

# Arrival: Peace

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     So this morning as we continue in the season of Advent, you see the wreath and candles up here again. The wreath itself is shaped in a perfect circle and that symbolizes the eternity of God.
- Each candle has a significance as well and you likely know that. On each Sunday of the Advent season, we recognize one of the four virtues that Jesus brings to us. Hope, peace, joy, and love.
- Today, like Mary, we wait for the Christ child. We celebrate what God has already done and say in the words of Luke 1, verses 46 and 47, My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
- We reflect on the wonder of the precious name of Jesus, our Savior and our Prince of Peace. Today, I encourage all of us to focus on the peace that comes from knowing that God is still in control.
- Amen? And that Jesus is the God who saves. Amen again. Well, we celebrate the journey back to Bethlehem during the season called Advent.
- [ 1 : 1 8 ]     And it's derived from, we talked about this last week, the Latin word Adventus, which means, does anyone remember? Coming?
- Or, perfect. Perfect. Arrival. That's the specific event that the season of Advent leads us to. The moment when Jesus arrived.
- And with him, all the prophetic hope and the promise of a Messiah to redeem the people of God. Last week, we began by looking into the prophetic hope of the Messiah through the eyes of the Israelites.
- We had a bit of a history lesson. The specific writing, again, of the Old Testament prophet, Isaiah. So, as we continue today, we'll be turning to Isaiah once again to consider the prophetic promise of peace.
- To be realized in and through Jesus. I know it seems like an improbable promise. We live in a world that is immersed right now, especially in war and division and conflict.
- [ 2 : 2 6 ]     But it's from this place of improbability, this very unlikely place, that we turn our eyes to Christ. We remember the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4, 6, and 7.
- You can turn there now. This has been a meaningful passage to me throughout my life because I am a nervous Nellie. Do not be anxious about anything.
- 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 your minds in Christ Jesus.
- If you're feeling anxious, overwhelmed, discouraged, fearful this holiday season, then I want you to know you are in the right place today.
- It's only through Christ that we can find the peace that we so desperately long for. The good news is we don't have to wait another thousand years, two thousand years to experience it because the peace of God is available to us right now, right here today, because Jesus has arrived.

[ 3 : 45 ] Thank you. That's good. The amen-worthy stuff, don't be shy. Now let's look at Isaiah 11, verses 6 to 8. It's a beautiful picture of the type of peace and harmony that will come with the reign of the Messiah.

It's a description of the future, yes, but it's also a picture of how the peace of God can be present in our life here and now as well. So let's jump in together.

Isaiah 11, verses 6 to 8, if you have your Bibles. The wolf will live with the lamb. The leopard will lie down with the goat. The calf and the lion and the yearling together and the little child will lead them.

The cow will feed with the bear. Their young will lie down together and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra's den and the young child will put his hand into the viper's nest.

What? It's a peaceful kingdom that we're hearing about here. This passage gives us a detailed description of natural enemies.

[ 4 : 54 ] Do you recognize that? But they're living in harmony with one another. That's the what part. Hopefully we can wrap our heads around these images.

They're very clear images. But the improbable nature of a wolf lying down with a lamb, a leopard lying down with a calf, these are prey and predator.

A child putting their hand into a snake's den. There's a parenting lesson to be learned there. So how could these things ever happen? How could it happen?

What kind of upside down universe would we need to live in where this could be? This Christmas season can bring lots of challenges with it, can't it?

Are there people in your life who you can't even imagine eating a meal with or spending the evening next to? And yet you're probably thinking, oh, that's coming up soon.

[ 5 : 52 ] But if that's your experience, if that's the sense that you're having this season, you're not alone. Relationships are fractured and broken and strained.

Is there a specific relative that you're going to be hanging around with this holiday season that you know is just going to cause trouble for everyone else? Through their opinions or their entitlement or anything like that.

Have you thought already about what you're going to do in that situation? Or are you just not going to go? As we think about this, there's one picture that might help us.

It's a moment when Jesus is hanging on the cross. He looks over all the people that are gathered there. The Jews were there, right next to the Romans.

And everyone was looking up at him as the crucifixion unfolded. But what happens next is pretty amazing. And I don't know if you've ever thought about it.

[ 6 : 57 ] In the depth of his abandonment. The betrayal that he's experienced. Alone and in unfathomable, excruciating pain.

What does Jesus do? Luke 23 verse 34 tells us, Then Jesus said, I'm going to try and manage to get through it.

Father, forgive them. For they do not know what they are doing. Forgiveness.

Forgiveness is the doorway through which peace enters into the spaces of our lives. Can you recognize that? We heard the words of Isaiah 11, 6-9 a moment ago.

And it gives us this amazing picture of enemies dwelling together in harmony. This reality isn't just a defining feature of Christ's future.

[ 7 : 58 ] His everlasting kingdom that is to come. It can be a reality that we experience here and now with each other. Forgiveness is a gift offered to all of us through Jesus Christ.

Forgiveness is one of the most powerful gifts that we can extend to other people.

And in many instances where we have enemies or division or broken relationships with other people, there needs to be a process of forgiveness.

Think back for a moment to those relatives that you were thinking about that popped into your head, their faces or their names. Maybe you're not excited to see them. Is there something at work there that maybe needs to be dealt with?

Is there some past event or frustration or friction that you need to address? Something that's spoiling your peace with someone else? Or even worse, poisoning the relationship?

[ 9 : 23 ] If there is, then I trust that Christ can grant you the strength and the courage to step into a process where the ultimate goal is finding peace.

Because an important part of Christ's ultimate plan and purpose is to restore all of creation into peace. Peace restored.

We all look forward to the day when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God. Scripture tells us that is to come. The world will be at peace because of Christ the Messiah.

He will be the unifying one for all of us. And this reality is reflected again in 1 Colossians 1, 19 and 20. You can see it there on the screen.

When Paul writes these words, There's that word again.

[ 10 : 38 ] Peace. Christ made peace through his blood shed on the cross, it says. It's through Christ that we can experience redemption and restoration and forgiveness, which we just talked about, and peace.

That's good news worth sharing with others, wouldn't you say? Even if that person is your weird uncle Charlie or awkward aunt Karen.

And I have neither of those. I specifically chose names that can't be traced. But their awkward names do pop into my head, which I will not share.

But folks, Christ died for them too, right? We believe that. Remember him this holiday season. Maybe that seems obvious.

It seems like a real pastor thing to say, right? But the holidays can be a difficult time. As a pastor, I'm reminded of this reality every year as I have conversations with people.

[ 11 : 47 ] You know that we now have a grief share ministry in our church. And so when Joanne and I meet with people in that group, we hear these stories of, how will I get through the holidays?

That empty chair really hurts. The holiday season generally isn't truly synonymous with the concept of peace, is it?

Let me unpack that for a second. We tend to rush around like yuletide maniacs, don't we? We talk about comfort and joy.

We sing about it. We sing about peace on earth. We talk about joy to the world. But our frenetic pace and our packed schedules seem to reflect a different focus.

Is that fair? How peaceful do you feel right now? How many shopping days till Christmas? Oh, I won't go there. And as much as the Christmas season can be filled with wonder and joy, and I hope that it is for you, it can also be a time of grief as we reflect on the loved ones who won't be with us around the tree, who won't be sitting with us and sharing a meal at the table this year.

[ 13 : 08 ] Maybe for the first time, maybe for the hundredth time or longer. I have a sincere question for you this morning.

How are you feeling? How are you managing your perceived holiday responsibilities and commitments? Do the things that you're cramming into your schedule give you a sense of joy and of peace?

Or are they just holiday boxes that you're checking off a list? How are you managing with the grief and loss that you may be feeling?

I have to confess that in the busyness of the Christmas season, I don't always find my batteries recharging. Certainly not with the kind of real joy that celebrating the birth of Jesus should bring to me.

As followers of Jesus, we often talk about listening to the still, small voice of God, right? Resting in Him.

[ 14 : 21 ] So let's try to do that more intentionally this year. I give you permission to gift yourself more time with you and God this year than you maybe have in the past.

Does that sound like something that you can seek to prioritize? Hopefully you don't think, well, easier said than done. It's a challenge.

A world restored to peace. As we think this Advent season about the arrival of Jesus, we're reminded that part of the messianic hope and promise was a world restored to peace.

I think we can all agree that the world needs peace right now, right? Literally and figuratively. Just as much as it did in the time of Isaiah. Just as much as it's going to need every single day until Christ returns.

Forgiveness is a powerful path to peace and we've considered that. But so are things like empathy and understanding. Maybe there are people around you that just need someone to listen to them.

[ 15 : 38 ] Some of you have probably experienced this from me when we've crossed paths and I say, how are you doing? And you say, I'm okay. Give that snap response. And I say, don't lie to me.

Because we're quick to say, not your problem. It's my problem. I don't want to share that. But it's okay to say, I'm struggling. This is a family and it's a safe place.

Maybe someone just needs to hear you say, I can imagine how you feel. I'm sorry. And I'm sorry. I know it's a busy time of year, but what would it look like to share some time and space with other people this holiday season?

As we remember Christ, let's also remember that we live in a world that is so weary from sin and destruction. The world is groaning. Can you feel that?

Can you hear it? It's a world longing for peace. And we know where only eternal peace can be found.

[ 16 : 47 ] The arrival of Christ 2,000 years ago changed everything. That's an obvious statement. His arrival brought anything but peace to many of the people in and around Jerusalem.

We recognize that as well. In fact, King Herod had all the firstborn boys murdered just to try and stop the specific messianic prophecy from coming true.

But Jesus lived and accomplished his purpose here on earth. Through Jesus, we can access peace in the midst of life's storms.

Through Jesus, we can experience eternal salvation and forgiveness. And it's only in and through Jesus that we can have the kind of true peace that surpasses our understanding.

So, my friends, my brothers and sisters, let go of whatever anxiety and fear you may be experiencing. In your life, in your circumstances, and pick up, receive the gift of Christ.

[ 18 : 02 ] Share him with others. Share the good news of great joy, which we'll be talking about more next week. Does that sound okay?

Amen.