. Christ came and brought the message of peace to non-Jews who were far away from God. And he brought that message of peace to those who were near to God. Through Christ we all have the right to come to the Father in one Spirit (Ephesians 2:14-18, ERV).

4. We are to be instruments of peace in the world

Romans 14:19 *Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding*

In a world that chooses violence, we take care to build peace and to be agents of reconciliation wherever possible. [[4]](#footnote-4)

*Philippians 4:9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

The Beatitudes, spoken by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, open and close with the same proposition; the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who know how to receive and know how to give – the intakers and the outgoers, the receptive and the re-givers. The life becomes as natural as breathing. You breathe in and you breathe out – you breathe in God’s kingdom, and you breathe out Gods peace.[[5]](#footnote-5)

The world would be a much better place we actually listened in life to his words about caring for the needy, about being peacemakers wherever we go, about loving God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strengths and thus loving our neighbours as ourselves[[6]](#footnote-6)

There is a disputed claim that of the past 3,400 years, humans have been entirely at peace for 268 of them, or just 8 percent of recorded history. (War described as where more than 1000 people have been killed).[[7]](#footnote-7)

In another shocking statistic, America has been at war 93% of the time since it was founded in 1776 – 222 out of 239 years.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Some here have experienced that reality of war first hand. Apparently since 1996, conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo has led to approximately six million deaths.[[9]](#footnote-9)

On yet another sobering note: Sadly, there is no peace in the birthplace of our Saviour. For a second year running, there is no Christmas cheer in Bethlehem, with tourists shunning the Palestinian city and many residents seeking a way out as the Gaza war grinds on. Bethlehem's Manger Square in front of the Church of the Nativity is largely deserted, and souvenir shops are shuttered. Once again, there are no plans to put up the traditional light-festooned Christmas Tree in the ancient settlement that is revered by Christians as the birthplace of Jesus and now sits on the West Bank. In the church pastored by Munther Isaac, (Bethlehem's Lutheran Church) the nativity scene has a figure of the baby Jesus lying in a pile of rubble. "We feel that this war will never end," he said. [[10]](#footnote-10)

We have that challenge staring us in the face today and in 2025: to bring peace to the world, starting here in NZ. We have to pray for peace, we have to demonstrate peace, we have to advocate for peace, we need to live peace.

Where is the peace that Jesus came to proclaim?

A Prayer for Peace

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardships as the pathway to peace; taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His Will; that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him forever in the next. Amen.[[11]](#footnote-11)

1. The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke (Vol. 8, p. 968 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary (Is 9:1) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume (p. 1096) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Marva J. Dawn *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* 115 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. E Stanley Jones *The Unshakable Kingdom and the Unchanging Person* 163 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Marva Dawn Joy *Divine Wisdom: practices of discernment from other cultures and Christian traditions* 40 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. https://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/06/books/chapters/what-every-person-should-know-about-war.html [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/595752-the-us-has-been-at-war-225-out-of-243-years-since-1776 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violence-democratic-republic-congo [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-831481>, DECEMBER 1, 2024 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The Serenity Prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr [↑](#footnote-ref-11)