

WOULDN'T PEACE BE SPECIAL
ISAIAH 9:6; PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7; GALATIANS 5:22
2025-12-07

Last week the first Sunday of Advent focused on the theme of hope. **God is calling you to hope.** And **that hope includes** the “riches of His glorious inheritance” for each of us. But what is this glorious inheritance? It’s this: when we receive Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Saviour we become children of God. John 1:12 says, “*Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His Name, He gave the right to become children of God.*”

At the end of Romans, Paul revealed the importance of God’s Word: “*everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we may have hope.*” Romans 15:4

The verse which frames all of the themes of Advent comes from Romans 15:13: “*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*” The four themes are all right here. The God of hope will fill you with joy and peace because you trust Christ. When you trust Christ, you will overflow with hope. This hope isn’t just for a better day or an end to suffering, but also hope that our lives have meaning and possibility beyond our present situation. This is hope in God who makes all things new. Our hope isn’t in our circumstances, no matter how badly we want them to change. If our hope is only in a change of circumstances, we’ll always be disappointed. That’s why we hope in God **who has always revealed Himself as** a God of newness, redemption and transformation. Our amazing God sent a Saviour—His Son—to save the world and that includes you and me.

On this second Sunday of Advent, I thought I would easily prepare a tidy message about peace. Turns out, it’s not so straightforward. The Bible’s full of rich references to peace—over 100 of them, so the struggle becomes which to include and which to pass by. Not easy!

For those of you who were tuned into life, **in the 1960's there was this great wave of peace**—at least peace talk. Because it was also the time of the Cold War and Viet Nam and napalm. People everywhere, led by the beatnik/hippy movement would flash the peace sign. It’s something that is still done today. The slogan, “make peace, not war” poured out of mouths relentlessly. It was also the time of a massive rejection of God. On April 8, 1966 the cover page of **Time magazine had the startling title: “Is God Dead?”** And there began this proliferation of **secular humanism—something that continues to this day. We can make it alone. We can do this without religion, without God.** All religions have ever produced is war and misery and oppression. In that regard it smacked of communist philosophy. But if you lived through it, there was a sense of euphoria, of freedom. **John Lennon** led the Beatles singing of “*All We Are Saying, is Give Peace a Chance*” and another iconic Beatles song was “*Imagine*”, with the lyrics:

*Imagine there's no heaven. It's easy if you try.
No hell below us; above us only sky.
Imagine all the people living for today.*

*Imagine there's no countries; it isn't hard to do.
Nothing to kill or die for and no religion too.
Imagine all the people living life in peace.
You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one.
I hope some day you'll join us and the world will be as one.*

*Imagine no possessions, I wonder if you can.
No need for greed or hunger—a brotherhood of man.
Imagine all the people sharing all the world.
You may say that I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one.
I hope some day you'll join us and the world will live as one.*

It was one of the most popular songs ever. You may even find yourself humming it as I speak about it. Sometimes the world sounds very close to what the Gospel preaches, but you need to be discerning. The call for peace and unity and living by sharing are worthy goals. But stay with me. A third song that fit right in with it was, “***All You Need is Love***”. These 3 songs conveyed a powerful message that we can go it alone. We have it within us to create a better world and we don’t need any God to do it (remember the natural worldview that Chuck Colson spoke of when we were looking at “What’s the Big Deal About Jesus, Anyway?”). But it was never really recognized for the danger such thinking posed. People just loved the melodies and many moved right into that kind of thinking. I don’t want to suggest that all the Beatles music was down the wrong road, nor am I suggesting that they accomplished this shift on their own; it was part of a greater movement for sure, but the timing of it all came together and it’s been disastrous. **The problem is that there are part truths in it.** The ideals in it are of course good—nothing to kill for, eradication of hunger and greed, the desire for peace and sharing. **God might even agree with no religion, if you consider Christianity a relationship with Christ rather than a religion per se.** Ironically, the one who led the peace movement, John Lennon, was murdered, gunned down in front of his home in New York City.

Peace isn't so easy. It's elusive—like happiness. When you pursue it, it slips right through your fingers. We're in a time when war is prevalent. Russia continues its barbaric attack on Ukraine, the Middle East boils over with Israeli/Palestinian hostilities fuelled by Iran through Hamas and Hezbollah, the Houthi in Yemen and ISIS and Taliban. In Africa, the Congo and Sudan boil over. That's without mentioning Nigeria, Ethiopia, Somalia or going to South America and finding the atrocities in Venezuela and Columbia. Haven't even gotten to Haiti yet. Or repression in places like North Korea, Myanmar, Cambodia, Syria. On the world stage peace doesn't seem to last. Manmade peace doesn't seem to last or work very well. Yes, Peace is elusive.

So let's start with what it is. Peace doesn't start or end with us. It's a gift of God—one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit—if you're walking with God, keeping in step with Him, your life will reflect that with evidence of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and restraint. You may notice that they go together. If you have love you'll have joy, if you have joy you'll have peace, if you have peace you'll be kind and show kindness, goodness and gentleness and if you have them you'll show restraint. They're circular and reinforce each other. Isn't that awesome! But you won't "achieve" peace on your own. I repeat: it's a gift of God. It's the Lord who will bless you and keep you; it's the Lord who makes His face shine upon you and who is gracious to you. It's the Lord who lifts His face toward you and gives you His peace.

Second, peace is certainly not just an absence of conflict or an absence of war. There's a whole inner dimension to it. It's a life lived without anxiety, without inner turmoil. In **Job**'s time of separation from God (Job 3:26) he said he had "*no peace, no quietness, no rest, only turmoil.*" Later Eliphaz, Job's judgmental friend, (Job 22:21) urged Job to "*submit to God and be at peace with Him; in this way prosperity will come to you.*" **Jesus** says, "*Who of you by worrying can add even an hour to his life?*" (Matthew 6:27.) **Peter** says, "*Cast all your anxiety on Him for He cares for you.*" (1 Peter 5:7). A life that's truly peaceful is a life that rests in the full assurance that God is in charge and will meet all your needs (Philippians 4:19). It doesn't mean living life disengaged or without passion; participate fully in the life God gives you.

In the Sermon on the Mount, **Jesus** said, "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.*" (Matthew 5:9). So, it's not that you should not try to establish peace wherever and whenever you can—you should—but notice that the peacemakers are blessed. And who's the giver of all blessings? God. It starts and ends with Him. So let God lead without hesitation or reservation or worry—that's the **peace of God** **that passes** all understanding (Philippians 4:7)! Psalm 29:11 **David** says the Lord blesses His people with peace. When you live for God, when love and faithfulness meet, righteousness and peace kiss each other (Psalm 85:10). **Solomon** says there is "joy for those who promote peace (Proverbs 12:20) and a heart at peace gives life to the body (Proverbs 14:30).

But let's zoom in. **Isaiah** gives us so much. Once again we come to the ninety chapter, so central in the Christmas narrative, as Isaiah speaks of **Jesus as the Prince of Peace**. He's come into the world to give us peace, His peace. Jesus has come to establish peace between God the Father and the humanity He created which has gone rogue, sinful—turned away from Him. But the passage contains even more:

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." (Isaiah 9:2). He has come to lift us from death to life. *"Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end."* (Isaiah 9:7)

If you desire no end to peace, look to Jesus. Come out of the darkness and the shadow of death and into the light—His light. Cross over from death to life.

Later in **chapter 53** that we read last week in preparation for Communion, Isaiah tells us that **it was Jesus' punishment that brought us peace**. **Micah**, who says Jesus will be born in Bethlehem, also says **He will be our peace** (5:5). **Zechariah**, the prophet, foretells of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey—yep, it's the Palm Sunday prophecy—saying **He will proclaim peace to the nations**. In **Romans 5** Paul tells us that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ because we have been justified through faith in Him. In **Colossians (1:20)** Paul says He's made peace with us through His blood shed on the cross and later he urges us to let the peace of Christ rule our hearts (3:15).

As we focus in on the Christmas narrative, Zechariah, when he regained his voice at his son John the Baptist's circumcision ceremony, prophesied that Jesus would come to *guide our feet into the path of peace*" (Luke 1:79). Isn't that special?

Now here's the biggie. In announcing Jesus' birth, the angels proclaimed to the shepherds: "*Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord... Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to those on whom His favour rests.*" (Luke 2:10-14)

On earth, peace.

Ephesians 2:14 says Jesus is our peace. The good news is for all the people. So, it's not about money for the poor or good health for the sick or happiness for the discouraged, though it encompasses those things—it's for all the people. **The good news is Jesus came, as only He could, to remove our separation from God, to take away our sins and our sin nature, and in their place to bring peace—His peace—for all people. That's something every one of us need**—rich, poor, healthy, sick, wise, simple, discouraged, happy—we need His peace. And so, we have the peace that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7). Jesus says: "*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives,*" (John 14:27) —but as God gives it! Share His peace, celebrate His peace, this great gift of God! Imagine! How special would that be if the world caught the real thing!

Now here's the thing: it's available for the asking! God would be delighted to give it if people would seek it from Him through Jesus. Amen.