

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message

December 14 2025 "Advent: Peace "The work of reconciliation. This is why Jesus came"

I Intro.

We're flying through Advent and rapidly approaching Christmas. Advent is our time of preparation for the coming of The Christ. You'll want to keep up with our Advent events. Stay connected to our social media to keep up with everything that's happening. Welcome to our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We consider you part of our community. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are fully committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

II Recap.

Advent is a time for intentional, thoughtful, preparation and anticipation for the coming of The Christ. To do the proactive work of preparation. Working through the themes reflecting on each of these as we prepare for Christmas. Hope, Joy, Peace, and Love. Focusing and holding each of these in a new way, can make Christmas something powerful and significant for us. Our emphasis on justice returns us to the original meaning of the coming of The Christ. The coming of The Christ announced the promise of justice. The work of returning, reconciling, restoring, redeeming, rescuing the world back to God's original intent. God has always been doing the work of redeeming all of creation back to him. The incarnation (birth) of Jesus, Jesus – "*moving into our neighborhood*", is the active, working with us, building the Kingdom of Heaven. Bringing heaven to earth. This calls us to roll up our sleeves and work alongside what Jesus came to do. Bringing about real justice in each one of these areas.

III Sunday.

I'm going to back into this conversation. Start easy, but...brace yourself. I'm going to get really personal in a bit.

What destroys peace– as you understand peace?

I don't have right or wrong answers here. You don't have to play; "*read my mind*".

Let's dig deeper now. Think about a recent conflict you had with someone close to you. A major disagreement, debate, argument. You didn't resolve it right away.

What was it like to be in that place of conflict over an unresolved issue?

What were the things that stood in the way of resolving the issue?

It was probably things like; pride, feelings, things said, things not said, lack of any workable solution, past unresolved issues, inability to voice your struggle, and more that got in our way.

Pushing the idea of peace through reconciling conflict, think about these.

What does the process of working through any issue look like?

What are things that have to be addressed, dealt with to get to some sort of resolution– to make peace?

Conflict can be devastating to any relationship. Conflict is a break, division, between people. You are no longer united, one, at least for that moment. It can be within a group. It can be with many others, or just one person. Even at times it can be in our relationship with God also. If something has happened in our life, we feel like God wasn't there when we needed him, we genuinely feel like God let us down. And that creates distance, a split, and the relationship is broken. In that conflict, division, brokenness, **there is no peace.** There is only one way that the conflict can be resolved, peace restored. Bringing what has been torn apart, divided, back together again. And that work of restoring peace takes real work. We're going to walk through what true peace is, what it's centered in, and how we are to be a part of this Advent work of peace. And that peace is through the process and **work of reconciliation.**

Three scriptures today that talk about receiving peace, and the **work of peace.** Understanding God's work of peace making, and our partnership with God. All in the work of justice.

1. Peace is announced and we receive it from God. A classic Christmas reading, but we'll need to define peace through some other scriptures.

Luke 2:8-14. That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby **wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.**" Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, "Glory to God in highest heaven, and **peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.**"

The peace mentioned isn't peace that has to be earned by those who please God. It isn't stepping and fetching trying to do all the things God wants, to earn peace. Rather, this peace is the desire, and the work to please God, actually brings peace. God isn't a mob boss dispensing peace to those who please him. When we do the work God placed inside of us, we experience peace. So, the natural question is now, ***"What pleases God that brings peace?"*** We believe it's the work of justice. This Advent theme of peace is being a peacemaker.

2. We're told what the work of peace is. Paul described God's work of making peace. He defines and gives us the context, what this justice work of making peace looks like.

Colossians 1:19-20. For God **in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.**

This is a little deeper, more profound explanation of what the work of peace is. God, coming in the form of a person (flesh) takes on the work of **reconciliation.** Bringing what was divided, separate, apart, back together. Not forcing togetherness. It's not; 'going along to get along'. The difference between being a peacekeeper and a peacemaker. But **working the process of bridging the gap** between God and us. This is the active work of reconciliation towards peace.

The emphasis is on peace with “everything”. We don’t have peace because we draw lines, build walls, create our own artificial distinctions that force separation, division, therefore destroying peace. Just like the disciples always asking; “*who’s in and who’s out?*” There seems to be something inside of us that just naturally wants to define who to include and who to exclude. Which always hurts the work of peace. The pronouncement of peace will be experienced by those who chose God. And the truth that this peace is for “everything”. All of creation. This means there is work that God is doing, coming to this world, tearing down everything that divides and calls us to that same work. Healing the divide between us, each other, and ALL THINGS, shows us the work of reconciliation. Bringing things we separate back together. This is what brings peace. Get into the deep work of peace, and reconciliation. Have to do the work of tearing things down that destroy peace.

3. Then we get about the work of being a peacemaker. Which is what actually pleases God. What makes us his children. Paul really spells it out here. There’s lots to unpack.

Ephesians 2:14-16. For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.

Peace comes from joining God’s work of reconciliation of all of creation. In 2 Corinthians Paul tells us that God, in reconciling us to himself, has given us the “*ministry of reconciliation*”. Our mission, the work that God has been doing since the beginning of time, and Jesus came to do, is to undivide people. Doing the work of destroying the things that disrupt peace. The sacrifice has already been made. Now we’re about the justice work of bringing different, separated, divided, people back together. Peace from unity, oneness. It doesn’t come from or through forced sameness or uniformity. Peace through oneness comes through the cross. The sacrifice of Jesus. This absolutely destroys all the things we use to divide and take away peace. Our dividing, separating, excluding people, deciding ‘who’s in and who’s out’ is not ours to do. Reconciliation has to come from recognizing the division between us. And what causes the division. Reconciliation is the work that God is doing. “*To set things right*”. There can be no reconciliation UNTIL things that create division, are taken down. The things that makes some people ‘in’ and some people ‘out’, some worthy and some unworthy, the walls of hostility we build, are made right. Peace comes from actively tearing down the systems and structures that destroy peace. Throughout history, scripture reveals God’s work of bringing all of creation back into relationship with him. The continual work of redemption and reconciliation. In the birth of Jesus, we see God coming down in the flesh, to live out this work of reconciliation. For the purpose of bringing peace, wholeness, salvation. Peace that was announced to those shepherds. Bridge the divides, flatten the differences we create, and work to unite all people.

But there is no reconciliation without justice. To be makers and bringers of peace, we must move towards others. By doing the ministry of reconciliation. For the sake of peace. If there was harm done, still being done, then the work of justice, reconciliation, the movement towards

peace, has to be the work of justice. Naming, calling out, destroying, the things that build walls and inhibit peace. In couples counseling it can never “*kiss and make up*”. It’s identifying, calling out the harm and hurt. Then doing the things to repair that harm and hurt. Then stop doing the things that harm and hurt. “***No justice, no peace***”. Reconciliation is not quieting the conflict or disagreement (peacekeeping). Peace is born out of transforming the things that cause the hurt. So, returning to the question we asked at the start.

What destroys peace...as you understand peace?

What is inside of you that may hinder you from being a peace-maker?

The hostility that pushed us apart, the walls WE create to divide. Defining ‘who’s in and who’s out’, who’s worthy and unworthy, who’s deserving and not deserving, are continually being torn down, destroyed. Our hate and division, dividing people up, was put to death on the cross.

IV Challenge.

The making of peace begins with us. We proclaim the power of the cross, sacrifice, when we do the work to receive God’s restoring us, reconciling ourselves with God. And then the work of justice. Breaking down the walls of hostility that we love to put up, and reconciling us to each other. THIS is the message of Christmas. The announcement of peace. The work of justice. Bringing the peace that God offers us to each other. Jews and Gentiles— which means everyone else. Racial, ethnic, class, social, any group of people who are at enmity with each other, are to be united. Not by believing the same things. Not uniformity. This is us, moving towards others in our uniqueness. God didn’t wait for us to change to move towards us. God moved towards us when we weren’t aware God was moving towards us. We surrender to the grace and work of reconciliation of God towards us, by allowing God to heal the hurt and dividedness within us. This is the true message of Christmas.

So, what can we do, to participate in the work of dismantling things that destroy peace?

We RECEIVE GOD’S LOVE.

We STOP LABELING, we STOP DIVIDING, we STOP BUILDING WALLS.

We REACH OUT, we MOVE TOWARDS OTHERS, we BUILD, we REPAIR, we RESTORE, we CULTIVATE, we CONTINUALLY LIVE AS GRACE RECEIVERS WHO CONTINUALLY GIVE THIS GRACE TO OTHERS. We tear down walls we’ve put up, speak against division, hate, injustice, racism, things that create division and build walls of hostility. We stop labeling ‘who’s in and who’s out’, worthy and unworthy, deserving and not deserving. We are to be makers of peace. The real “*children of God*”. And work to build a world in which everyone, everything, can experience the peace from God and flourish.

The Advent candle reminds us that peace is a light that shines in a dark world. And that darkness will not overcome peace.