

SUNDAY December 7, 2025

“Because of Bethlehem... Peace is the Word”

Isaiah 11:1-9 Romans 15:4-13 Matthew 3:1-12

It's the second Sunday of advent! Are you ready to celebrate Christmas yet? Maybe you have been occupied with other tasks and duties, or other matters that has caused you not to even start to get ready for the 'big day'. And maybe you just don't want to be asked if you are ready yet! A couple of weeks ago I spoke about not worrying and trusting God in all things. But we know that we don't try enough to let go of those matters. There is always something to worry about- or so it seems? Yet mixed with our worries are anxieties of what ifs! What if I can't get the toys the children would like? What if they sold out of that special topping for pies? What if it snows hard and they get stuck somewhere on the road? What if I am grieving and mourning the death of loved ones that I cannot focus on the living Christ coming to us again? What if these anxieties cause me to sleep poorly? And the list continues? What are we to do in these situations?

The first thing is to try hard to get your blood pressure down, to relieve your stress, to relax and give all your anxieties and worries to God. Because as you face what is real in the here and now, most of what you are anxious about or are spending precious time worrying about, what is real is that you cannot do a thing to change the outcome. So let it go and try to look for peaceful moments.

As we continue to make our way through this Advent season we are reminded of the words from Psalm 139:23. *Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts...and lead me in the way everlasting.*” We also need to be assured that Jesus knows our tendency to worry and this is why he said, *“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life... your heavenly Father knows what you need.” (Matt. 6:25-34).* And most likely you do not need the extra 30 pound turkey or extra fruitcake or dozen cookies. What one needs to hear and to share is the Good News of Jesus' birth and ultimately his life, death and resurrection. God knows what we need and Jesus has taught us to diligently seek ways of reaching out to others.

Isaiah 11 is the prophecy of the one who would come from Jesse's family and the spirit of God will be upon him. So too will the spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and fear of the Lord. Around him shall be the belts of righteousness and faithfulness. The one who will come will also one day bring about the peaceable kingdom. The kingdom of God which shall be led by the child born for this purpose. The child we call Jesus! This peaceable kingdom is only made possible if we seek understanding of what it means to live in peace.

There are different kinds of peace- inner when individuals to be able to breathe freely, with clear focused thoughts. Outer peace is found when people relate with others on a regular or daily basis and there is no conflict or division. We know that presently there are peace negotiations being held between Russia and Ukraine; and in Palestine-Israel. Complications are resulting to these discussions when drones have flown in and destroyed buildings. But there is still hope because the discussions are still ongoing.

Conflicts abound when people gather together because all are gifted to do, think and process information differently. But why is it though that some conflicts end with real peace while others only end with a truce? It is usually because of how mediation is handled and how each of the parties are willing to hear from the other what has been said. What is needed is that the situation is explained from the other person's perspective before stating their own view. If this occurs, tensions may be reduced, but when people combine mediation with perspective-taking, hostility will drop to its lowest levels. People don't just agree to disagree, they begin to understand each other. In this example, one learns that it is not enough to stop talking about the problem. We have to start seeing through the other person's eyes. That's the heart of what Jesus said: "Love your neighbor as yourself," and be realistic. Yes we are all striving to do what God calls us to do, but trying to impress God with your works, or attempting to please God with your merits or even asking questions from the other's perspective will enable talking to occur maybe but maybe we need to adhere to Yoda's wisdom-- "do, or do not. There is no try."

THE second candle lit represents the gift of peace that comes to us in the birth of Jesus born in Bethlehem. Peace is the Word (Big W) When we look at this statement focusing on the idea of "WORD" the Greek meaning is LOGOS which when translated is a word, thought, reason, or divine principle. This LOGOS is central to Greek philosophy's reason and Christian theology as it refers to Jesus- the Word made flesh; God's gift to humanity in the person of the infant Jesus- God with us in human form.

We read in John 1:1-5 *In the Beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.* God is comprised of the TRINITY- creator Jesus and Spirit so when God said that HE would be with his people - he sent Jesus the Son of God to be born into human time and experience. This occurred as Jesus was born of Mary.. so when we think of Jesus as the Son of God, born to be the child who shall lead the peaceable kingdom, we also reflect upon him as the one who brought and shared peace. And taught us to do share this peace with others.

And as we know it is not always easy to share and show peace. We think that one will win and one will lose in disagreements; but when people's perspectives are seen- there is peace because Jesus also brings us this hope.

What does peace is the Word-- it is what the world needs right now. It is what is needed if there is hope for wars to end. And this is only made possible through faith in the one who was to come. THIs is possible if we do - not try- what John the Baptist proclaimed. *Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near.* Isaiah spoke and stated that the voice of the one crying out in the wilderness says, '*prepare the way of the Lord.*' *Make his paths straight.* John the Baptist knew that JEsus' ministry was soon to start so the timing was imminent to get ready.

As we prepare for Christmas, we too need to prepare to receive Christ Jesus. We need to open our hearts, repent, seek peace and to talk about problems and resolve them openly- amongst family members and in the church. Peace will come only if we do what John states, Repent and seek God's forgiveness. Repent and prepare your heart to be open to receive Christ's presence. Peace is the Word- so how do you share it?

IN 1955 the world was still recovering from war. Racial tensions in the United States were growing as the Cold War was chilling hearts. In a mountain retreat in California, a song was born from ordinary people who were simply tired of the hatred and lack of peace in the world. It started simply at a youth retreat designed to bring together kids with diverse backgrounds- different races, economic levels, and urban and rural experiences. They stood in a circle and sang. This song became a global anthem. It was sung in schools, churches, rallies, and even political events. Through the intervening years, it made it into different hymnals, on the radio, in commercials not because it was complex — but because it was convicting. This song simply stated the need for peace in the world- and peace is still being sought- around the world, in communities, churches, schools and in the hearts of people who yearn for a better way of thinking and knowing God in their lives. Sy Miller and Jill Jackson hoped that the young people would seek peace for their generation, and be peacemakers for generations to come. They didn't just try by waiting for the world to calm down. They carried peace into the chaos and took the first step.

As we have lit the 2nd candle this Advent, we light it because Peace is the Word we seek in Jesus Christ. We also light it so that the darkness will go away and the light of the one who comes will shine.

Let us pray-

God of light and hope we praise you for your gift to us in Jesus Christ and we await his coming to us in this time of preparation.

Enable us to use this time to repent, to pray and seek peace in our hearts as we share together our prayerful song for peace. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us sing together "LET THERE BE PEACE>."