

The Advent Candle of Peace

December 5, 2021

Scripture: Luke 2:8-14

Introduction

This is the second week in our Advent series. Last week we examined the Advent Candle of Hope. Today we will explore the Advent Candle of Peace. Peace is one of the nine fruits of the Spirit that we find listed in Galatians chapter 5, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, **peace**, patience” (Galatians 5:22)

There are several accepted orders and names for the Advent candles. I chose my order because it follows Galatians 5:22. The order I have chosen is the same order as the first four “fruit of the Spirit” in reverse. The first four are “love, joy, peace and patience.” So, the reversed order becomes patience, peace, joy and love. We saw last week that hope has to do with patience and waiting and believing God will do as He promised.

Remember from last week that in Romans 8, Paul wrote of the “firstfruits of the Spirit” which is very similar to Galatians 5. Reading from Romans, ²² “For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”

(Romans 8:22-25)

Keep in mind that for the next few Sundays, as we work our way through the Advent Candles, working our way through the “fruit of the Spirit” in reverse order, this will end with what I consider the primary “fruit of the Spirit” which is “love”.

This second Sunday of Advent, when we view Galatians 5:22, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, **peace**, patience,” we are studying the Candle of Peace.

Let us begin with the angel's proclamation of peace upon the shepherds in the field that first Christmas. Reading from Luke chapter 2, beginning at verse 8, "And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling *cloths* and lying in a manger.' ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth **peace** among those with whom he is pleased!'"

One of the things I love about Christmas is the nativity scene. It is hard to imagine a more peaceful-looking scene than Joseph and Mary with their newborn child surrounded by sheep and shepherds under the starry midnight sky. We even sing about it. One of the most peaceful Christmas carols ever composed was "Silent Night" written in 1816 by Franz Gruber, an Austrian school teacher and church organist. "Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright. Round yon virgin, mother and Child, Holy Infant so tender and mild, sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace." This song touches our heart, for we all long for a life of peace. How can we have peace while living in a broken world that lacks peace? When we are surrounded by conflict, hate and so many factions agitating each other, how can we have peace? When world tensions are building, tensions similar to those that have created wars that cost millions upon millions of lives, how can we have peace? The answer is simple, but not commonplace or trite. The answer is Jesus. Christ is not only our hope, but He is our peace, and not just at Christmas but always. Only through Christ will the world and those in it ever know peace.

During a debate in the House of Commons of the Canadian Parliament in 1946, just after World War II had ended, it is said someone spoke out during the debate. Although I could not find the source of this quote, I am going to use it, “There will never be agreement at the peace tables of the world or rest in the individual heart until the Prince of Peace reigns supreme in the hearts of men.” I believe this to be a true statement, but since the world is run by sinful humans, most of whom are lost, it is also impossible.

This is what the Advent Candle of Peace is all about today, the impossible. Part of the Christmas story, part of the Christmas message, is that Jesus brings us peace. Satan thought what God the Father would do to His Son for the salvation of the world was impossible. But our God is the God of the impossible. I have heard it said, “There is not enough darkness in all the world to snuff out the light of one small candle.” There certainly is not enough darkness to snuff out the light of Jesus who is the Light of the world. Remember Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 18:12) Jesus truly does bring hope and peace through His light as it shines into the hearts of those saved by faith.

This morning we will explore four aspects of peace that Jesus brings. **First**, Jesus brings peace with God the Father. **Second**, Jesus brings peace to our souls. **Third**, Jesus brings peace with others. **Fourth**, Jesus will bring peace on earth.

Jesus Brings Peace With God

Jesus brings peace with God, Paul made this simple truth clear to the believers in Rome, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1) Paul tells not only do we obtain peace with God through Christ, but also without Christ mankind does not have peace with God. The fallen world’s natural state is sin and conflict.

When God sent the angel Gabriel to Mary to tell her of God's plan for her and the Savior it began with peace. ²⁶ "... the angel Gabriel was sent from God ²⁷ to a virgin ... named Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!' ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying ... ³⁰ And the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.'" (Luke 1:26-30) Mary was troubled at the angel's greeting, but the angel spoke words of peace and assurance to her, telling her not to be afraid because God was with her and she had found favor with God. You might wonder how Mary found favor with God. She found it the only way any of us find favor with God, by faith in God and in His promise of the Messiah to come. Like so many Old Testament believers before her, she had faith in Christ before Christ even came. By her faith, God had chosen her to be the vessel through which His Son would enter the world to bring salvation to all those God redeems.

God also sent an angel to Joseph, Mary's husband-to-be. The angel told Joseph, Mary "will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21) The name "Jesus" is the Greek form of the Hebrew name "Joshua" meaning "salvation." Jesus was given this name because He was the promised Savior who came to bring us peace with God by saving us from our sins.

When John the Baptist was born three months before Jesus, John's father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied about John. In his prophecy he spoke about how John would go before Jesus preparing the way for this One who would bring us peace with God through the forgiveness of our sins. Hear Zechariah's words about his son, John in Luke chapter 1, ⁷⁶ "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, ⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins ... ⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1:76-79) Even though beheaded, John entered into to God's kingdom in peace. John,

Zechariah, Mary and Joseph. you and me will find peace in all circumstances by giving our lives to Jesus as our Lord and Savior because of what He did on the cross.

Jesus was born into this world to die on the cross so that our sins could be forgiven and so we could be restored to a right relationship of peace with God. This was revealed to the prophets of the Old Testament. For example the prophet Isaiah was directed to write the following, ⁴ “Surely *Jesus* has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But *Jesus* was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that **brought us peace**, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on *Jesus* the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:4-6)

As I studied the meaning of the Advent the first thing that impacted me was the hope Christ has brought into this broken world. Christ is the hope of God for mankind, even in the midst of evil, He brings peace to all who believe in Him as the Christ, who is the perfect sacrifice for our salvation and reunites us with God the Father.

Jesus Brings Peace To Our Souls

Next, Jesus brings peace to our souls. One’s soul is spiritually dead and when God brings it to life, our soul is spiritually awakened. Then we seek God’s eternal truth and His Son. The sin that once separated us from God has been atoned for by Christ on the cross. When we come to saving faith in Jesus, God sees us through the perfection of Christ and says, “I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.” (Hebrews 8:12)

Even though we are saved, we still sin. Sin creates conflict with God and within ourselves. Although we desire to draw closer to God, our weakness results in anxiety, stress and inner turmoil. So we dig in and think that by our own efforts we can find inner peace. We want to be in control and fix ourselves. Jesus did not come to

bring peace only between God and His followers but also to bring peace within us. Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. When we die to self and let the Spirit take charge of our lives, inner peace becomes stronger and more consistent and we learn to surrender and quit trying to take back control.

Remember last Lord's Day you heard about Simeon. God had promised that he would not die before he saw the long-awaited Messiah. Just at the time Joseph and Mary carried the baby Jesus into the temple, God's Spirit came over Simeon and directed him to the temple. In Luke we read how Simeon took Jesus into his arms and praised God, saying, ²⁹“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.” (Luke 2:29-32) Simeon is a wonderful example of Jesus bringing personal peace. We sometimes talk about our bucket list, all the things we want to do or accomplish before we finish our lives here on earth. Well, apparently Simeon only had one thing on his bucket list, he wanted to see the Messiah before he died. His hope was fulfilled when he finally saw Jesus – that was all he needed. He praised God saying, “you are letting your servant depart in peace”, embraced Christ, and was at peace.

It is the inward peace of Christ that enables people to lay down their life for the glory of Christ. Remember how Stephen was killed? Reading from the Book of Acts chapter 7, verse 59, the mob surround Stephen as Saul watched and “as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’” Christ gave Stephen the inner peace of knowing he would be in heaven with his God. The inner peace of God's Spirit caused Stephen to “fall to his knees *and* he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” When you truly believe in Christ, everything and everyone around can be a flurry of hate and you can still be at peace within.

If there was ever one who understood the inner peace of Christ it was Paul. He experienced the transition from the ambition of the world to follow Christ. He stood by and watched Stephen stoned to death because of his ambitions. When Christ saved him, Paul was taken on a journey from turmoil to peace. This enabled him to write, ⁴“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷**And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**” (Philippians 4:4-7) Notice that this wonderful peace of God is only available in and through Jesus Christ. The Bible says the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Jesus said the same thing, as Paul but differently, ²⁶“**The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.**” (John 14:26-27) Jesus not only brought peace between believers and God but within ourselves.

Jesus Brings Peace With Others

To the world peace is fleeting and there seems to be a lack of desire for peace. The Advent season is a reminder to the world of how one needs to set aside their own advancement and seek peace. The Advent began with seeking peace. When Joseph first heard Mary was pregnant he was going to break their betrothal, which was more binding than an engagement, requiring a divorce. Joseph must have deeply loved Mary because we read “**Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹And her husband **Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.**” Joseph would have been deeply hurt knowing Mary was pregnant and the child was not his and Mary had**

been unfaithful. Yet, his love for her would not allow him to disgrace her. In Matthew chapter 1, verse 20 we read how God brought peace to Joseph and he found peace with Mary. “But as *Joseph* considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” If Mary had been pregnant with another man’s child he would have divorced her, but this child was not of man. This child was Jesus, and He was conceived in her from the Holy Spirit. So Jesus, even before He was born, brought peace between Joseph and Mary and kept their marriage from coming apart.

Just like Joseph, we too go through many challenges in this life, one of the most difficult being when our relationships are in turmoil. That is when we need to ask Jesus, the Prince of Peace, to come and bring us peace in our relationships, to intervene, to reconcile and to restore. The world is in turmoil and governments are running amuck, conflict is everywhere. This was true in Isaiah’s time as well as ours. God gave a vision to Isaiah and he wrote it down, ⁶“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6) Christ can bring peace to any situation if we surrender our egos to Him.

This is exactly what Paul taught in his letter to the persecuted church in Ephesus, ¹⁴“For *Jesus* himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.” (Ephesians 2:14) Jesus came to break the barrier between God and mankind and He came to bring down barriers between people, to bridge the gaps and bring people together and to restore peace to our damaged relationships. For believers the solution is straight forward, ¹⁵“let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all

wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Colossians 3:15-17) Jesus is the only solution for peace in a world that is broken.

Jesus Will Bring Peace On Earth

As we have study God’s Word, we have observed Jesus brings believers peace with God and inner peace to their souls and peace with others. I will close by exploring how Jesus will bring peace on earth.

We began with the angels who announced Christ’s birth to the shepherds and told them were to find the Christ child... ¹³ “suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!’” (Luke 2:13-14) This is the coming peace prophesied in the Old Testament through Isaiah, “*Jesus shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.*” (Isaiah 2:4) Some might say, hold on a minute pastor, how do you know Isaiah was not talking about God the Father? To answer this question we jump forward to chapter 9 of Isaiah, ⁶ “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.” (Isaiah 9:6-7) This prophecy is clearly about the Christ Child, who is called the “Prince of Peace” and who upon His second coming or “Parousia”, the Greek word meaning “appearing of the King” Jesus will rule the earth and there will be peace. That is certainly something I look forward to.

Peace on earth is broader than peace for humans alone. It is physical peace in nature -no more hurricanes, drought, earthquakes and so on. It means peace among the animal kingdom as God revealed to Isaiah, ⁶ “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. ⁹ They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” (Isaiah 11:6-9) This will be the first time the world will know peace since the fall in the garden - Jesus is the Christ and He is the “Prince of Peace”.

If this were not enough, Jesus goes beyond the earth and mankind and the animals and nature, He brings peace to the universe that He created. Jesus is the intimate peacemaker. “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself **all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.**” (Colossians 1:19-20) The universe was created by His word and peace shall come by His word when He returns. Therefore, this verse in Colossians brings us right back to where we started. The reason Jesus brings peace with God, peace to our souls, peace with others and peace on earth all goes back to the cross. Without the Jesus shedding His blood on the cross, there would be no peace. Without Jesus being born as a baby, whose birth we celebrate at Christmas, there would be no cross.

Let me ask, do you have peace with God? Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins so that you could be forgiven and restored to right relationship with Him. If your faith is in Christ, then you have peace with God.

Do you have peace within your souls, within your being? If your faith is in Christ, then Jesus has not abandoned you, but has come to live in you by His Holy Spirit. Jesus is the only One who can bring true peace into our souls. Jesus said if you believe in Him

by faith, He has a gift for you, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” (John 14:26-27)

Do you have peace with others? If your faith is in Christ, then He has given you all the resources you need to do your part in living in peaceful relationships with those around you. After you have done your part, you may ask Jesus in prayer to work in the other person’s heart that you may live in peace.

Do we have peace on earth? Oh, how I wish we did! We do not have peace on earth yet, but we have the promise of peace on earth to come, and God has never yet broken a promise. The angels proclaimed to the shepherds on that first Christmas, “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” This is the Christmas I celebrate. Amen!