December 5, 2021 ~ 2nd Sunday of Advent ~ The Prince of Peace

I speak to you in the name of the Prince of Peace. Amen.

Last week we focused on the Advent gift of HOPE. Today on the 2nd Sunday of Advent we reflect upon PEACE and upon Jesus as the Prince of Peace. The prophet Isaiah prophesies that the coming Messiah is named:

* Wonderful Counselor
* Mighty God
* Everlasting Father and
* Prince of Peace (from Isaiah 9:6)

A couple of years ago, I did an Advent Book Study on a book by theologian Walter Brueggemann called **The 4 Names for the Messiah**. He devotes a chapter on each of the 4 names.

Here is how Brueggemann describes peace.

*Peace requires the capacity to forgive. Peace requires a readiness to share generously. Peace requires the violation of strict class stratification in society. Peace requires attentiveness to the vulnerable and the unproductive. Peace requires humility in the face of exaltation, being last among those who insist on being first and denying self in the interest of the neighbour.*

These are all actions that make the presence of the Prince of Peace known in our midst.

The Prince of Peace. The truth is that certainly Jesus was not an earthly prince. He was the poor child born in a stone manger.

God’s peace is not the same as the world view of peace. Peace from God is much more than the absence of war or conflict. Peace from the Prince of Peace is not silence or stillness or calm waters or tranquility. It is an inner state of being in harmony with God and with one another. Peace is wholeness. Peace doesn’t require the outside world to be quiet. In fact, we bring our peace from God into every part of our day.

Here is a wisdom story about the meaning of peace.

A mother with 5 small children decided that their summer vacation should begin with planting a garden. So she took her little brood to the nursery where for the next two hours they squabbled over who got to push the cart, insisted on seeing every plant in the 5 acre greenhouse, cried very hard when there were no pink petunias and broke a large clay pot. Home at last, she complained to her very patient husband “*All I want is peace and quiet and some beautiful flowers.” “My dear”* said her husband, “*I believe they call that a funeral.”*

Peace is the Hebrew **Shalom** which is defined by Bishop Kevin Robertson of Toronto as *the welfare of the whole community safeguarded by one another.* Shalom means much more than hello and goodbye. It is the desire for peace, harmony, and wholeness. Peace is justice for the poor. It is repentance. It is forgiveness.

I went for a run last walk and halfway through right on Red River Rd when I was heading for home, I started to reflect upon the reality that I am now an orphan as both my parents have died, my father on October 1 of this year and my mother 14 years ago. I started to feel very sad but then I turned to Jesus, the Prince of Peace and prayed for God’s peace to be with me. I must tell you that I feel revitalized and filled with the peace of God that passes all our understanding. Peace is turning to that inner spring of water that gushes up to our eternal life. I did not. I could not generate that peace on my own. It was God who did it for me when I asked.

After Jesus healed a person, he would say, *Go in peace*. When Jesus healed the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years and who reached out and touched his cloak, Jesus said to her, “*Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace.*” Luke 8:48

In his 2nd letter to Christians in Thessalonica, St Paul calls God, *the Lord of peace,* and goes on to write *may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways.*

The first thing that the risen Christ said to his followers in the upper room in Jerusalem was “*Peace be with you*,” Luke 24:36

When Jesus sent out 70 disciples, he told them to say, “*Peace to this house.”* The peace of God is tied to hospitality, to healing, and to restoration.

Peace makers are included in the beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount.

*Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God*. Matthew 5:9

When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, we are accepting the responsibility of receiving God’s gift of peace and then sharing that peace with the world. Jesus said, “*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.”*

And now it is time for another story.

There was a woman who wanted peace in the world and peace in her heart and all sorts of good things, but she was very frustrated. The world seemed to be falling apart. She would read the newspapers and get depressed. One day, she decided to go shopping, and she went into a mall and picked a store at random. She walked in and was surprised to see Jesus behind the counter. She knew it was Jesus because he looked just like the icon she’d seen on the wall in her church. She looked again and again at him, and finally she got up enough nerve and asked, *“Excuse me, are you Jesus?” “I am.” “Do you work here?” “No,”* Jesus said, *“I own the store. “Oh, what do you sell in here?” “Oh, just about anything!” “Anything?” “Yes, anything you want. What do you want?”* She said, *“I don’t know.” “Well,”* Jesus said, *“feel free, walk up and down the aisles, make a list, see what it is that you want and then come back and we’ll see what we can do for you.”*

She did just that, walked up and down the aisles. There was peace on earth, no more war, no hunger or poverty, peace in families, no more drugs, harmony, clean air, careful use of resources. She wrote furiously. By the time she got back to the counter, she had a long list. Jesus took the list, skimmed through it, looked up and smiled. “*No problem*.” And then he bent down behind the counter and picked out all sorts of things, stood up, and laid out the packets. She asked, *“What are these?”* Jesus replied, *“Seed packets. This is a catalogue store.”* She said, “*You mean I don’t get the finished product?”* *“No, this is a place of dreams. You come and see what it looks like, and I give you the seeds. You plant the seeds. You go home and nurture them and help them to grow and someone else reaps the benefits.” “Oh,”* she said. And she left the store without buying anything.

We sow the seeds of peace.

There is a beautiful prayer and song called ***Make me an instrument of thy peace.*** It is called the Prayer of St. Francis. And you will hear the first two verses sung in just a moment.

First, we pray. Lord, inspire us to sow the seeds that make for peace. Let us sow love, pardon, faith, hope, light, and joy.

Amen.

Here are the words to ***Make me an Instrument of Thy Peace*** that were sung at the end of this sermon:

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace;
Where there is hatred,
Let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy;
And all for thy mercy's sake.

O divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as o console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving hat we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.