

This is the last week of our Advent series on **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 Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.* God told Isaiah that a person would come who would save people from their sins and Isaiah is inspired to write these words about that person. He understands that he will be born and at his birth he will inherit these titles because he has come to establish a kingdom and rule in power.

We have been thinking about these beautiful titles given to Jesus by Isaiah almost 700 years before and we've seen that as:

Wonderful Counsellor – Jesus came for those who were in need and if we want his help we need to be honest with him, learn to listen to him and do what he says.

Mighty God – Jesus' power is at work in us, for us and through us and that nothing is too hard for him.

Everlasting Father – we need to look at him through the lens of scripture rather than our own experience or understanding of our own father. He is gracious and compassionate and will never leave us.

Today we come to the last title: Prince of Peace.

How many [4 pics] of you are already completely finished with your shopping? Raise your hands. Bless you for being organised! How many of you are rushing out of here to go do some more today? We will pray for you. How many of you have re-gifted a present this year? Well done great stewardship and you obviously weren't going to use it anyway.

I wonder how many of us have something in our lives that we wish was different. I know, for a lot of people, this is the best time of the year, and for others, this is a very difficult time of the year. Some of you, you've got health issues, and that can be very difficult. Or, even maybe more difficult is when someone that you love has health issues. I know that just during this time of year, it can just be crazy. Crazy with the schedules. Got to get everything done. Got to go, go, go, go. Got to get all the presents. Got to get them wrapped. Got to get them under the tree. Got to get the house cleaned up. **Got to get the** [4 pics] decorations done. Got to get all the meals made. Got to get everybody to

this house or that one, and it can just be chaotic. And instead of being a peaceful time, for so many people, it's just a time full of anxiety.

I know financially, a lot of people are just stressed out. You're spending and spending and spending and January is coming, and so are the bills. And you feel it. The kids are unwrapping the presents and instead of going Oooh, that's lovely, you're going, "Ooooh, we've got to pay for all of this." Tension, anxiety. Some of you, you've got family issues. You go to see your family. It's supposed to be a Merry Christmas. It looks more like a Jerry Springer Christmas. You know, it's just like, "Errrrrrr," and it can be challenging. Where is the peace in Christmas?

Jesus is called the Prince of Peace and it is my prayer that we each experience his peace in our lives during this festive time. I love the Christmas Eve service, even with the carols! For me it really is peaceful and as we pass the light from one to another I sense something of God in our midst. It's worth coming along to. I hope we experience the peace of God in other services too.

Luke 2:10-14 is one of the most famous Christmas passages: *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."* Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, *"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."*

When He appeared, the angel talked about "Peace on earth;" but yet, when I think about the birth of Jesus, I'm not envisioning a very peaceful thing. A little teenage girl named Mary finds out she's pregnant, and she's pregnant by God. Not an easy thing to explain at the well. Imagine the comments, the knowing looks and the gossip. So the very beginning of that just is not peaceful. Then you travel through her journey, and at some point, she's nine months pregnant and they decide they've got to travel across country on a donkey. Nine months pregnant on a donkey. Nothing peaceful about that.

When they get to Bethlehem and she knows the baby is coming and they don't have anywhere to stay, and she's, "Find me a place now!" And so finally,

Joseph negotiates a deal with some guy and says, “Man, there’s not a room in town, but you can stay in the barn.” “Oh, good. Okay. So we can have the baby in a barn. That’s what I always pictured, with animals, and animal poop, and barn stuff, you know. Perfect,” and so here you’ve got this little girl, nine months pregnant, travelled all this time on a donkey, in a barn. She gives birth, and there is no epidural, so there’s likely a bit of noise! Jesus is born. The Prince of Peace enters planet earth. King Herod gets threatened. He’s freaking out. “I’ve heard rumors about this. There’s been prophecies. Is this guy going to try to overthrow me?” And so, the king says, “Let’s just kill this baby. Go find him and kill him. And just to make sure, find any baby under the age of two that’s a male, and kill them, as well.” So here we have the Prince of Peace is born, and all of a sudden all of these innocent baby boys are being murdered.

I fast forward [3 pics] to today, and I see people who just don’t have peace. At our church, I see believers who are just stressed out all of the time. No peace. Just anxiety. Tension. I see Christian marriages, and you think, “Okay. He knows Jesus. She knows Jesus. They should have a peaceful marriage.” And yet, studies show that just as many Christian marriages end up in divorce as non-Christian marriages. Some studies say that even more. Where’s the Prince of Peace in that? I see people worried about their own health or for someone they know. Then, turn on the news, and what do you see? Car bombing, school shooting, countries at war. I started to ask myself, “If Jesus is the Prince of Peace, did He fail?” If He’s the Prince of Peace, did He fail? Ultimately, it depends on how do you define peace?

I’ve always thought that peace would be the thing that would remove my anxiety, or peace would calm me when I am disturbed. But when we study Jesus, the Prince of Peace, we find He is so much more than just that. **So, who is Jesus?** Among many other names, Jesus was called the Prince of Peace. In Hebrew it’s the phrase Sar Shalom. Let’s talk about those words. Sar is the equivalent of Ruler, Captain, the one in charge – root in Caesar and in Czar.

Shalom: expresses “wholeness, completeness, finished word, perfection, safety or wellbeing.” Jesus is the Sar Shalome. You could say He’s the Captain of rest. He is the Lord of tranquility. He is the Chief of contentment. Jesus is the Sar Shalome. But what did **the angel say?** “*on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.*” As long as we are following Christ, we can have His peace.

Does that mean that we can do anything we want and still have peace? Well, of course not. Can we bad mouth people and complain constantly all week and then expect to have peace at church? No, because we're doing something outside the Lordship of Christ. Can a couple get into a big fight and call each other things and then all of a sudden expect to have the peace of God? Well, of course not. Why? Because they are outside of the Sar Shalom. Can we ignore God all week, never read the bible and never pray and still expect to have peace? No, we are outside the will of Sar Shalom. It's only when we are under the lordship of the Sar, the One who is in charge, that we experience His peace. Jesus is the Sar Shalom, the Prince of Peace. The amazing thing is, when we are under the lordship of Christ, He can give us a peace that most people don't understand. When, when your private world is falling apart, Jesus can give you an inward peace that goes beyond human understanding, and just as the Sar Shalom can give you peace, He can also take that same peace away. Why would He do that? He may remove your peace to get your attention. He may remove His peace when you've left Him to draw you back to Him. Why would He do it? He's the Lord of peace, the Prince of Peace.

What does that mean in our everyday life? Two thoughts. First of all, Jesus, the Sar Shalom, **He is the peace who comforts you.** He is the peace who comforts you. Some of you right now, you've got some things in your life that are just going haywire, and there is no inward spiritual peace. Understand that the Sar Shalom, Jesus, wants to bring you comfort. Here is what Jesus said. The words of Jesus, John 14:27, He said, "*Peace I leave with you.*" Notice whose peace he gives - He said, "*My peace I give to you.*" Notice, it's not your peace. It's His peace that Jesus gives to you. He said, "*I don't give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid.*" Who's peace does He give to you? It's His peace. It's the peace of the one who is in charge of peace.

Some of you might be saying, "Well, I don't have his peace." Maybe you've stepped out of his will. You may be a believer in Jesus, but you're trying to do it yourself. You're trying to have the energy for it. You're trying to figure it out. You're trying to solve it on your own. You are trying to do and cope with life outside of the Sar Shalom, the Prince of Peace. Maybe you are in God's will but God is developing faith in you and lack of his peace is his way of drawing faith from you. What do we do? Scripture is very, very clear.

Philippians 4:6-7 says this - “*Do not be anxious about anything.*” Many of you right now, you are anxious, period, about everything. Scripture says, “*Don’t be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,*” what do we do? We should, “*present our requests to God. And then, the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus.*” What do we do? When we are outside, trying to cope on our own, and we don’t have peace, we simply step under the lordship of Christ, and then we take our requests and we present them to Him and say, “I can’t do this. It’s no longer mine. I trust You with it, and because You are in charge, I have Your peace.”

It’s not rocket science! At one level it is the simplest thing in the world – 2 Chron 7:14 *if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

Phil 4 – by prayer, with thanksgiving (hard in certain circumstances), present your requests, THEN the peace.... See the pattern? On one level really simple but in reality we find it so difficult because fear has such a grip on us. There have been times in my own life when I’ve really needed peace because of a situation in the family or at church and sometimes I’ve tried to fix things myself and forgotten that there is a process and a surefire way to peace. Sometimes, you may not know just how good He is until you know just how hard life can be. And some of you, that’s right where you are at this moment. Let me tell you, with everything in me, I believe Jesus is the Sar Shalom. He is the peace who comforts you.

Jesus is also the peace who saves you. He is the peace who brings salvation. Look at what scripture says. Romans 5:1, “*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith*”. Notice scripture doesn’t say we’ve been justified by our good works or our religious efforts. Since we’ve been justified through faith, what do we have? “*We have peace with God.*” “*We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” We have peace with God, not because we are out here trying to do our own good works, but we have peace with God through the Sar Shalom, our Lord Jesus Christ. Some of you may say, “But I don’t really know if I have peace with God. I don’t feel peace. Why might that be?” Because perhaps, the One who can give us peace and take it away has

strategically removed peace from you to draw you toward Himself or maybe it's because you don't really know him.

Ray Comfort asks people three questions: How many of us have ever told a lie? Put your hand up. Those of you with your hands up have permission to look at those who don't and say, "You're a big fat liar!" How many of us have ever stolen something? Hands up. To those whose hands are down I'll ask a supplementary – did 10% of your income go in the offering this month? Just asking but we'll leave that there because it's nearly Christmas. Third question: how many of us have ever looked lustfully at someone? Don't answer that one! We'll draw the line there. It was Jesus who said that if you've ever looked lustfully at someone, you've already committed adultery in your heart – so most of us are lying, thieving adulterers! Welcome to MPN where we like to make you feel good about yourself! But if you think about it, if God judges on the 10 Commandments we'd all be guilty. Every human being would be found guilty, so is it any wonder there is an absence of peace, because we're outside of the only One who can bring His real spiritual peace.

That's why Christmas is so incredibly important. "*For God so loved the world that he sent his only Son*, Jesus." Born of a virgin, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Why is that so important? Because we, with an earthly father, inherit a sin nature. We are bent toward sin. We are sinners by birth. You never have to sit down a child and say, "Guess what? Today I am going to teach you how to sin. We are going to have sin lessons. Okay? What I want you to do is sin. Be selfish. You know, hit your sister." We don't need to teach that because we're bent toward it. But Jesus, who was born of a virgin, did not have this sin nature so that He could be the perfect sacrifice for our sins, so that He could be the innocent Lamb of God, who was slain for our sins on a cross, so that He could give His life, be raised again, so that we, even in our sin, could receive grace and forgiveness and be drawn to him, the One who is in charge, who gives peace. It's not our peace. It's His peace. We can't earn our way to be right with God. It's only because we receive what Jesus did for us, and that alone.

Some of you right now, you're here, and you're wondering why you don't have peace with God, and so you're trying to be a good person, but you're wondering have you been good enough. And you're trying not to be a bad person. **Eph 2:3**

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. All of us, when we are without Christ, follow our own desires and thoughts and we cannot truly have peace. It takes faith in Christ in order for us to have real peace. We can't earn it and we don't deserve it – it comes only through faith.

Ephesians 2:12-14 continues: *remember that at that time you were separate from Christ..... without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace*

Without him we can never have true peace. With him we have forgiveness of sins and peace that passes all understanding. He is the one who comforts us and saves us. May you know him and his peace in your heart.