

Prince of Peace
Isaiah 9:2,6-7
December 2, 2018 – First Sunday of Advent

It was almost seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus that Isaiah penned these words:

For unto us a child is born,
unto us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulders;
and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor,
Almighty God, the everlasting Father,
the Prince of Peace. (*Isaiah 9:6*)

And they are among my favorite words in the entire Old Testament.

As I mentioned at the beginning of our service, this Christmas marks the 200th Anniversary of the writing of “Silent Night” by Franz Gruber and Joseph Mohr; and what would Christmas be without “Silent Night.” So, today we pair the first verse of Silent Night with the writing from Isaiah. That first verse calls for the infant to “sleep in heavenly peace,” and here in Isaiah, the child is named “the Prince of Peace.”

This Advent Rev. Alice is doing a wonderful study during our Sunday School hour on the names of Jesus. I encourage you to take part in that study; and, those of you who have paid close attention to my pastoral prayers may be able to guess that “Prince of Peace” is one of my favorite names for Jesus. In the original Hebrew, the words are *sar shalom*. *Sar* is usually translated as “ruler,” but it can be translated as “king” or “prince.” Indeed the Hebrew calls Jesus the “Ruler of Shalom,” and, as I have commented several times in the past, *shalom*, is more than just the absence of war or violence. It is that, but it is also an inner peace, a fullness, a wholeness; and our Lord and Savior, the child to be born anew, promises all of that: the absence of violence, but also the inner peace, the fullness, the calm that is life in Christ.

“Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright.” Christ is the ruler of the calm. Christ brings calm. Christ offers each of us a calm, wonderful peace; for a loving ruler not only rules in peace, but also offers peace to his people.

Friends these are turbulent times. These are violent times. There is much war, much hatred, much evil in the world. And there are natural evils: disease, fires, hurricanes, earthquakes. And still, there are opportunities for peace. Have you ever met a person who simply seems to radiate peace, a person who seems never to get ruffled, no matter what is happening, a person who is always calm and bright. I tell you that's a person who knows the peace of Christ. That's a person who has the peace of Christ in their heart, a peace so strong that it literally radiates from them.

And so, I ask again, "What about you?" Do you experience that peace? If not, what is blocking your peace? The folks I just spoke of, those individuals who always seem to be at peace, live in a real world. They are not without problems. They are not without challenges. But, they have learned to always put the peace of God first. Yes, they deal with the problems and the challenges, but they constantly, hear me *constantly* remind themselves how much God loves them, and how they are called to live out of that love.

I seek to be one of those people; and sometimes I do a pretty good job. Then someone or something "pushes one of my buttons" as the saying goes, and suddenly I become all too human and all the less Godly. It was two weeks ago, at Thanksgiving that I spoke of the lilies of the field that do not worry about what they will eat or what they will wear. It's Christ's call to put our worries aside. Put the cares aside. Put our trust in the Prince of Peace.

And so it's Advent. It's a time when we once again await God's great gift to the world – the Prince of Peace, the very gift of God's self in human form. And I invite you, as I will seek myself, this Advent, to move into an ever closer relationship with the Prince of Peace. Yes, we all must deal with the problems and the challenges; but, if we hold tight to the Peace of Christ, those challenges will somehow become more manageable.

And this Advent, on this 200th Anniversary of Silent Night, I invite you to hold the song in your heart. Verse by verse, contemplate the meaning of a new verse every week.

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright,
round yon virgin mother and child,
holy infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

May that heavenly peace, not only be peace for the Christ child, but the Christ child's gift of peace to us. May we truly live in that heavenly peace this advent, through the Christmas season, and even forever more.

Let us pray . . .

Precious Lord,
Prince of Peace,
this day our prayer is simple:
give us you peace
that others may see the peace of Christ in each of us.
Amen.

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