

Christ Community Covenant Church
Christmas Peace
Pastor Dave Scherrer - December 20, 2015

The passage Rick read to us just a bit ago at the start of our worship has served the 'church' in Christmas celebration for a long time! Let's look at it again.

Isaiah 9:6

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Let's stop there – wouldn't it be great to live under the governmental authority of the **Prince of Peace**. These words were written 700 years before Jesus was born in anticipation of his advent – his 'coming' – that I what Advent means.

This is the fourth week of the advent season. On Christmas Eve we will light the final candle the Christ candle. The words of the Advent season have been our inspiration for the past several weeks of worship themes: **Love, Hope, Joy** and now today, **Peace**.

Have you met the truly "Unsettled Person?"

Scrooge may be the ultimate unsettled person. Scrooge is the Christmas poster boy for selfishness, greed, and stinginess. We love to hate the Scrooge that appears early in the first half of the story 'A Christmas Carol'. Scrooge is at war - with himself, with his nephew, with the world that he seeks to drain his wealth from. He is at war with God. He is in constant fear of being found out. As he travels through time, he discovers that the wages of this war is death - death of Love and the innocent as represented by Tiny Tim. He knows first-hand of the death of joy and the death of hope.

But he goes through a transformation. After meeting the ghosts of Christmas Past, Christmas Present, and Christmas Future, Scrooge becomes a new person. Waking from the most terrifying night of his life, he becomes generous, and turns over a new leaf.

He finds peace and as he does he loses his fear. The evidence of his peace is shown in the loosing of his grip on money. He becomes hilariously generous and as giddy as a schoolboy.

Ultimately what he found that unusual night so long ago in a dark and cold London was Christmas Peace.

Peace . . . What a blessed hope! But . . . ?

We don't see a lot of peace on earth do we. There are wars and rumors of wars. WARS (*1000+ battle-related deaths in year* - Syria (300K), Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Ukraine, South Sudan, Israel/Gaza, Somalia, Yemen). We have family members perhaps that we are at war with. Democrats and Republicans are at war. What again was the promise of the promise of the angels?

Luke 2:13-14

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

The angels weren't lying but here is the hard truth: Jesus never said there would be widespread and comprehensive peace between warring humankind – what the angels were declaring with the sighting of Jesus as a little baby on earth, breaking through into humanity in its lost condition, there was an even greater miracle unfolding than mere human peace. That would be peace on earth with God. We can have peace with God and then we can claim that wonderful end of the play...Scrooge-like peace within our own hearts and souls!

The Christmas Promise - Peace with God and Peace Within!

Romans 5:1-2

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Fear, some have said, is the enemy of Peace. We are in a circumstance that is beyond our ability to control, and inside we are in utter turmoil. We believe that the worst will happen to us, and that our feelings are an accurate read on the situation. We scramble for solutions, all the while struggling for air as we are inwardly trapped by a cage of wild emotion. We are out of control. Like Scrooge, we clutch at things. Christmas gives us hope of finally letting go.

God's peace – no small deal in a violent and unsettled world. The promise of peace, real peace – 'Soul peace' where the deepest parts of who I am is at rest. Wow what a promise! Peace is here **and fear is gone!** What a promise! Because many of us live with a lack of inner peace, we try to head off potential fear by bringing outer peace through control. We grip our relationships more tightly, spend our money more independently, and avoid people that make us feel uncomfortable.

Remember the part of the Christmas story where the tender aged girl Mary is approached by an angel and she is afraid. The angel appears to her and his first words to her are "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.

When the angel comes to her, we would expect any young woman to run for the nearest exit! But Mary's response was not to control the situation – and peace came quickly. Why? Unlike Scrooge, Mary had a deep and abiding belief within her that God always, always, always had her best in mind. When she realized God was giving her a sacred, but hard mission, a purpose in life that would expose her to ridicule, pain, and family rejection, Mary simply chooses to say, "I am the Lord's servant... May your word to me be fulfilled" (Luke 1:38).

Mary's peace did not come from the outside in. Mary's peace came from the inside out. We look for inner peace to come from something or someone around us. When peace flows out from the inside, from knowing that God loves us and has our best in mind, that peace lasts a lifetime – and is a light in our hearts that dissolves fear.

Yes, love has come. Infinite love has taken the form of a 5 pound, 13 ounce 21 inch long bundle known affectionately as 'sugah wooga' to his daddy Joseph. Yes, love has entered the world. The Bible says God is love and I believe it, because a greater love the world has never seen but that the Father would send his only Son into the world as a tiny baby only to live and die and live again for us – all from the motive of pure love. No strings attached to the love of this Christmas present!

Just hours before his death, Jesus knew that the next few days would be a time of terrible fear and violence and confusion. He tried to prepare them with the promise of peace:

John 14:27

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

It is still a time of fear and violence and confusion. But now the promise has come in person! We have a place of sanctuary and that place is in the arms of a person! In a moment we will hear a wonderful song, where words will continue to challenge and encourage us. Our youth choir will sing us the story of Christ's coming in a lullaby and they will remind us that **Jesus is our sanctuary.**

Jesus is our sanctuary

There is a place of unmatched peace and perfect protection, a place of fearless love and endless hope. That *place* of sanctuary is a *person* - Jesus Christ, Lord at thy birth, the Prince of Peace! Let's continue to worship the King through song.