



2: Preparing the Way For PEACE (Advent)

Before peace can fill our world, it must first rule our hearts. John the Baptist called people to prepare the way for the Lord — and his message still matters today. Discover how repentance, faith, and forgiveness make room for the Prince of Peace.

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* All Scripture is from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) unless otherwise noted.

The term **ADVENT** is derived from the Latin word *ADVENTUS* meaning “coming” or “arrival.” Early Christians who used this term in appreciation of the 1st coming of Jesus and anticipation of the 2nd coming of Jesus - His birth & His future RETURN.

Isaiah 9:6 For **a child** will be born for us, **a son** will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named **Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace**.

Peace is a word that usually is used after times of war - when the hostility ends and new relational boundaries are drawn. Once war ceases and the terms of peace are established, something amazing can happen: former enemies can become close allies (e.g. United States, Japan, & Germany). The hostility was real, but so was the reconciliation.

The Bible says the same thing about our relationship with God. Because of sin, we weren't neutral — we were at war with Him (Col 1:21, Eph 2:1-3, John 3:18). But through Jesus, God didn't just call a truce... He made peace. He brought us close. He turned enemies into family.

Isaiah 40:1-2 LSB

“Comfort, O **comfort My people**,” says your God. “Speak to the heart of Jerusalem; And call out to her, that her warfare has been fulfilled, That **her iniquity has been removed**, That she has received from the hand of Yahweh Double for all her sins.”

Northern Israel had been invaded by Assyria over the course of many years (ultimately conquered in 722 BC). This punishment - sent from Yahweh, because of Israel's sins - occurred during the life of Isaiah and his audience. Isaiah lived and ministered in Southern Israel (Judah), and warned that punishment from Yahweh was coming for their sins too - if they didn't repent. They would NOT, and the Babylonians later conquered Judah and carried off many captives (e.g. Daniel and friends) in 586 BC - even destroying the temple in Jerusalem.

God had brought war to His disobedient people, but - in the future - **HELP was on the way!**
And that's Isaiah's message to a distraught people.

Isaiah 40:3-5 LSB

A voice is calling, “**Prepare the way for Yahweh** in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert **a highway for our God**.
“Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley; Then the glory of Yahweh will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together; For the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.”

Prepare the way for Yahweh. It sure seems like Yahweh is about to make an appearance on the Earth after preparation is made for His arrival. Imagine if the President of the United States were to make a scheduled visit to our little town. Our main road would look immaculate with nothing to interfere with his arrival. So too, there was to be preparation for Yahweh's visit.

Make smooth...a highway for our God. This language of **every mountain** leveled, and **rough ground** being made into a smooth highway is metaphorical language pointing to the promise that NOTHING - not mountains, hills, or **rough terrain** will keep **YAHWEH - our God** from coming to help His people and extending PEACE to them.

How would THAT preparation for PEACE happen? We see the ultimate answer to the question - 700 years after Isaiah's prophecy, when Zechariah - a priest serving in the Jerusalem temple - received a message by an angel sent from God.

Luke 1:13,16-17

But the angel said to him, "...Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him **John**... He will turn many of the children of Israel **to the Lord their God**. And he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers to their children [Mal 4:5], and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, **to make ready for the Lord a prepared people.**"

John was a popular name in the New Testament times, with 6 different men having this name.¹

John = "Yahweh is gracious".

This was the name of the forerunner who would announce the coming of Yahweh and extend Yahweh's offer of peace to sinful people. Just after John was born, here are the words his father spoke over him.

Luke 1:76-79

And you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High, for **you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways**, to give his people knowledge of **salvation through the forgiveness of their sins**. Because of our God's merciful compassion, **the dawn from on high will visit us** to shine on those who live in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into **the way of peace**.

Sometime around the birth of John, Joseph receives the news about his fiancée, Mary, being pregnant, and as he has not been intimate with her yet, he prepares to break off the engagement.

Matthew 1:20-21

But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to **a son**, and you are to **name him Jesus**, because **he will save his people from their sins.**"

The Hebrew name **Yeshua** = "Yahweh saves" **will save His people from their sins**.

🕒 When you TRUST HIM...He will forgive you and live inside of you! And that's the greatest gift you'll ever receive!

"Yahweh saves" would be fully human, but...**MORE** than *HUMAN*.

Matthew 1:22-23

Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: *See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to **a son**, and they will name him **Immanuel*** [Isaiah 7:14], which is translated "**God is with us.**"

Jesus was not merely *named Immanuel* - **Jesus IS...God with us!**

✝ The One who created human beings was implanted in the womb of a human...and became a human!

All other religions teach about how to get to God, but **Christianity tells us how God came to us!**

Luke 3:2b-6

God's word came to **John** the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the vicinity of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah: A voice of one crying out in the wilderness: **Prepare the way for the Lord** [Hebrew = Yahweh]; *make his paths straight! Every valley will be filled, and every mountain and hill will be made low; the crooked will become straight, the rough ways smooth, and **everyone will see the salvation of God.***

One day as John was warning of God's wrath & extending God's peace, preaching & baptizing - **God with us** does show up.

John 1:29-30

...John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, **the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!** This is the one I told you about: 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.'

THIS is how PEACE would be made between God and His sinful enemies. Paul, once one of God's fiercest ENEMIES - yet one who had experienced God's forgiveness and PEACE - later writes it this way.

Colossians 1:19-22

For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in **Him**, and through **Him** to reconcile everything to Himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by **making peace through His blood, shed on the cross**. Once you were *alienated and hostile* in your minds as *expressed in your evil actions*. But now He has reconciled you by His Physical Body through His death, to present you **holy, faultless, and blameless** before Him—

Believing that we are now **holy, faultless, and blameless before God** should show up on our faces, through our voices, and spill out onto others around us. This is our message that we can carry to others - **allowing God to use US to Prepare the Way of PEACE to the lives of others**...like one beggar telling the other beggar where to find the bread:

- You are a great sinner. (So was I.) You have been God's enemy. (So was I.)
- BUT...Jesus is a Greater Savior, able to make you holy, faultless, and blameless!

✓ **ASK** God for opportunities, **LOOK** for opportunities, and **TAKE** opportunities to tell others about Him during this Christmas season, a.k.a. **Advent**.

¹ Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, in Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990-), 2:211.

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

- * Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), **Gary** (850-673-2507), **Betty** (850-973-3266), or another follower of Jesus soon!
- * Or call our **deacons & wives: Alan & Christy Androski** (850-464-1428), **Steve & Debbie Bass** (850-673-7952), **Noel & Patricia Barnes** (813-767-2881), **Derek & Emily Beaty** (813-763-4421), or **Tim & Joni Hughey** (850-464-1156).

Discussion questions

These discussion questions are designed to help you LIVE what you LEARN with your Family, Friends, or Small Group.

Looking Back to Look Forward

1. How does the contrast between judgment (Assyria/Babylon) & comfort (**Isaiah 40:1-2**) set the stage for the arrival of the Prince of Peace?
2. **Isaiah 40:3-5** speaks of valleys lifted and mountains lowered — metaphorical roadwork. What are some “obstacles” in the human heart that must be leveled for God’s peace to reign?

Preparing the Way — Understanding John the Baptist

1. John’s name means “Yahweh is gracious.” How does his mission (**Luke 1:16-17; Luke 1:76-79**) embody that meaning?
2. John preached *repentance* as preparation for the Lord’s coming. Why is *repentance* essential for experiencing peace with God?

Jesus — The Prince of Peace Arrives

1. **Read Matthew 1:20-23.** How does Matthew’s description of Jesus as *Immanuel* — God with us - deepen our understanding of the peace God offers?
2. **Read John 1:29-30.** John the Baptist calls Jesus “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” How does this imagery connect to Advent and the theme of **PEACE**?

Peace Made Personal

1. If peace fundamentally means “the end of hostility and reconciliation,” how does the cross fulfill this definition according to **Colossians 1:19-22**?
2. When you think back on your life, when did you realize that you had once been an enemy of God, not just neutral? How did God bring you near?
3. Many Christians intellectually believe they’re forgiven but struggle to feel forgiven. How does the phrase “**holy, faultless, and blameless**” challenge your understanding of what Jesus has done for you?

Becoming Messengers of Peace

1. We often say: “We need to be like one beggar telling the other beggar where to find the bread.” Who is one person in your life who needs to hear about God’s peace this Christmas?
2. John prepared people for the first coming of Jesus. How can we prepare people for the second coming of Jesus? Talk about some practical ways you might share Jesus with others.
3. Pray for one another.