

Isaiah 9:6

Dear Friends in Christ,

My Grandad was a veteran of World War I. My father was a veteran of World War II. I had an older cousin who was a veteran of the Korean War. I have had discussions with Pilgrim veterans who were wounded in battle; one a POW. I have had veterans of Viet Nam sit in my office while struggling with its aftermath.

Most of us vividly remember 9/11. Everyone lives in expectation of terrorist attacks. We wonder if the day will end with another report of a shooting in a school, a mall, a fast food restaurant while this government attempts to take away the ability of its citizens to defend themselves. There's constant conflict among the nations of this Earth. There are growing and legitimate concerns and fears about the economy, government honesty and encroachment, computer hacking and the power grid.

I remember as a boy, a teen and a young man the many who were prophesying that this country was moving onward and upward to better things and peace on earth; that man is basically good and will resolve his problems. I believe most live in distracting delusion and preferred ignorance as they pursue the next round of whatever satisfies the flesh.

We need help, alright, but not the help this world finagles and exploits. We need help, alright, but not from humans who have shunned God and consequently find themselves jumping from one failed solution to another. There's only One who gives help. We're preparing to celebrate his birth. He is . . .

## THE PRINCE OF PEACE

### I. Not As The World Gives.

It's not simply a good thing to do as Christians, but it is an imperative that we fix the following words of Jesus in our hearts and minds. We have examined them here a good number of times in these past years. What they say has been happening for some generations and will continue to build and intensify. Here they are:

"See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place (**must** take place, not might), but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.'" (Matt. 24:7-8)

Actually, it's not difficult - *it's impossible* to conclude that this world will come to peace within itself, that heaven on earth is within the grasp of man. And, realistically, it's by far easier for church people who don't want to hear this and find it negative to *dismiss themselves from the totality of Holy Scriptures* and run to those places that pick and choose what pleases the ear - assures the listener of peace and contentment with this world. Not "in" but "with" this world.

One day I found myself in back of an SUV with a "Coexist" bumper sticker. Below that sticker was another bumper sticker which read: "It has become appallingly clear that our technology has surpassed our humanity." On the contrary, with some exceptions, our technology exacerbates what humanity is: flawed! We call it sin. Our technology has become grossly intrusive with our personal lives, created a massive arena for gossip and slander, is distracting to any real thought and in-depth dialogue, and, has dumbed down worship and growth in the Word of God.

Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you." (Jn. 14:27a) All I ask you to do, at this moment of this sermon, is to hear the simplicity of those words, "not as the world gives do I give to you." The peace Jesus gives will never connect to this world's ways, wants and thinking. And yet, much of the church sees Him as the example of how we humans can end war and strife and have a happy life here.

## II. Christ's Peace.

So, let's back up to John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you." This time it's the first part of that we want to consider: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you."

His peace. That peace is the only peace which can address what the Scriptures say about you and me as we stand alone before God. These words: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom. 2:23) All humans are forever separated from God by their sin. And, as a result, as Scriptures say, "(we) were by nature children of wrath...dead in our trespasses." (Eph. 2:3b,5a) Dead. Paul says we "were enemies". (Rom 5:10)

Think of it: If we were by nature children of wrath and enemies of God there was a fierce war between God and us: The war we declare against God by virtue of our sin. But Christ intervened. As Scriptures say, "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8)

God is at peace with us. For the sake of Christ's suffering and death, the wrath against us because of sin has been removed. We are no longer God's enemies.

Commentator Gary P. Baumler writes:

"Jesus' peace is not the same as the world's peace. It doesn't depend on harmony between countries and tranquility in families. It isn't as fragile as the next temper flare-up or grab for power. It isn't disturbed by plans gone awry. Even Jesus' arrest, trial, torture, and crucifixion couldn't cancel it. "Jesus' peace calms troubled hearts and makes fearful hearts confident. His peace transcends human understanding and sustains us in all conditions. His peace keeps us at one with God and serene in our salvation. We need not be afraid or overcome by troubled hearts." (Gary P. Baumler, People's Bible Commentary, CPH, St. Louis, 1997, p. 204)

How significant those words of Paul: "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:7) Peace which surpasses our understanding. Indeed! Though we are still sinful and often ignore God and our walk with Him, for the sake of Jesus, He is always there and loves us.

Jesus is the Prince of Peace. He is eternal Royalty Who oversees unending, uninterrupted peace for His subjects.

## III. In The Meantime.

But, of course, there is still the meantime. The moment. The lives we live in a grossly chaotic and wicked world. And here's how Scriptures describe life in this world for us. It's not what we want to hear, but it's the reality check for those who sacrifice spiritual life and service to God for the pursuit of whatever. Jesus said, "In the world you will have tribulation." (Jn. 16:33b)

Shortly after the Apostle Paul was stoned at Lystra, the disciples declared to the church then - and now - "through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." (Acts. 14:22b) No commentary needed. Just our ears!

In describing the Christian struggle with sin, Paul declared, "So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members." (Rom. 7:21-23)

David declares, "I walk through the valley of the shadow of death..." (Ps. 23:4) And that because "The wages of sin is death." (Rom 6:23) This is where we live: the valley of the shadow of death. We must venture through it day by day.

And yet, in every one of these statements, it is The Prince of Peace Who has gone ahead of us. It is the Prince of Peace who says, "I have overcome the world." (Jn. 16:33b) He has! He has overcome sin, death and hell for us. It is the Prince of Peace Who says, "Let not your hearts be troubled...In my Father's house are many rooms... I go to prepare a place for you." (Jn. 14:1,2) It is the Prince of Peace Who says to our still sinful ways, "...whoever believes...is not condemned...". (Jn. 3:18a)

Finally, and since we are not condemned because of Jesus, it is the Prince of Peace Who enables all who confess "I walk through the valley of the shadow of death" - it is the Prince of Peace who enables us to say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life (my life in this *valley*), and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." (Ps. 23:6)

The Prince of Peace, our Lord Jesus Christ, gives us the forgiveness and love of God. Forever!

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

*4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent*

*December 20, 2015*

*Isaiah 9:6: “This Child Is... The Prince of Peace”*

- I. Not As The World Gives.
- II. Christ's Peace.
- III. In The Meantime.

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