

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday Dec 6, 2020. "Names: Names Are a Blessing. Peace."

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

We're still gathering in person. A small but growing group who follow all the safety guidelines joins us in person. We're so encouraged with your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We still are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions you have, please pass them our way. We feel just as isolated as you, and we want to maintain that connection with each of you.

II Sunday.

Ok, we were back in pocket on Sunday after taking a week off of gathering 'in person'. We missed you and we were glad to see some of your faces again. We hope to make the run to Christmas with being able to keep doing 'in person'. Stay tuned for any changes we may make.. Also, Sunday was the second Sunday of Advent. Last week we did an abbreviated service of worship and scripture to remember the first theme of hope. The confident expectation of the **coming of Jesus**. We hope, (see what I did there), you found that service meaningful. Sunday we hit our second theme of advent. And that is peace. We wove it into our overall theme of "names", and the power of being able to name things, give understanding and explanation to the things we experience, in order to find help to deal with all the things we have to face. I know that sounds really vague, but we'll dive deeper into what that actually means, and it will make more sense as we go.

Because we all deal with the cliché definitions of peace, let's unpack that word a bit.

What does peace mean to you?

Do you have an understanding or belief about peace that's different from the world's?

Lastly, what helps you experience the peace you believe in, what can disturb that peace?

The scripture we used for this Sunday of peace was one that does an incredible job 'naming' things. It names things that disrupt or disturb this peace God desires for us, and then it gives us the PERFECT answer to the lack of peace. So, read **Isaiah 9:2-7**, and we'll ask the traditional questions.

What jumped out to you about this passage?

What did it say to you about things that take away peace?

How did you understand what would bring peace?

Ok, let's dig into this passage.

It begins with describing, naming, a world in need of peace. And this passage does it in several ways.

1. Those who live in the land of deep darkness. (Or however your version worded it).

This passage written 700 years before the birth of Jesus describes life for the people of that day as living in deep darkness.

So, what do you believe “*living in the land of deep darkness*” means?

This passage has so much connection with what many of us may be feeling today. With everything going on, praying for 2021 to be better, we can feel the heaviness and weight of what can only be described as darkness. Or in other words, despair, discouragement, hopelessness.

Think back and describe a dark time in your life. How did you feel in it?

2. Then this passage describes the things that cause this deep darkness.

This passage then breaks down for the readers what has caused the people to live in this darkness. War, slavery, which we understand and see as; hate, oppression, division, disunity, the powerful exercising control over the powerless. And the Israelites were feeling the weight of the darkness of being on the receiving end of being at war and being in slavery. And if we want to be honest, (which I think we do), can find current application that this country was founded on slavery and the use of war, power over the weak, to establish itself. Now this isn't an anti-war position. This is just honestly admitting that many in our nation, and people we know who have been hurt, and their lives shattered by war and at the hands of those who are more powerful.

How have you seen, experienced the misuse of power to create these things that feel dark?

Division and disunity are often the results of the lack of wholeness and health by those in control.

3. The answer to this darkness.

Then we are told what is the true answer to this darkness, division, despair. And that is the coming of the one they call/NAME the; “***Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.***” For this particular Sunday of Advent we will focus on that final description. The Prince of Peace. The other descriptions are so beautiful, but it's this title of “*prince of peace*” that seems to paint a picture of what not only light is, (described earlier in this passage), but what will address these specific issues that create darkness. And this name “prince of peace” is the one who will bring light in the darkness. And what will push back the dark, be light, is the making of peace. This is what Jesus taught in The Beatitudes. “*Blessed are the peaceMAKERS, for they will be called the children of God*”. There seems to be something extra special about this peace, shalom, that Jesus brings, is the prince of, and calls us to join the work of actually ‘making’ peace. Not just keeping it, but actively living in a way, doing things, that brings about peace.

No real question here. Just think upon what our world would look like if we recognized Jesus as the “*Prince of Peace*”?

III Challenge.

So, in this second Sunday of Advent, we recognize and celebrate the name of Jesus as “***The Prince of Peace***”. The light coming into the world to push back the darkness that often surrounds us. And we are called to join in the work of being a people who actively ‘make’ peace.

So, what would it look like in your life to be a person who makes peace?