

Unwrapping the Names of Jesus: Prince of Peace

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Preacher: Kent Dixon

[0 : 00] Welcome here for this Sunday, December 19th. Wow. Can you believe that it is now less than a week until Christmas?

Maybe you have a little bit of panic. I have too much shopping to do. I have too many gifts to wrap. I have too many things to accomplish, too many boxes to check off between now and next Saturday. But it's going to be okay, I promise. This past year has been difficult for us in many ways, and in many ways that we can't probably even express in words.

I mourn for those whose lives have been affected by the pandemic, the ongoing pandemic. Those whose health has been affected, those who have lost loved ones, those who have struggled with jobs and income.

But for all the anxiety and the uncertainty that this year, this two years, has brought with it, we still have the hope and joy of the Christmas season all around us.

[1 : 14] Cherished traditions and gatherings may still be challenging for us this year, but we will find ways to celebrate. Despite the ongoing reality of this pandemic, my prayer for each of you is that you are still able to reflect on the things that you can do.

The people whose company you can enjoy during this Christmas season. And despite so many things remaining different this year, we still can celebrate.

We still recognize the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And even more than that, we recognize in all of this that God is still in control.

He's in control of our lives. He's in control of our circumstances. Amen? Amen? On each Sunday of the Advent season, we've recognized one of the four virtues that Jesus brings.

Hope, love, joy, and peace. And this morning, as we continue in this season of Advent, I'm going to be lighting our first, second, and third candles again, which represent hope, love, and joy.

[2 : 37] And I'm going to light our fourth candle, which represents peace. Today, like Mary, we wait for the Christ child.

We celebrate all that 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, friends, focus on the peace that comes from knowing that God is still in control and that Jesus is the God who saves.

We recognize again this morning that we're in the season of the church calendar known as Advent. And that season includes the four Sundays that lead up to Christmas. And in this season of Advent, we anticipate Christmas and the time when we recognize the birth of Jesus, the Word made flesh. And the season of Advent continues until this coming Friday, Christmas Eve, when we will gather to recognize that our waiting is over.

[4 : 26] Our Advent sermon series this year has been titled, Unwrapping the Names of Jesus. And over the course of this series, we've been looking at four of the specific names that the Old Testament prophet Isaiah used to refer to the coming Messiah, the Son of God, who would be born as the man Jesus.

And as we've unpacked or unwrapped these names each week, we've looked at a contemporary understanding of the name, what the name would have represented when it was originally declared, and then how the name relates to Jesus in the circumstances of our lives and in our relationship with him.

And our focus passage for this series has been Isaiah 9 verses 2 and 6, which say, The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

And those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned. 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 Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

[5 : 56] We're concluding our series this morning by considering that name, Prince of Peace. So first, let's begin with a contemporary understanding of that, Prince of Peace.

Well, it's likely not news to you, but the Canadian government focuses within a framework of parliamentary democracy.

I took political science as part of my undergraduate degree, so I could bore you with all of that this morning, but I won't. But we also recognize that we are a constitutional monarchy.

I don't see anyone looking, What? Queen Elizabeth, the Queen of England, is recognized as our head of state.

My mom was a fierce monarchist. She loved the royal family. She loved learning about them. She felt very proud to be a Canadian, to be part of this constitutional monarchy.

[6 : 57] So granted, Queen Elizabeth's role is at a distance. She doesn't set public policy. She doesn't choose political leaders. Sometimes I wish she might.

But as one British historian frames it, here's a quote, a constitutional monarch reigns, but does not rule. Does that make sense? So even though we have some connection to a royal family, to a monarchy as a nation, we probably have a fairly limited understanding of princes, or even royalty in general.

Is that fair to say? So we're not part of a monarchy where princes take the throne, or princes taking the throne, has a direct impact on us.

Not really. Prince Charles is next in line. His sons, Prince William or Harry, may one day become kings of England, and are de facto monarch, but that doesn't really affect our day-to-day lives, does it?

Maybe princes are in stories that you read as a child, like Prince Charming in Sleeping Beauty, or Prince Caspian in the Chronicles of Narnia, or maybe you're familiar with Prince Humperdinck from The Princess Bride, that great movie from the 80s.

[8 : 19] So whether by title or by name, I don't know that most of us feel deeply connected or able to relate to the role or nature of what it means to be a prince.

And I think we may be able to recognize that, though princes aren't generally in charge, earthly princes have limited power or authority, really, if any, it seems.

And they may not even be next in line for the throne of their country or their kingdom. The role or the position of a prince, certainly in human terms, doesn't really feel like a position of power or influence, does it?

Or perhaps even significance? So what about the word peace? What does that word mean to us? Audience participation time.

What does peace mean? Lack of war. That's good. Others?

[9 : 23] Ah, fullness in your soul. Peace. Harmony.

As Larry suggested, a lack of conflict in some way. A sense of satisfaction or commitment, right? Contentment, I should say. So there are tons of expressions and concepts related to the idea of peace or that include the word peace.

We may say we wish for world peace, which is a real thing, a tangible thing. An end to oppression and conflict around the world. We may crave a moment of peace.

Some peace and quiet. So when we're overwhelmed, we may declare even, leave me in peace. In family conflicts, maybe you're like me, you seek to keep the peace.

When we've hurt someone else or there's tension in a relationship, we may need to make peace or want to restore peace. And last but not least, in that final concept, that final context, we seek to rest in peace.

[10 : 45] In peace, right? Peace. So that hopefully gives us a kind of a contemporary perspective on the idea of prince and peace.

So second, what does this name, Prince of Peace, mean with a more complete understanding of what it might have meant to Isaiah? What it might have meant to first century church people who equated this prophetic name, Prince of Peace, and the identity of the Messiah than with the man Jesus?

What does it mean to say that the Messiah prophesied by Isaiah in our central verses for this series is known as the Prince of Peace?

Well, it's important to recognize that first of all, Isaiah was using this name, declaring this name, as a title.

But not merely a title without any authority or power behind it. The Messiah, Jesus, is the Prince, the ruler of peace.

[11 : 59] And as you may have learned in the past, the expectation for the Jewish people would have been that their Messiah would have been more of a military leader. Their ideal Messiah would have been a conqueror who would have come in with force to liberate them, to free them from Roman oppression.

That was the kind of Messiah they were expecting, that they were looking for. So then do you see how any suggestion that Jesus, this baby born in a dark, dark and cold Bethlehem stable, to foreigners from Nazareth, any suggestion that he would grow up to be a humble and caring carpenter could be the Messiah, the Messiah that they expected.

That would have been ridiculous to some people. And to others, it would have been, at the very least, disappointing. And as we learn in Scripture, other people were infuriated by that suggestion. But for those who recognize Jesus as the Son of God and gave up everything to follow Him, for you and for me, for those who still recognize Jesus and follow Him to this day, Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

Unlike earthly princes, whose names and titles may not carry much weight or mean all that much, Jesus' title, Prince of Peace, means something very different.

[13 : 42] It's a position with significant power and authority. But just how much power and authority?

Let's explore that for a bit. In Matthew 28, verses 18 to 20, we read that after His resurrection, Jesus met with His disciples, and some of them still doubted that He was the Messiah, the Son of God.

So we read then in Matthew 28, 18 to 20, Then Jesus came to them and said, All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

And surely, I will be with you always to the very end of the age. Friends, this Prince of Peace is no paper prince by name or title only.

[15 : 02] As Jesus declares Himself, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him.

So hopefully this is an obvious question, and I certainly mean it to be rhetorical. But who gave this power and authority to Jesus, I wonder?

Well, let's take a moment to look at five different places in Scripture where this is reflected. In Matthew 11, verse 27, Jesus says, All things have been committed to me by my Father.

No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son, and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.

John 3, verse 35, tells us, The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in His hands.

[16 : 09] In John 13, 3, we learn that Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God.

And then He washed His disciples' feet. Ephesians 1, verses 20 and 21 says, speaking of God's power, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age, but also in the one that is to come.

And in John 17, verse 2, I hear lots of page flipping. That's good.

Jesus prays, Father, the time has come. Glorify Your Son that Your Son may glorify You.

For You granted Him authority over all people. And what's a big focus of that priority of power and authority?

[17 : 38] That He may give eternal life to all those You have given Him, Jesus says. Scripture makes it very clear that Jesus' power comes not only through His relationship with the Father, but also through His inheritance, through His birthright.

ultimate power and authority, as we've seen here, has been given to Jesus. And with that authority, He then rules over all creation.

So third, having recognized these things, how does the name Prince of Peace relate to Jesus in the circumstances of our own lives and our relationship with Him?

What does it mean for us that Jesus Himself is the Prince of Peace, the true source of peace in our lives? Friends, how are you feeling these days?

Could you use some peace? the same power that Jesus demonstrated when He calmed a raging storm at sea, the same authority He used to cast out demons and heal the sick is at work in your life.

[19 : 08] And that power can and will bring you peace. Friends, Jesus is with you in every moment, in every challenge.

He's never forgotten you, and He never will. Are you able to let go of the unknown and trust that God is in control?

That's for me as much as it is for you. Jesus has got this. My friends, if we want true and lasting peace, that requires two things.

It requires faith, and it requires trust. Trust in the Lord. Trust in your almighty and all-powerful Prince of Peace with all your heart.

Are you struggling with a broken relationship that desperately needs healing and restoration? cry to Jesus for peace in that.

[20 : 32] Are you struggling with the unknown of your circumstances, your health, your finances, the unknown of the pandemic? Cry to Jesus for peace and God's presence and provision in those things.

peace. When we sing the beloved carol Silent Night, which we're going to sing Friday, we sing of heavenly peace.

peace. I'm having trouble this morning. The peace that passes all understanding.

May that peace fill every corner of your life. my friends, may the peace of Christ rule in your heart, not just this Christmas season, but always.

Over the course of our Advent series this year, we've considered what it means for Jesus to be our wonderful counselor, our mighty God, our everlasting Father, and our Prince of Peace.

[21 : 45] Jesus is our wonderful counselor, making God's counsel and God's guidance available to us through his birth, death, and resurrection.

Counsel that is life-giving, life-altering, eternity-changing, and not just for us. Jesus is the good news that we are called to share with everyone we meet.

Jesus is our mighty God. The greatest challenges in your life, can you look at them from the perspective that God is in your corner?

He is cheering for you. God is with you, and you have his power at your disposal to help you make it through.

Jesus is our everlasting Father. where earthly fathers have fallen short or been limited by their own humanity. Jesus is the best mentor and father figure we could ever have.

[22 : 59] Loving us unconditionally, he stands with us in the circumstances of our lives, and he will stand with us when we face our final judgment. moment.

And finally, Jesus is, as we learned this morning, our Prince of Peace. He brings his Lordship over all things, all the brokenness in our lives, to restore peace and wholeness again.

Only Jesus has the power and authority to bring true peace, bring true peace, in every aspect of our lives. my friends, trust in your Prince of Peace.

Lean on him and not on your own limited understanding or resources. My prayer for each of us this Christmas season is that we have gained a deeper and more personal understanding of these prophetic names, declared about the Messiah, declared about Jesus by the prophet Isaiah in the 8th century BCE.

And that by exploring these names together, new light has been shed for you on the one who came as a baby in Bethlehem. The one who lives today and the one who will return again.

[24 : 27] Merry Christmas. God bless you.