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Prince of Peace

Isaiah 9.6-7

Series: The Child-King

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The Village Church

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I. **The Peace Problem**

- A. A pastor friend of mine was out for a run one day
 - 1. At various times in his ministry he moonlighted as an EMT
 - a. So he was trained in various aspects of emergency medicine
 - 2. Well, he was out for a run, and all of a sudden his breathing became very labored – out of breath long before he should have been for a routine exercise episode
 - a. In fact, he got very weak, was sweating more profusely than he had previously experienced
 - b. And he even had to lie down on the sidewalk
 - 3. The first thing that came to his mind was, “I’m not having a heart attack”
 - 4. And then, his EMT training kicked in
 - a. And he realized that one of the symptoms of having a heart attack was denial
 - b. So his saying, “I’m not having a heart attack!” was actually a symptom of having a heart attack!
 - 5. And yes, he was having a heart attack
- B. We humans have a peace problem
 - 1. And we are in denial that we have a peace problem
- C. In a sense, we’re not in denial that we have a peace problem
 - 1. We are very aware of the wars and rumors of wars that seem pervasive in our media-saturated culture
 - a. Ukraine has occupied our minds for a couple of years now
 - b. Only to be supplanted by the war in Israel-Palestine
 - 2. And we are at least vaguely aware that sections of our cities in this country bear a striking resemblance to a war zone
 - 3. We know we live in a violent age
- D. But at various times people have been in denial even of that kind of violence
 - 1. WWI was to be the “war to end all wars”
 - a. League of Nations was to settle international conflicts once and for all
 - 2. That turned out to be the voice of hubris, the epitome of cultural naivete
 - 3. And then came WWII
 - a. Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister of Britain, goes to Munich

- b. He gets Hitler to sign the “Anglo-German Agreement” in which Hitler agrees to limit annexation of Europe to the Sudetenland, and preserve Czechoslovakia’s independence
 - c. And that Germany and Britain would never be at war with each other again
 - d. He returns to Britain triumphant – greeted by throngs of exuberant crowds
 - e. He addressed the crowd from a balcony at No. 10 Downing Street and declared, “I believe it is peace for our time.... Now I recommend you go home, and sleep quietly in your beds.”
 - f. And within 6 months Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia
 - g. And British bedrooms were bombed
 - h. And the rest, as they say, is history
- E. Denial, however, didn’t start in the 20th Century
 - 1. Judah was under pressure from the Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians in the 7th Century B.C.
 - a. Yet the Neville Chamberlains of Judah, the professional prophets, assured the people of Jerusalem that they had nothing to fear!
 - 2. Jeremiah, always it seems, the bearer of bad news, had to bring the hammer down
 - 3. **Jeremiah 6:14** (ESV) — 14 They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.
- F. Apart from the imminent threat of these denials, we are all aware of the dangers of our times – both here and abroad
 - 1. But the real denial of our peace problem is the denial of the role the human heart plays in the turmoil
- G. Story – a newspaper editor in England posed a question, seeking responses that he would publish in the editorial page
 - 1. Question: What is wrong with the World?
 - 2. G. K. Chesterton wrote his letter:
 - 3. Dear Sirs:
 - a. I am.
 - b. Sincerely Yours,
 - c. G.K. Chesterton
- H. The origin of the peace problem is the human heart
 - 1. The reason we have wars in Ukraine and in Israel-Palestine
 - a. The reason we have murders in our cities
 - b. The reason why hundreds of thousands die of fentanyl poisoning
 - c. The reason why there are more than 25 million humans who are trafficked in the world today
 - 2. Is because the human heart is not peaceful
 - a. In fact, the human heart is sinful – wicked, in fact, at its very core
 - b. The default setting for the human heart is selfishness
 - c. And the society and its media reinforces that very tendency and disposition

3. **Genesis 6:5** (ESV) — 5 The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.
 4. **Jeremiah 17:9** (ESV) — 9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?
- I. That's what we're in denial about
 1. We are in denial that the root of hatred and violence and war and conflict lies within each one of us
 2. And we're unwilling to admit that
 - a. And we're instead willing to chase after rainbows of phantom solutions to these problems
 - b. Especially when those solutions amount to the removal of all those who don't see the world the way we do
 3. If we can't kill them, we'll cancel them
 - a. And if we can't persuade them, we'll silence them
 - b. One way or another
- II. **Counterfeit Peace**
 - A. Of course the world is filled with counterfeit peace movements
 - B. We saw it in the 60's
 1. The flower children, AKA the hippies
 - a. Who gathered in places like Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco
 - b. In the "Summer of Love" in 1967
 - c. Distributing flowers
 - d. And called everyone to idyllic lives of peace and love
 2. But the flower children had no impact on the human heart
 - a. And they had no impact in the world as a result
 - C. We see it all the time in our political discourse
 1. How politicians speak in messianic terms during election seasons
 - a. Of how, under his or her leadership, this conflict or that war or this other problem would never happen!
 2. But not one of those politicians – from whatever side of the political divide – has any solution to the human heart
 - D. We see it in the "peace through strength" ideology
 1. However prudent the geo-political strategy to keep the lid on violent extremist elements in our world
 - a. No solution for the human heart flows out of cabinet rooms of the world's super-powers
 - E. In fact, that was the strategy for peace in the ancient world
 1. And the current iteration of it in our day is just a barely sanitized version of the brutal Pax Romana
 2. A period of about 200 years, spanning the time of Caesar Augustus, ending with the death of Marcus Aurelius
 3. And yet historians will admit that the designation was misleading at best

4. Like they say about the Holy Roman Empire – it was neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire
 - a. The Pax Romana was anything but peaceful
 5. It was a relative peace in which the hegemony of Roman rule reached its zenith
 - a. Ruling 70 million people – about 33% of the world’s population at the time
 - b. Governing Europe from Spain to current day Turkey
 - c. And most of the population centers of North Africa
 - d. The entirety of the Mediterranean basin
 - e. A time of prosperity in trade and travel
 6. But it was all achieved and enforced by the brutal boots of the dictator’s armies
 - a. And it had nothing to do for the human heart
- F. Every single human ideology – political and otherwise – is a counterfeit peace movement
1. And today’s incipient neo-Marxism, so pervasive in our universities and even in our elementary and secondary schools, is no different
 2. Human history is a history of lost causes

III. Text

- A. It is against that backdrop of counterfeit peace that Isaiah speaks
- B. **Isaiah 9:2–7** (ESV) —
1. 2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
 - a. those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.
 2. 3 You have multiplied the nation;
 - a. you have increased its joy;
 - b. they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.
 3. 4 For the yoke of his burden,
 - a. and the staff for his shoulder,
 - b. the rod of his oppressor,
 - c. you have broken as on the day of Midian.
 4. 5 For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
 - a. and every garment rolled in blood
 - b. will be burned as fuel for the fire.
- C. And what is it that will achieve this destruction of the destroyers?
1. What will achieve true “peace for our time” – indeed, for all time?
 2. It’s shocking! – a child!
- D. 6 For to us a child is born,
1. to us a son is given;
 2. and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
 3. and his name shall be called
 - a. Wonderful Counselor,

- b. Mighty God,
 - c. Everlasting Father,
 - d. Prince of Peace.
 - 4. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end,
 - a. on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
 - b. to establish it and to uphold it
 - c. with justice and with righteousness
 - d. from this time forth and forevermore.
 - 5. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.
 - E. True peace
 - 1. Delivered by this child born, this son given
 - 2. **Peace – shalom (Heb)**
 - 3. Delivered by the Prince
 - a. The executive officer of the Godhead
 - 4. But not a Prince who enforces by the dictatorial boot
 - a. But one who by love transforms the selfish and wicked and hateful human heart
 - 5. It is this Prince of Peace that we focus on in this final message for Advent

IV. **True Shalom**

- A. First, the peace in view in this passage, this shalom, is not the mere cessation of conflict and of war
 - 1. Not the bare suppression of violent expressions that is the most we can hope for in the merely human sphere
- B. True shalom is that and much more
 - 1. A settled satisfaction, and confident rest that all enmity and antagonism has been resolved
 - 2. A sense that, from the inside out, a genuine sense of well-being pervades the human personality
 - a. And extends through all relationships
- C. Todd Wilson: ... not simply psychological ease but a holistic sense of fulfillment, well-being, and flourishing.
- D. Cornelius Plantinga summarizes the message of Isaiah:
 - 1. They dreamed of a new age in which human crookedness would be straitened out, rough places made plain. The foolish would be made wise, and the wise, humble.
 - 2. They dreamed of a time when the deserts would flower, the mountains would run with wine, weeping would cease, and people could go to sleep without weapons on their laps.
 - 3. People would work in peace and work to fruitful effect. Lambs could lie down with lions.
 - 4. All nature would be fruitful, benign, and filled with wonder upon wonder; all humans would be knit together in brotherhood and sisterhood; and all nature and all humans would look to God, walk with God, lean toward God, and delight in God.

5. Shouts of joy and recognition would well up from valleys and seas, from woman in streets and from men on ships.
 6. Plantinga: The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call shalom.
- E. And in this text the Prince of Peace will accomplish it two ways
1. Two ways which human efforts have always sought but never been able to attain
 2. He will end war
 - a. He will break the rod of the oppressor
 - b. He will destroy the artifacts and instruments of war once and for all
 3. And He will rule in a way that promotes universal well-being, safety, security, and human flourishing
 - a. Increasing His government and peace
 - b. Ruling with justice and righteousness – which human actors can never seem to approximate
- F. And He will do it heart by heart
1. And then by extension
 - a. Relationship by relationship
 - b. Church by church
 - c. Society by society
 2. **Isaiah 11:9** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain;
 - b. for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.
- G. This won't happen all at once
1. Wilson: ... the way he will put our world to right, a process of peace-making that Christians believe began at Christ's birth but won't be completed until Christ returns in glory to consummate what he has begun.

V. **Peace with God**

- A. The Prince of Peace begins to act to bring shalom with the most significant of all relationships
1. With our relationship with God
 2. And it is this relationship where we are most in denial
 - a. Most people have no sense that apart from the grace of God, we are enemies with God
 - b. That God is opposed to us; that He is against us
 3. **Jeremiah 50:31** (ESV) — 31 “Behold, I am against you, O proud one, declares the Lord GOD of hosts, for your day has come, the time when I will punish you.”
 4. Or that God is angry – wrathful – against those who act as if He did not exist
 - a. **Romans 1:18** (ESV) — 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

- B. But the Prince of Peace has come!
1. And through the life, death and resurrection of the Prince of Peace, the enmity with God has been dissolved
 2. **Romans 5:8–9** (ESV) —
 - a. 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
 - b. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.
 3. **Romans 5:1** (ESV) —
 - a. 1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
 4. **Romans 5:10** (ESV) —
 - a. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.
- C. There is no hope for peace anywhere apart from peace with God
1. Peace with God by stop being in denial
 - a. By stopping our incessant presumption that we're ok without God
 - b. By stopping our prideful attempts by which we presume we can earn favor with God
 - c. By stopping our refusal to consider God in our thinking
 2. But peace with God by faith in Jesus Christ
 3. **Romans 3:23–25** (ESV) —
 - a. 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
 - b. 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,
 - c. 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith....
 - d. Propitiation! – a wrath-removing sacrifice!
 - e. Redemption received by faith – by trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ
 - f. His life, His death, and His resurrection
- D. Do you have this peace with God?
1. There is no hope anywhere in the world apart from peace with God

VI. **Peace Within**

- A. Once you have peace with God, then you can have peace within
1. Peace in your own soul!
- B. The NT makes the distinction between peace *with* God and the peace *of* God
1. Peace within is the peace of God
- C. **Philippians 4:6–7** (ESV) —
1. 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
 2. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- D. What are your anxieties?
 - 1. What are your cares?
 - 2. What are your worries?
 - 3. What wakes you up at night?
 - 4. What do you fret over?
- E. When you have peace with God, ask Him, by prayer and supplication
 - 1. And He will give you the peace of God
 - 2. Peace in your heart
 - 3. **1 Peter 5:6–7** (ESV) —
 - a. 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,
 - b. 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.
 - 4. Cast your cares on Jesus – and you will have peace in your hearts
- F. **Matthew 11:28–30** (ESV) —
 - 1. 28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
 - 2. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
 - 3. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”
 - 4. Come to Jesus – the Prince of Peace
 - a. And He will give you rest in your souls
 - b. Peace within

VII. **Peace in the Church**

- A. And of course, if you have peace with God, and peace within
 - 1. That will carry over to peace in the church
 - a. Peace with your brothers and sisters
 - b. There is not need for enmity with brothers and sisters when each one, in humility, has cast himself or herself on the mercy of Jesus
- B. **2 Corinthians 13:11** (ESV) —
 - 1. 11 Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.
- C. **Romans 14:17–19** (ESV) —
 - 1. 17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
 - 2. 18 Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.
 - 3. 19 So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.
- D. **Colossians 3:14–15** (ESV) —
 - 1. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
 - 2. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.
- E. **2 Timothy 2:22** (ESV) —
 - 1. 22 So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

- F. **Hebrews 12:14** (ESV) —
 - 1. 14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.
- G. Relentlessly, the NT calls the church to be people of peace
 - 1. **Matthew 5:9** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

VIII. **Peace in the World**

- A. And as the church expands – marching across the spans of time and space
 - 1. So that God gathers those from every people, tongue, tribe and nation
 - 2. Then peace will expand in the world
- B. Because the peacemakers will proclaim
 - 1. Not a counterfeit peace
 - 2. But genuine shalom
 - a. Which can only come through the Prince of Peace
- C. And when the church has been functioning as the church – it has been a force for peace in this world
- D. **Ephesians 2:11–22** (ESV) —
 - 1. 11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—
 - 2. 12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.
 - 3. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.
- E. The issue in this text is critical – even to such occasions as the war in Israel, and the rapid antisemitism which is rampant in our corrupt college campuses these days
 - 1. The issue is Jew v. Gentile
 - 2. There is only one solution to the enmity between Jew and Gentile
 - a. Any Gentile!
 - b. Arab Gentile
 - c. European Gentile
 - d. American Gentile
 - e. Any Gentile
 - 3. That solution is Jesus, the Prince of Peace!
- F. Ephesians 2 cont.
 - 1. 14 **For he himself is our peace**, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility
 - 2. 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that **he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace**,

3. 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.
4. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.
5. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.
6. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,
7. 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,
8. 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.
9. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

IX. Conclusion

- A. This baby born, this son given
 1. This Wonderful Counselor
 2. This Mighty God
 3. This Everlasting Father
 4. This Prince of Peace
- B. Is the only way we can have peace with God
 1. Peace within ourselves
 2. Peace in the church
 3. And peace in the world
- C. The Prince of Peace will prevail
 1. And if we truly want world peace
 - a. We will do everything we possibly can do
 - b. To spread the gospel of peace to every corner of the globe
- D. When Russians and Ukrainians embrace the Prince of Peace
 1. There will be no more war in Ukraine
- E. When Jews and Palestinians embrace the Prince of Peace
 1. There will be no more war in Israel-Palestine
- F. When African-Americans, and white Americans, and Hispanic-Americans, and Asian-Americans embrace the Prince of Peace
 1. There will be no more racism
 - a. No more violence in the streets
 - b. No more destruction in our cities
- G. When Democrats and Republicans embrace the Prince of Peace
 1. There will be no more rancor in our political discourse
 - a. No more hateful lies and accusations
- H. And the Prince of Peace will prevail
 1. And we – in this church and every genuine church of Jesus – will do everything we can to proclaim the gospel of peace to every people, tongue, tribe and nation
 2. Not just abroad

- a. But right here in this community
- b. In this state
- c. And in this nation