

Rev. Dan Welch Advent 4 12-22-24 Texts: **Isaiah 9:1–2, 6–7; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20**

This morning, we come to the finale of a four-week sermon series on the titles given to Jesus as found in Isaiah 9:6. “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given . . . and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” So far, we’ve learned about the first three titles, “Wonderful Counselor,” “Mighty God,” and “Everlasting Father.” Today we will focus on the fourth title given to Jesus in Isaiah 9:6: “Prince of Peace.”

We live in a world where the *opposite* of peace is far too common. Around the world, numerous nations are at war with other nations or sometimes even at war within themselves. Many of our service men and women are stationed in foreign lands when they would rather be at home celebrating Christmas with their loved ones.

But nations are not the only ones who are at war. Many people in this world have feelings of hatred and even perform acts of violence toward others for lots of different reasons. Some people hate and hurt others because their skin is a different color or because they belong to a different religion or to a different political party. Some hate and hurt others simply because they covet what others have. No wonder society seems to be at war with itself!

On top of that, we can even find war among people who should love one another. Some husbands and wives are at war with each other, and the result is that marriage vows are often broken. Some parents and children are at war with each other, and the result is that we have dysfunctional homes filled with tension, strife, and violence. Even fellow Christians who ought to love one another are often filled with hatred for one another—and the result is that we have some congregations filled with disharmony and conflict.

Sadly, it’s clear we *don’t have* peace on earth—and that’s discouraging because we all want peace. During the Christmas season many hope for some sort of peace in their lives. Instead, we can’t seem to avoid war. Why is this the case? What we need to understand is that things have been this way ever since Adam and Eve declared war against God!

God’s Word teaches that, as descendants of Adam and Eve, everyone in this world is conceived with their sinful nature. And so, it is natural for us to be at war with God. In fact, the reason there is so much war among people is that we’re at war with God! Until we have peace with God, there will be no peace on earth.

In fact, if peace were up to us, we’d be doomed to an eternity without peace. Scripture teaches that we’re by nature enemies of God. The problem is not that God doesn’t love us. No! The problem is that we don’t love **God**, nor do we trust

Him. The proof is that we constantly sin against God by our desires, thoughts, words, and deeds—by the evil we do and the good we fail to do.

God's Word also clearly teaches that we deserve God's eternal wrath because of our sin, and there's nothing we can do to change the situation. Not only can we do nothing to get rid of our guilt and avoid the punishment we deserve, but the real problem is that we can't change our own hearts. We can't give ourselves the peace we so desperately need.

And since we're not at peace with God, we can never be at peace with others. Left to ourselves, there would never be peace on earth but only war and strife at all the various levels of human relationships.

But that's why we need to pay very close attention to the true message of Christmas. Because there is good news for us war-torn sinners who long for some sort of peace. This morning, we get to hear about the Prince of Peace.

Simply put, Jesus, God's Son, came into this world to give you peace. But the peace He gives you has to start with Him bringing us into a loving relationship with God. We need to be at peace with God if we are going to be at peace with others.

In our Old Testament Reading from Isaiah, we hear that the child who is born for us and the son who is given for us is called "Prince of Peace." He is called "Prince" because He rules over us, and the "Peace" describes the nature of His rule. As Isaiah writes, "Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end" (9:7).

Isaiah is speaking here about Jesus who is **God** in human flesh. Yes! The baby who lived in Mary's womb is the **Creator** of all things. The infant Jesus had more power in His little finger than all the armies of all the nations that have ever existed. Yet Jesus chose to live a life of humility and service. Jesus even allowed Himself to be beaten and nailed to a cross.

But why would Jesus allow people to do this to Him? In Isaiah 53:5, we find the answer: "But He 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." Did you hear that? The very same prophet Isaiah who speaks of Jesus' birth in chapter 9, speaks of Jesus' suffering and death on the cross in chapter 53.

Please understand! Jesus didn't **have** to do this. He didn't **have** to endure this shame and suffering. He could have made war against us and wiped us out. But He instead allowed us to wipe **Him** out with our sins so that we might be

saved from our war against God and be rescued from the punishment we deserve.

The apostle Paul writes about this wonderful Good News in Romans chapter 5: “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life” (vv. 6–10).

In other words, Jesus was **born to die** for us! Isn’t that truly amazing, and at the same time **heart-rending** to consider? Jesus was born so that He could die in order to give us peace with God. Earlier in Romans chapter 5, Paul says, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 1).

And now, because of Jesus’ death and resurrection **you** are at peace with God. The war God could have justly waged against you He instead waged against His Son, whom He punished in our place, so that through faith in Him we might be “justified,” that is, “declared righteous” before God. The risen Lord Jesus, the Prince of Peace has reconciled you to God. Your sins are forgiven. You are no longer God’s enemy. You can live at peace with God.

Remember what the angels said to the shepherds? “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth **peace** to those on whom his favor rest!” (Luke 2:14 NIV). If you want God’s peace, then let His favor rest on you. In other words, repent of your sin and trust in the Prince of Peace who died for your sin and reconciled you to God.

Sadly, God’s favor does **not** rest on some people in this world—not because God doesn’t want His favor to rest on them but because some refuse to repent of their sin and trust in the Prince of Peace.

Maybe you know someone who is running from God and trying to find peace in his or her life of sin. Maybe **you’ve** been guilty of this foolishness. Well, God doesn’t want you to be at war with Him or other people. God wants His favor to rest on you so that **you** can receive peace from the **Prince** of Peace.

This morning, we worship our Savior, the Prince of Peace who came to give us peace with God. Today, God’s favor rests on you as He calls you to repent of your sin and receive peace through faith in your Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

I have some more good news. The same Prince of Peace who has reconciled you to God can also heal the broken relationships you have with others. As the love and mercy of God fills your heart, you will be moved to show love and mercy to others - *even forgiving those who have hurt you.*

Because of Jesus, we can begin to have peace on earth. Because of the Prince of Peace, husbands and wives can begin to forgive, love, and serve each other. Because of the Prince of Peace, parents and children can begin to forgive, love, and serve one another. Because of the Prince of Peace, all humans who trust in Him can begin to forgive, love, and serve one another. There can be peace on earth when people are at peace with God.

However, as wonderful as that news is, we must remember that we will never have complete peace on earth until Jesus returns again in glory. As I mentioned earlier, many people refuse to rest in God's favor, and so they don't have the peace of Christ. Even we Christians who **do** trust in Jesus continue to be at war with the desires of our sinful natures.

Nevertheless, even though we will never have perfect peace on earth until Jesus returns, we believers can still live in peace and have certain hope for the future! We can live in peace *now* because we know that our sins are forgiven and that we are reconciled to God through Jesus. We can also live with certain **hope** for the **future** because one day Jesus will return, as He promised, and then He will put an end to all war and all evil.

This hope is **possible** because the Prince of Peace was born of the virgin Mary - *born to save His people from their sins so that you could have peace with God.* This reminds me of some of the words from the hymn "Hark! The herald angels sing, 'Glory to the newborn King; peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.'"

With those words in your heart and mind, let God's favor rest upon you and your homes, and make the Prince of Peace the center of your marriages and families—and then you will experience the peace of God that passes all human understanding. Amen!