

Prince of Peace

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[0 : 00] Many of you will know that I'm involved with an outdoor centre called Teen Ranch.! I spent almost eight years working there and I've gone up to volunteer, taking groups up! Ever since the time I've left.

And the whole time when I worked there, and volunteered before I went to work, I was only, never called Gordon only Gordy. And I'm not giving that as a suggestion by the way.

But it does mean that every time I meet someone, if they call me Gordy, I know exactly where I know them from. So we also had a guy there called Paul Fishburne and he was called Hook.

And we had a guy called Paul Fowler, we had other people who weren't called Paul as well, but Paul Fowler, he was called Chook. If you need to work that one out, you can ask me later.

Most other names were either shortened or an O was added to the end of them. And this is just how Australians seem to like to address each other.

[1 : 10] Now we've been looking at the names of Jesus found in the verse from Isaiah. Not nicknames, of course, but more like descriptions or ways for us to help understand the aspects of his character.

And the last one, as we have seen, is found in that verse, is Prince of Peace. Now when I think about peace, strangely enough, I also think about Teen Ranch. I do think about Teen Ranch a lot. But Teen Ranch comes to mind. Now if you've never been stand about too many, two miles from a busy dual carriage, we're near the village of Inch Teor up near towards Dundee.

And between that busy road, the 60 or more young people who come for camps, all the staff up work there, 30 or so of them, the maintenance team and all their machinery and all the horses, it can be quite a noisy place as you can imagine.

Every now and then, usually when the campers aren't there, it can get very quiet. And I don't just mean less noise. There are sometimes moments of almost complete quiet.

And even out there in the countryside, it happens seldom enough that you always notice it. And there are very rare moments of peace. Then of course someone will start a chainsaw or a strimmer or something and there it all goes.

[2 : 30] But they're really good moments on a really beautiful property. Now I said they were rare at Teen Ranch, but of course they're even more rare for us living in a busy city like Edinburgh. Buses going up and down the road the whole time. Unless of course you're trying to catch one.

And imagine you would struggle to think of a time when you were outside and that you experienced that kind of peace, that utter quiet. Even in the middle of the night, there's always some sort of noise.

Now you might see where I'm going to be going with this. The last title for Jesus in this Advent, as I've already said, is Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace.

And we already know of course that that does not mean Prince of Peace and Quiet. The passage of Isaiah we looked at earlier and the verses that lead up to the verse we spent Advent looking at has some not very peaceful language in it.

And it wasn't a peaceful time in the history of God's people. Judah and Israel were threatened by powerful forces from beyond their borders. Alliances had been formed and neighbours attacked neighbours.

[3 : 44] And at the time of greatest threat, the king in Judah called Ahaz chose to look to other countries instead of trusting in God. And that king's failure was the context for the Isaiah chapter 7 and all it promised.

David had died about 240 or so years before, but the expected child would be born of David's line as we saw in verse 7.

This person will sit on David's throne, rule with justice, righteousness and bring lasting peace. Not a temporary peace, but a lasting peace. Not like those still moments at teen rants I mentioned earlier, that come as welcome spaces, but last only for moments.

The peace this child offers cannot be only the absence of noise, but something much deeper. So what does a peace that we can only get from God look like?

Firstly, it's marked by God's nearness and blessing. Sorry, this is a teen ranch talk, but another illustration from teen ranch. When I was here in the past summer earlier this year, one of the younger staff asked me if I thought the book of numbers was the most boring book in the Bible.

[4 : 59] And we're going to have a look at a couple of verses now that prove that numbers and every other book of the Bible are anything but boring. And they'll probably be familiar to you if you've been around church for any time.

And they are from Numbers chapter 6, verse 24 to 26. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace. Now, following on a little bit from what Gordon was saying earlier, Permanence is something that we're drawn to, but increasingly no longer expect.

Leave aside how many prime ministers we've had in the last few years. We now actually have cars which are advertised as disposable. I know you can't believe it, is that Sam?

When certain things go wrong in these cars, you don't fix them, you just replace them, because it's not designed to be fixed. None of these parts are designed to be replaced. You buy your washing machine, you hope.

[6 : 01] Maybe you'll get 10 years out of it, knowing that your parents or your grandparents had the same one for 20 or 30 years. But that sort of permanence is not what these verses promise.

There's a favour and protection and flourishing in this verse. The Lord will guard and watch over us. We can sense God's delight and approval and nearness.

The blessing that God speaks over us transcends circumstances. It doesn't depend on good or bad days. It remains true of us in all days, with a permanent only God can deliver.

Secondly, God's peace is rooted in his nearness. God gives us a promise of his nearness in this verse. There you go. Come on.

It's not cooperating. It's there somewhere. Come on, there you go. So this verse from Zephaniah 3, 17. For the Lord your God is living among you. He's a mighty saviour. He will take delight in you with gladness.

[7 : 08] With his love he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs. All God does comes from his perfect love. And this verse reminds us that his peace also flows from his love.

As you saw a moment ago, this does not depend on what's going on, but is a never changing truth about God. And as a promise God has made to us, it's never changing for us as well.

That then we have peace. Then we have our peace through God, with God through Jesus. Jesus promises followers this new kind of peace in John 14, 27.

I'm leaving you with a gift. Peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.

The peace that Jesus gives is a peace that only he could give. This peace with God in a relationship which Jesus made possible on the cross. That's what Paul's talking about in Colossians chapter 1.

[8 :12] For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Peace comes to us not through a feeling, but a person who was uniquely able, but also, as this verse reminds us, willing to give of himself.

We can't create that peace ourselves, and nothing in the world, in the world or that the world has to offer can create that either. And that's not to criticize the world or people who work hard in the world to make it better.

But the peace we've been talking about only has one source, and it's given to us by God through Jesus. Now this is third Sunday in Advent, 11 days till Christmas.

Hope that doesn't come as a surprise to anyone. So it's good for us to close by just have a brief look at part of the Christmas story, and specifically what the choir of angels sang to the shepherds that night on the hill outside Bethlehem.

[9 :19] After they told the shepherds about Jesus' birth, they sang, come on, there we go, Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.

Now does it now look like peace is conditional? Is peace only for the people God likes? What does it mean when it says, to those with whom God is pleased?

How do you get to be one of the people that God is pleased with? Well the clue is who the angels are singing to. You might know the shepherds were among the lowliest people of that society.

Few people were thought less of. They looked after their sheep. They lived outside, slept, cooked round fires, and everyone was glad that they did it as far away from town as possible.

God was pleased to tell them about Jesus first, because Jesus had come for everyone. And the great good news is that he's also come for us. The message of those angels on the night is a message for us as well.

[10 :25] Peace is offered to everyone, but we must take it personally. The same Jesus who lay in a manger, lay to hang on a cross so you could be forgiven. The same Jesus who was announced by angels is that Jesus who invites you today.

Over these weeks we have invited you to come to Jesus as wonderful counsellor, mighty God, everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. We pray that you will accept his invitation to new life and peace.

Let's pray together. Thank you Lord that you came so that we might come to know you. Open us to your message of love we pray and help us to receive all you have for us.

In Jesus name, Amen. Bluetooth Bluetooth