

Prince of Peace

Welcome to the final week of our Christmas series called, **Gloom to Glory (A Promise of Hope)**. This has been a 4 part series where we have been examining one of the most famous Christmas passages that we find in scripture and taking an in-depth look at the 4 names given to describe Jesus. **Isaiah 9:6** For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. In week one we looked at how Jesus is our WONDERFUL COUNSELOR. Week two we looked at how Jesus is our MIGHTY GOOD and then last week we looked at how Jesus is our EVERLASTING FATHER! If you've missed any of the last 3 weeks, we would love for you to catch up on our Vertical App or on our Youtube page. **Btw..remember next week we will NOT BE MEETING IN PERSON! Our service will be streamed via FB & Youtube @10:30am. Pastor Donnie will be preaching a message to help us begin preparing for our 21 Days of Prayer which begins January 7th so make sure that you do not miss next week!**

In chapter 9 of the book of Isaiah, the prophet was sent by God to speak a word of HOPE to the struggling nation of Israel. Not just a word of hope, but a word of assurance and above all that; He gave a promise! A promise that would change the course of history. A promise you and I are still standing on and holding onto today. A promise that is unchanging and is eternal! **A promise that takes us from "gloom to glory!"** Let's pray as we prepare to dive in..

Do we have any last minute gift wrappers in the room? That brings me anxiety just thinking about waiting till the day before. Any last minute grocery shoppers hoping the stores have what you need to cook for tomorrow? What about this, anybody gotta leave here today and pick up a gift you forgot or procrastinated on getting? In a perfect world, we would have everything ready a week or even a few weeks in advance, but life right! I think we can all testify that it's easier said than done. For so many families, Christmas is anything but PEACEFUL, but can actually be chaotic! I hear so many families use the line...I'm ready for Christmas to be here and to be over with! Why? Because in a perfect world, there would be no anxiety, stress, concern, grief, family drama, insecurities or any kind of fear that would be detrimental to us in our celebrations. But yet, Christmas for many of us, brings those emotions and feelings into reality. It brings us into a state of chaos. Remember in week one when we said Christmas didn't arrive when everything was okay, but arrived when we were in our darkest time, when we were in a position of no way out. Left unto ourselves, we kept digging a hole deeper with no way of escape. Faced with the reality of going astray with our sinful selves, God stepped in.

Show of hands, how many of you can honestly admit this morning that you need some peace during the Holiday season? If you can admit that you need it, you've probably sought after it? For many of us, when our eyes and hearts are not focused on Jesus, we tend to seek other options. Whether it be people, social media, hobbies, our jobs, pursuits of different kinds, we find ourselves being peace hoppers hoping something will calm our hearts. Unfortunately, we

can find ourselves deep in a hole before we realize it's not working! Fortunately for us though, Isaiah gave us a fourth name for the coming Messiah and that is "PRINCE OF PEACE!" What does Prince of Peace mean, glad you asked: **The Hebrew word for prince is *sar* which means ruler, chief, captain. The Hebrew word for peace is *shalom*.** It is commonly used as Jewish greeting. Isaiah wasn't prophesying Jesus to be the chief of greetings. *Shalom* in this verse is actually referring to all kinds of peace. The kind of peace and especially that which brings restoration to everything He touches. Today, we want to show you how Jesus, being our Prince of Peace, wants to restore your heart from a place of chaos to a place of calmness. To do that, we want to give you 3 signs of a heart ruled by the Prince of Peace.

Sign #1: A Peaceful Heart is a Heart that has been Reconciled to God

It is impossible to have to truly have a calm heart if your heart is not reconciled to God. I know that might sound harsh, but it is reality for us. In the beginning, Adam and Eve were in perfect harmony with God. Perfect harmony inwardly and outwardly. There was no conflict...until there was. Sin arrived on the scene and everything changed. What was perfect became imperfect. Guilt, shame, entered the scene. Sin broke the relationship. The disobedience introduced conflict between God and man. Since then, we have become enemies of God, and the fact that God is perfect and holy; means it is our fault! We desire our sinful nature and do not naturally want Him. We are at war with Him. **Romans 8:7**, "The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." Our hearts are naturally broken, wicked and selfish. Yet, God had a plan through His Son Jesus, the Prince of Peace. God is so in love with us that He couldn't bear not being able to have a peaceful and intimate relationship with us. So when Isaiah prophesied that the coming Messiah was the Prince of Peace he was telling "everyone" that would listen...the Prince of Peace is coming to reconcile God and man. To resolve the conflict that started with Adam. The Apostle Paul puts it this way...

Romans 5:1, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"

Romans 5:10, "For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!"

2 Corinthians 5:18-19, "18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation."

Colossians 1: 19-22, "19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. **22** But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—.”

Jesus, through the sacrifice on the cross, He has given us the opportunity to be reconciled to our Heavenly Father. He has given us the opportunity for peace with our Heavenly Father! We can have a personal relationship with Him. No more shame, no more guilt, no more hiding, no more running. We can sit and enjoy His company. Our relationship is built upon intimacy. The cross has eliminated our sins being counted against us! If we put our trust in Him, surrender our lives to Him, we are saved through His life! Through Jesus, our relationship with our Heavenly Father is secure! We're not at war any longer with the one who created us!

Maybe this morning, your heart is not reconciled with God. You are at war with Him. Things have not panned out like you've thought they would and the hand you've been dealt seems unfair. You've struggled with the idea and understanding that He's a loving God and this Holiday season is no different; matter of fact, it makes it worse. Please hear me...He KNOWS what you're feeling. He KNOWS what you've walked through. He KNOWS what no one else doesn't...He also knew you would question and even possibly blame...yet He sent His Son to be a Prince of Peace. He loves you...He wants you....He's calling you...He wants to have peace with you. He wants to bring peace to your heart... (Transition statement?)

Sign #2: A Peaceful Heart is a Heart that Praises God

What are you struggling with this morning? Take off the facades, pull away what you want people to see and answer internally...what am I struggling with? What is causing you anxiety, stress, shame, guilt, concern, grief, fear, depression, insecurity? Practically speaking, with this many people in the room, some of you experience one of these emotions on a day to day basis; if not more. So what is it?

The Apostle Paul was on house arrest when he wrote one of the most famous passages of scriptures that you and I hold onto today. Btw, if there was anyone who understood what it was like to have life knock the wind out of you, it was Paul! Here he was, in chains and yet writing hope to the church at Philippi. **Our circumstances cannot dictate our hope and our willingness to share it with others!** The church was facing external problems and internal pressure...that sound familiar? Isn't it like God to have something documented over 2000 years ago to still be relevant in our lives today! Listen to what the Apostle Paul says:

Philippians 4:4-7, “4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! **5** Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. **6** Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **7** And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Depending on your circumstances this morning, that promise may make you want to shout and holla. It may want you to run a lap. It may make you want to hit your knees and cry. It may not mean nothing to you, but however it touches you; don't let it be just another familiar passage! Too often, we allow God's Word to be just words on a page when it's actually alive and ready to speak to us. Maybe that's why our lives look the way they do...He's ready and we're not!

Paul gives very simple commands in this passage. He says, **rejoice always!** Do you? When life gets heavy and the easy way out is to complain and play the woe is me card, do you rejoice instead? Then he says, **Be gentle to all. Let it be evident!** Unfortunately, people don't see believers being gentle when the storms start hitting. They see believers who forget who controls the storms....

Then Paul has the audacity to say **6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.** Sounds hard doesn't it? You know why? Because it is. It requires humility and transparency. It requires us to truly let go and surrender whatever is causing anxiety. It requires us to trust and rely through faith that God will do what He says. **But, here's the deal; this is the prerequisite to PEACE! Prayer, petition, thanksgiving; those are non-negotiables. Too often, we want peace without obedience.** We want peace without elbow grease. We want peace without getting dirty. We want peace without having to give up anything. We want peace without having to be involved.

You want peace this morning? You gotta start praying! You gotta start giving thanks for what He has already done and it won't hurt to thank Him for what He will do btw! It's not that God doesn't already know, but, church this is an invitation for you to be a part of what God wants to do in your own life. Btw, the outcome is a promise: **7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**" This is where Jesus shows up. He's interceding. He takes the "anxiety, stress, shame, guilt, concern, grief, fear, depression, insecurity," and brings the balm of peace over those things. He's guarding your heart and mind. The question is will you let Him? Will you pray, will you petition? Will you give Him thanks?

One commentator states, "When we have problems and worries, we often forget to pray about them. Then, when we do pray, we may think that the only help that God can give is to grant the request as we have presented it and change the situation. God may very well do that. He has the power to change any situation, but He will not be limited to that. God does not promise to change every situation to our liking. What He does promise to do is give us peace during any situation. In other words, God may or may not change the circumstance, but He will change our disposition toward it so that it does not cause us inner turmoil."

Jesus wants to reconcile our hearts of anxiety to a heart of rejoicing! No matter the circumstances, we're rejoicing! We're believing! We're claiming victory, why, because we're victorious!

Sign #3: A Peaceful Heart is a Heart that brings Reconciliation to Others

When you have been reconciled to God, you then have been given an assignment. As children of God, we have then become ambassadors. In other words, our job is to tell the world the "GOOD NEWS" of Jesus! If you truly have had a heart change through the power of the Gospel, it should be really hard not to tell. That doesn't mean you'll be given a platform to preach on, but it means that **God strategically puts people in your life to hear the Gospel from your lips!** In other words, through Jesus being our Prince of Peace, He makes us Peace Makers! Notice I didn't say peace keepers! There is a difference. Peace makers address the issues preventing peace. Peace keepers try to cover over the things hindering peace hoping things will change but never addressing the issues. Jesus is a peace maker because he removes the issue of sin. We should work to the same end. Jesus laid down His life to make peace between God and sinners, and when we can carry that message of peace to others, we are peacemakers!

2 Corinthians 5:18-20, "18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."

Paul makes it real clear and simple for us! You believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, then you tell others about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a huge responsibility! This is not just a pastor's job btw! We're talking about life and death! Jesus is the One who saves, and the Holy Spirit is the One who convicts the world of guilt in regard to sin, yet we have been given the privilege of being ambassadors for Christ. Our message is this:

John 3:16-17, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

...and our lives should reflect the message we share:

Ephesians 4:1, "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received."

Are you living a life worthy of this calling? If not, what needs to change? What's stopping you? Do you feel the pressure of peoples lives at stake? Do you see people the way Jesus does? We don't have time to play church games; people are dying everyday and God's plan A of reaching them is you and I..let that soak in!

Invitation:

Do you know Jesus the Prince of Peace? Have you invited Him into your life? If not, would you do so now?

For those of us who are followers of Jesus already, are you experiencing the peace of God in your life? How can you lead others to the Prince of Peace if you are not abiding in His peace?

Who in your life needs to hear about the love of Jesus and the peace He wants to bring us? You may be the one planting the seeds of the Gospel, watering the seeds, but remember God is the One who grows it. Our job is to tell and show the love of Jesus!

As we close our service today I want to invite you to partake of Communion as we remember what Jesus has done to provide for our peace. The symbol of the bread and juice are symbols of the sacrifice Jesus made so that our sin could be removed and we could have peace with God. Before we do though I want to encourage you to first examine your heart. Here are the instructions Paul gives us.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (NIV) For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." **25** In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." **26** For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. The elements of the bread and juice represent the body and blood of Jesus. When we partake of these we are proclaiming what Jesus has done for us. This is what has provided for our peace and reconciliation with God. When we eat and drink it we are in essence saying I want more of Jesus! I want to abide in Him. I want His peace to fill my life. Through this testimony we highlight for others where they can find peace as well. However, we must be sincere and genuine because God's reputation is on the line. Are we living out what we say we believe? Therefore, Paul calls us to examine our heart before partaking in these elements.

1 Corinthians 11:27-32 (NIV)**27** So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. **28** Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. **29** For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. **30** That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. **31** But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. **32** Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.

So as we prepare to take these elements that symbolize our peace let's spend a moment examining our hearts. Confess and repent and do business with God. You may be in a place where you are not abiding in God's peace. Be honest with God. If you are not willing to confess and repent I am going to ask you to not participate. Also, if you are not a believer, would you also not participate. Out of respect for Jesus and what He has done for us. If you are in a place where you are abiding in His peace or you are willing to confess and repent if you haven't been, then by all means let's celebrate this communion time together and thank Jesus for His work on the cross! Let's pray.

(Once we have finished examining our hearts, invite people to receive the bread and juice. Lead the congregation to do so together. We will close our service with worship!)