

4- Prophetic Peace
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We are continuing our Christmas series called Behold A Savior Is Born. So far, we've preached on The Promised Hope, The Joy of Anticipation, and The Servant Love of Jesus. Today I am preaching on Prophetic Peace.

This is the prophetic peace that was promised through the birth of Jesus when an angel said to the shepherds in Luke 2:10-14

“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 Savior 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, peace on earth, goodwill toward men.”

The angels were prophesying that Jesus would bring joy for all people and peace to those on whom His favor rests. This peace was actually prophesied 800 years before this in Isaiah 9:6-7

Unto 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. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end.

This is a prophetic promise that predicts the birth of a child, Jesus.

1. Peace is Promised by God

Isaiah gave us a prophetic promise from God that this child will be the Prince of Peace and His peace will never end.

Peace is a timeless concept. It is something humanity has desired throughout history. From ancient times all the way up to modern day, people have longed for a sense of calm... a rest from the conflict and chaos of the world. But yet we still have wars and rumors of wars.

There's war in Israel right now. I saw a news report this week that the city of Bethlehem – which is normally full of people celebrating the birth of Christ – has decided not to celebrate Christmas because of the war in Gaza. Listen – whether or not they celebrate Christmas does not change the fact that there will be no true peace without the Prince of Peace! That's true in Bethlehem, in Gaza, and in our lives.

Whenever we lose our peace, we are somehow disconnected from our source of peace – which is the Prince of Peace.

So, no matter what they do in Bethlehem or anywhere else, for us, Christmas is a time to celebrate that Jesus has in fact arrived. The Prince of Peace has brought us God's promised peace. The promise that in spite of everything going on around us, we can access divine peace through Jesus. Jesus spoke about this role that was given to Him by God. In John 14:27 Jesus said:

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Jesus said that:

2- There's a difference between God's peace and the world's peace

Jesus distinguishes His peace from the peace offered by the world. We need to understand what biblical peace is. Many people think peace is the absence of conflict or trouble. But biblical peace is something you can have even in the midst of conflict or trouble! It is a peace grounded in eternal truth and the presence of the Savior.

The Greek word for peace used here means tranquility, harmony. The Hebrew word for peace shalom – which means quietness, calmness, success, health, and safety.

- Peace is having inner calm in spite of conflict.
- Peace is having inner tranquility despite other's hostility.
- Peace is being at rest in spite of the mess.

God wants us to experience peace no matter what is going on around us. This is the peace that was promised by Jesus. Peace that Jesus gives is not the absence of trouble. Rather, it is the confidence that He is there with you always.

Peace is not just a feeling or a state of being. Peace is a person! Jesus is the Prince of Peace. By sending His Son, God sent peace into the world. John 16:33 says:

I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

Peace is not something you obtain apart from Jesus Christ! He is our peace! Whatever pain you are facing – you can find peace in Christ.
 Whatever burden is weighing you down – you can find peace in Christ.
 Whatever stress you feel – you can find peace in Christ.

Worldly peace comes and goes, ebbs and flows with the circumstances. But the peace of Christ is with us in all circumstances because He is with us in all

circumstances!

Think about the circumstances when Jesus was born. So many images and songs focus on a picture of “silent night”—a peaceful moment when all was calm and bright. But if such a moment occurred on that first Christmas, it was probably a very fleeting moment. In fact, the city of Bethlehem was overflowing with hordes of people who had arrived after many dusty miles on rough, dangerous roads.

Mary gave birth in a barn where animals were kept.
 Visitors started arriving to visit the new baby within hours of His birth.
 Then King Herod was in angry pursuit.
 There was noise and pain and confusion and fear that first Christmas.
 Yet there was joy and peace in the midst of it all.

You see – God’s peace is not separated from the reality of life. It’s actually experienced in the midst of life. 2 Thessalonians 3:16 says:

Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.

God can give us peace no matter what we are going through!

3- HOW DO WE EXPERIENCE GOD’S PEACE?

There is no time in your life that the peace of Christ is not available! You just need to develop the awareness of God being with you at all times. Isaiah 26:3 says:

You will keep him in perfect and constant peace whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.

Two keys to peace are faith and keeping our mind stayed on the Lord. We see this also in 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.

Joy and peace are the result of faith. If you don’t trust God, you will have no peace or joy! God wants us to trust Him with our lives. This can only happen when we have an accurate perception of who God is. We must keep our mind stayed on these facts – that He is good and He always works all things out for our good. God will give us peace in all things. That excludes nothing! Peace only comes when we can trust God in all things. Even in the midst of our storms. Lack of peace reveals lack of faith!

When I think of peace, I am often reminded of the well-known hymn “It Is Well

with My Soul.” The old song is loved by so many because of its message that portrays such strength and steadfast trust. But the song has also become famous and more revered for the story behind the words.

Horatio Spafford was a businessman in Chicago in 1873. He went through tough times like losing property in the Great Chicago fire and losing one child to scarlet fever. Later, he sent his wife and 4 daughters ahead of him on a ship to Europe. While crossing the Atlantic, the ship sank, and all four of Spafford’s children died.

He got a message from his wife that she alone had survived, and he left on the next available ship to go and meet her.

During his journey, near the place his daughters had died, Spafford penned the words to the song. “When peace like a river attendeth my way / When sorrows like sea billows roll / Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say / It is well, it is well with my soul.”

The painful circumstances he faced make the lyrics even more powerful. The words were not written by someone who was enjoying an easy life but by one who found deep, authentic peace in the midst of heartache. As the hymn so beautifully captures, this journey of peace is not immune from those things. In fact, they are central to the story.

On this journey, we learn that peace is not the absence of trouble but rather the presence of God. Colossians 3:15 says:

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

If we do not let peace rule in our hearts – something will take its place.

What will that something be? A lack of peace.

If the peace of Christ does not rule our hearts, the worries of Satan will.

If the peace of Christ does not rule our hearts, the fears of Satan will.

If the peace of Christ does not rule our hearts, the lies of Satan will.

Philippians 4:6-7 says:

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

This is God’s prescription for peace: worry about nothing and pray about everything. In life we have 2 choices: We can live in faith or we can live in fear. We can pray or we can panic. We can worship or we can worry.

If we prayed as much as we worry, we’d have a lot less to worry about. Worry has never solved a single one of our problems. So, it’s worthless to worry.

Instead, prayer has the power to change things.
So don't worry, pray! Then you will experience the peace of God.

Peace is like a band of soldiers standing watch to protect you. Peace keeps out worry, fear, and anxiety. Notice that peace surpasses, or goes beyond, our understanding. You will have no peace if you live by your own understanding. Your own understanding will not get you through job loss or financial difficulties. You need something more.

Your own understanding will not get you through family problems or a spouse leaving you. You need something more. Your own understanding will not get you through medical problems or the loss of a loved one. You need something more. That something more is the peace of God that passes understanding. The Bible says we receive that peace when we pray and praise instead of being worried and afraid.

On Tuesday night I had a dream where I was studying for this sermon. As I was studying in the dream, I heard the Lord ask, "What were the circumstances when Isaiah was writing his prophecies?" I looked it up and Isaiah wrote in a time when Israel had rebelled against God and he prophesied that judgment was coming in the form of the nation of Assyria which would conquer Israel and take the people into exile. And it happened just like Isaiah prophesied. And Isaiah says later in Isa. 48:18 that God said:

If only you had paid attention to My commands: your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Isaiah wrote to people in exile and told them that if they had listened to God and obeyed God, then they would have had peace like a river.

I've preached many messages on peace, especially at Christmas. But I've never spoken about having peace like a river. What does it mean to have peace like a river? After all, a river does not experience peace.

As I normally do when I study, I read this verse in many translations to get more insight. Here's a few:

New Living Translation - *Oh, that you had listened to My commands! Then you would have had peace flowing like a gentle river and righteousness rolling over you like waves in the sea.*

The Message - *If you had listened all along to what I told you, your life would have flowed full like a river, blessings rolling in like waves from the sea.*

Good News Translation - *If only you had listened to My commands! Then blessings would have flowed for you like a stream that never goes dry. Victory would have come to you like the waves that roll on the shore.*

So peace like a river means peace that continually flows and never runs out.

Remember, Isaiah said of the increase of His peace, there will be no end! Think about it - a river is a moving stream of water. God does not say we will have peace like a pond. Ponds and lakes can look peaceful, but they can become stagnant if there is not constant inflow and outflow. So, for us to have peace like a river, we must have a constant inflow of life from God and an outflow to other people.

All rivers have a source, either a spring or a stream or melting snow. So, for us to have peace like a river, we must constantly receive the flow of God's Spirit. We can't retain peace in the present by trying to rely on past fillings of the Holy Spirit.

God commands us to be continually filled with His Spirit. Jesus is the prince of peace. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of peace. And Jesus said that when we are filled with the Spirit – out of our innermost being will flow rivers of living water! If the source of the river dries up, the river dries up. If the source continually flows, the river continually flows.

To experience peace, we must continually feed our relationship with God. As a river is continually renewed with the moving waters of springs and streams, so our peace comes from an active, ongoing, obedient relationship with the Prince of Peace.

Here's another thing about a river – it's source begins from a high place and flows down. And if we are going to have peace like a river – the source of our peace must be higher than ourselves, higher than other people, higher than our circumstances! And there is only one source that is above all others! The Lord God Almighty! Ephesians 1:19-22 says:

This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. Now He is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made Him head over all things for the benefit of the church.

Jesus is above every other power or authority and it's for the benefit of the church. That's us! And one of the benefits is that He is the source of peace like a river!

Here's another thing about a river: it flows over rocks, logs, falls, or any other kind of debris. Rivers find a way to go around obstacles. They just keep flowing. So when we have peace like a river, it will continually flow in our lives despite our circumstances or the obstacles that may get in our path.

A river's journey is not straight or without obstacles. Sometimes it meanders for miles through lush meadows or forests. Sometimes it encounters obstacles to flow

over, under or around. The river just keeps flowing no matter what. This is what the peace of God is like in our lives!
It continually flows from the headwaters in heaven where Jesus is seated at the right hand of God. He is the source of our peace.

And sometimes His peace flows gently through the easier times of life when everything is going well in our lives.

His peace flows in the whirling "eddies" of our lives when things just go round and round and round, seemingly going nowhere and we feel like we've lost our way.

His peace flows when life stagnates, when nothing seems to be happening in our lives and we feel trapped by the monotony of routine.

But, thank God, His peace flows freely around, under and over the seemingly-impossible obstacles in our lives, when hard times hit, when life takes a turn for the worse, when we suffer some type of loss (a job, a loved one, a dream), when we encounter financial hardship, marital strife or parenting problems, when our health is compromised, or some other trial and tribulation.

It is in these particular times when God's peace completely covers us, guarding our minds and our hearts in Christ Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

And nothing can stop it. Like a river, His peace flows unabated.
It never dries up. This, indeed, surpasses our understanding!

So, during this Christmas season, whatever your circumstances — good, bad or indifferent — peace is always present, ever flowing from the Source up above, from Jehovah Shalom; ever flowing around, over and under us along our way in life.

Some of you are putting off experiencing peace until your situation improves.
But God wants to give us peace at all times in all situations!

So, if your life seems stagnant – like it's going nowhere – ask God for peace like a river.

If it seems like you're going through rapids or over a waterfall – ask God for peace like a river.

If your life is peaceful right now – you should still ask God for peace like a river that never runs out!

It's a peace that is different from what the world offers.

This is a peace that goes beyond circumstances.

In fact, this peace helps us face tough circumstances without fear.

A peace that continually flows and never dries up.

A peace that guards your heart and mind.
There's no greater gift at Christmas than the gift of peace through Christ.