

His Name Shall be Prince of Peace

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 December 2025

Preacher: Andrew Fortuine

[0 : 00] Christ, we are in the season of Advent, which of course is the four weeks leading up to Christmas Day and the celebration of our Savior's birth.! Advent means coming or arrival.

And as we mentioned last week, it marks not only Christ's first coming 2,000 years ago, but also looks forward to his second coming when Jesus will return in glory to banish darkness and evil forever.

And so we are living in between the two Advents. And of course, that makes Advent a season of waiting. How many of us like to wait for anything?

If we're honest, in our humanness, waiting can be very frustrating. We become impatient. Waiting exposes how very little control we have over anything.

But biblical waiting is different because the object of our waiting and of our hope is not anything of this world. It is in God himself.

[1 : 02] And so last week, we looked at the gift of hope. That worldly hope leads us down a road of frustration. Putting our hope in the world ultimately leaves us hopeless.

But godly hope, that is what comes to our hearts and to our lives when we fix our eyes on the Lord. When we wait on him.

And that kind of hope will never disappoint. Today, the second Sunday of Advent, we look to the gift of peace that Christ came to give us. And to get us going, let's begin with this biblical greeting.

Maybe. Maybe. The suspense is building. There we go. Let's read this together. May God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

That's a wonderful blessing, isn't it? And it probably sounds familiar because it is the Apostle Paul's greeting in all 13 of his New Testament letters. Praying this blessing of grace and peace over us.

[2 : 08] Those things are at the heart of our faith. And they go together, don't they? For it is by grace you have been saved.

Through faith, not by works, but God's grace. Salvation is a gift. How about peace? That's also a gift. Peace is the result of living in God's grace.

Knowing that we have been chosen, we are accepted, we have been forgiven and adopted into God's family. And from that position of security and blessing as God's children, we then have peace with God and with one another.

That is a peace that this world cannot offer us. It's also a peace that nothing, no circumstance in this world can ever steal from us. Consider Jesus in the gospel, sleeping on the boat.

You remember that story? He's sleeping in the boat in perfect peace, even as the storm raged. Or of Paul's words to the Philippians and to us.

[3 : 12] That the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. That word guard is a military term. The spirit, the peace of God is guarding our hearts and minds from the trouble of this world.

Or the words of Isaiah, who prophesied a child born to us whose name will be Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Or the angel, of course, proclaiming Christ's birth. Glory to God in the highest. Peace on earth. Goodwill toward men.

There's a reason the word peace is mentioned over 400 times in the Bible. It's because God knows we are dust. So prone to fear, to anxiety, to conflict.

And in his grace, he fills us with wonderful, heavenly peace. And yet, we must be honest, as we live in a fallen world, if God's gift is peace to us, why are we not always experiencing that kind of peace in our lives?

[4 : 21] Why are we so often filled with anxiety and fear, even keeping us up at night? Why does there continue to be conflict in our relationships? And so let's turn to the Lord in prayer, and then we'll go to our scripture.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for Jesus. We thank you for the Prince of Peace in our lives. And we thank you for your word that testifies to the peace that you freely offer us.

And yet, we come to you as humble, needy servants of the Lord, because so often there is anything but peace in our hearts and in this world. And so, Lord, as we fix our eyes on you, on your truth, and on your promises, we pray that you would grant us that peace that passes understanding.

For we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Today's scripture, the very familiar passage of Luke chapter 2. We already heard a little bit from Luke 2 for our candle lighting.

We begin with verse 8. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

[5 : 33] 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 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, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about. The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. So very familiar words. I can't imagine how many sermons down through the years have been preached on this passage from Luke 2.

There's a lot of things we could focus on in these verses. But for today, we look to the heavenly peace that the angels announced to the shepherds and to this whole world.

[6 : 41] Let's start with a definition. What is peace? Well, here's one of the least satisfying definitions. Peace as the absence of war, the absence of conflict.

Defining a word with its negative, that doesn't really satisfy. Who remembers, and I'm dating myself, the Cold War between the U.S. and the old Soviet Union?

There was very little active fighting between these two superpowers during those 40 years. But nobody exactly felt safe either.

Why? Well, because both countries had massive nuclear warheads pointed at each other. I still remember my elementary school days being trained to dive under my desk in case of attack. And even as a child, I knew that wasn't going to be very effective. How about on a relational level? Peace is certainly not the absence of conflict there.

[7 : 48] The Cold War becomes the cold shoulder. This couple, does this scene look peaceful? In our relationships, we can actually become so demoralized by constant conflict that it feels easier just to retreat to our own corners.

But it can still feel like we're in a prison of resentment and anger. So maybe God's peace is something a little bit more. There's a beautiful word in the Old Testament, shalom.

How many of you have heard that word? Shalom. Shalom. What do we usually think of as its meaning? Peace. But in God's economy, in his wisdom, it's so much deeper and more meaningful than a ceasefire or a mere lack of conflict.

Shalom is God's perfect peace. It's the peace of completeness, of wholeness, everything that God intends it to be. It's both an internal peace in our hearts and also an external peace with others in this world.

We see this kind of shalom early in the creation story. Genesis 1 and 2. How after each new day of creation, God looked out over all he had made and behold, it was good.

[9 : 07] That's shalom. God's goodness just permeating everything. Did that shalom last? We know too well that it didn't. Why not?

Because sin always breaks shalom. It always destroys peace. Adam and Eve, our ancestors, were lured away by the deception of the serpent, wanting to be like God and ate of the forbidden fruit.

And our shalom with God was broken. Remember immediately after eating the fruit, Adam and Eve hear God walking around in the garden. In the past, they would have run to him with joy.

He's their father, their creator. But now, gone is the love, the trust, the peace they enjoyed with their creator. It's been replaced by fear and guilt and they actually run the other direction and hide. There's suddenly a chasm, a distance between God and his people. How about the shalom between Adam and Eve?

[10:12] What a beautiful, trusting relationship they had enjoyed. And of course, with God right at the center. All that is broken by sin. Remember what Adam says when God asks if they've eaten the forbidden fruit.

Well, he blames Eve. She gave it to me. God banishes his children from the garden and within a generation, violence, lying, even murder have infiltrated the human race. Even the shalom with creation was damaged. What does God tell Eve? I will make your pains and childbearing very severe. With painful labor, you will give birth to children. For Adam, cursed is the ground because of you. Through painful toil, you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you. And you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow, you will eat your food. In our world today, we take such difficult realities for granted. But such suffering and pain was never part of God's original design.

[11:18] But because of our sin, all creation is groaning. But God, would God allow our sin to overrule his sovereign plan for his people or his creation?

A plan of goodness and blessing. No. Sin could not have the last word. And in addressing the serpent, God also reveals his plan for redemption.

It says, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers. He will crush your head and you will strike his heel. This is the promise of a savior in Genesis 3 who would overturn the curse of sin and crush Satan.

Restoring peace with God and with one another. But notice in those words, at great cost to himself. In a beautiful picture of provision and grace, also foreshadowing the cross, God fashions for his wayward children animal skins to clothe their nakedness.

Before that, it was fig leaves that they had made for themselves. And inherent in these animal skins is that the life of another living thing had to be given in order to cover Adam and Eve's sin.

[12:38] Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission for sin. And with that, we fast forward ahead to Luke 2. The fulfillment of the promise, the announcement of a savior.

The setting for the big announcement, it's shepherds who are watching their flock by night. An entirely unremarkable scene in first century Judea.

But how often does God move in very normal rhythms of life? When for those shepherds, suddenly, boom! The angel of the Lord appears.

The Lord's glory is shining everywhere. And what does the angel always have to say when he shows up to sinful humanity? Fear not. Do not be afraid.

Now, if someone had gotten most of their information about angels from the Hallmark cards we receive at Christmas, they'd probably think of these, you know, cute, maybe chubby little creatures with little wings and harps and golden curly hair.

[13:48] But no, God's word reveals that these are powerful warriors, heavenly messengers sent straight from the presence of the living God, radiating his glory.

And when our human reality intersects with God's glory, whoa, we're terrified. We become intensely aware of our own fallenness. I think of the prophet Isaiah who saw the Lord high and exalted.

And what did he do? Well, he lamented, woe is me for I am undone. It's the reality that a sinful humanity cannot coexist with our glorious God.

But there's a deeper level to these words, fear not. What does the angel say next? For I bring you good news of a great joy.

Good news literally is the gospel. This is a gospel proclamation from the angels of God himself breaking into our fallen creation to set right what sin had made wrong.

[14:56] That's good news. No wonder the sky burst forth with the glory of the Lord and the heavenly host singing God's praises. Which brings us to our first point.

Jesus came to bring peace to a very broken world. That's probably not a news flash to most of us that this world is needy.

It's broken. It's dark. You just have to turn on the news and it can become discouraging. But you've also probably noticed how the real Christmas story in our world has a way of getting sanitized by various retellings.

Whether it's the heartwarming Christmas stories on TV or certain Christmas carols where the little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes. Or the star shining down on a quiet, peaceful manger scene. Well, the true Christmas story, according to the gospels, is a lot messier. God's people have been living under foreign oppression for centuries. The last prophecy to God's people about the coming Messiah dates way back to the prophet Malachi who lived 400 years earlier.

[16:08] That's a lot of waiting. That's a lot of silence for God's people. Jesus himself, born of an unwed teenage mother. We know the baby is of the Holy Spirit, but other people didn't, including Joseph at first, who almost divorces her in advance.

How about when it's time for the baby to arrive? Well, there's a worldwide census happening at that time and Joseph needs to return to his hometown. But for the baby's delivery, there's no room anywhere for them.

So they make do with a barn. And then, in a scene that doesn't show up in any of the Christmas cards, a murderous and jealous King Herod, believing his own throne is threatened because of this newborn king, brutally kills every boy under the age of two in the whole surrounding area. Joseph has been warned in a dream to bring Mary and Jesus to Egypt until Herod himself has died. What a messy world for the king of kings to enter into.

But is that exactly the point? How much our world, our broken world, needs the Prince of Peace? Jesus could have come riding a mighty chariot and imposed peace with an iron fist.

[17:29] He has the power and authority to do that. But God's ways are different. In his divine wisdom, God sent his son into our broken world as a humble baby. Vulnerable.

Weak. Relatable. Miracle of new life in our midst, proclaiming God's peace and favor to a very broken and needy people.

Which brings us to our second point. That this peace would not be so easily won. It could only be accomplished by Jesus paying the highest price possible, his life on the cross.

I remember as a child being drawn to manger scenes and just kind of the peacefulness of that, the faithfulness of God. And I remember the first time I saw a manger scene but with a cross looming behind it.

I didn't like it at all. Christmas and Good Friday are separate, right? They don't belong together. But of course, the cross is exactly why Jesus came.

[18:34] The prophet Isaiah had earlier spoken about the Messiah's power and majesty. Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

But he would also testify to the rest of Jesus' mission that he would be pierced for our transgressions. Crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace, shalom, was on him.

And by his wounds we are healed. Restoring shalom, peace with God, peace with one another. It had been broken since the time of Adam and Eve.

And that was the heart of Jesus' mission. To bridge this vast chasm that existed between holy God and sinful humanity. But possible only through Jesus' death on the cross.

And so, yes, the cross belongs looming over the manger scene because that's exactly why he came. I think of Simeon's encounter with baby Jesus in the temple.

[19:38] Mary and Joseph take their eight-day newborn to the temple for the rite of purification. And Simeon, you remember, an old and righteous man who had been waiting a long time for the consolation of Israel.

And he was there at the temple to receive them. Moved by the Holy Spirit, he meets Mary and Joseph there in the temple courtyards. And then he takes Jesus in his arms.

And he praises God for his salvation delivered to all the nations. But then, almost as if a dark cloud passes over Simeon's eyes, he turns to Mary.

And he says, and a sword will pierce your soul. Did the Holy Spirit allow Simeon to catch a glimpse of how this innocent little baby would somehow bring peace and new life to God's people?

It would only be through the cross. Several Christmases ago, when our firstborn son was still a little newborn baby, we were living in British Columbia, Canada.

[20:48] That was my first pastorate. And lo and behold, someone from the city reached out to me, gave me a call, and said, we would like to invite your family to be the centerpiece of our downtown Christmas nativity scene.

You would be Joseph, your wife would be Mary, and your newborn son would be baby Jesus. Well, how can you say no to that? So, we arrived.

And they had gone all out, two city blocks dedicated to a live nativity. There were animals, a little stable with a manger. There were bales of hay for us to sit on.

And there was even a choir singing over us. And I thought, this is great. People everywhere singing praises to God, getting into the Christmas spirit.

And I get to be Joseph. And then this sweet old grandma came up and said, well, can I hold baby Jesus? Well, sure.

[21 : 49] And she took Elliot, and immediately the whole crowd's attention fell away from us and continued with the baby. And followed the baby.

In fact, I realized that's where the attention had been all along. Not on Mary or Joseph, not on the animals or the choir, but on Jesus.

Well, the next day I was surprised when I woke up that the newspaper came out and we made the front page. And I knew it was right.

Because who's at the center? Jesus. Mary and Joseph were kind of off to the side in the shadows. But the focus is Jesus.

As it should be. So, this second Sunday of Advent, how is your peace meter? Maybe a better question is, how is your relationship with Jesus, the Prince of Peace?

[22 : 48] Is he right at the center of your life? Because I think the peace in our hearts, or the lack thereof, is a good barometer of our relationship with Jesus Christ.

You may have seen this bumper sticker. No Jesus. No peace. We see the truth of that everywhere in our world today. Wars, political crises, marriages in distress, youth dealing with anxiety and temptation and depression.

Without Jesus, there can be no peace. And yet, this world so often refuses to yield to his authority. We ourselves struggle to surrender to his lordship.

Truth be told, we'd rather be in control of our own lives. But then we wonder why we're not experiencing peace. But you know the rest of the bumper sticker. When we know Jesus, we will know peace.

And it is a deep, abiding peace that fills our hearts. A peace this world cannot give. It's because Jesus is reigning on the throne of our hearts. And even when this world is crashing down all around us, Christ's peace is greater.

[23 : 56] Two thousand years ago, God's light, his hope, his peace, his joy, and his love broke into our dark world.

And those gifts, his promises are for us today. But we're living in the in-between. Creation is still groaning. And together, we wait with eager expectation and longing for the day when Jesus, the Prince of Peace, returns in glory and ushers in his forever peace.

And so we pray, come, Lord Jesus, come. And when you do, may you find us ready. Let's pray. Oh, Heavenly Father, thank you for sending Jesus.

Without Jesus, where would we be? But we thank you that the Prince of Peace has entered into this dark world, shining light and hope and peace and all these wonderful gifts that come from putting you in the first, making you Lord and Savior of our lives.

And yet you know that we are human, we are weak, we are frail, how much we need you every day. How prone we are to wandering off, seizing control of our own life, or trying to make do in our own wisdom and strength.

[25 : 12] And we realize that we have departed from that peace you offer because our hearts are anything but peaceful. And so I pray for all of us that you'd give us the strength to put you first, to allow you the rightful place on the throne of our hearts.

I pray for those in this body of Christ that are going through difficult times. We think of your promise that in this world we will know trouble, but take heart, for Jesus our Lord has overcome the world. And so, Lord, find us faithful. Help us to encourage one another along the way. For we pray it all in the strong name of Jesus. Amen. Amen. Thank you.