



Camrose United Church  
Sunday December 6, 2020  
Advent 2: Peace

Rev. Helen Reed, Diaconal Minister

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***Candle Lighting***

*We light the Christ Candle, aware of God around, among, & within us. In a moment of silence, we prepare ourselves to celebrate God's presence in our community.*

***α Gathering Song: ♪ VU19 Kindle a flame  
Kindle a flame  
to lighten the dark  
and take all fear away.***

***Call to Worship<sup>HR</sup>***

Through the season of Advent, God's voice calls us forward.  
Through the stories of then and now and yet to be  
we get ready for the coming of God

Advent... **a story of preparation**

Advent... **a story of waiting**

Advent... **the start of a time of settling into**

**God's truth and God's promise**

Advent... **a journey into our faith, our history, God's love.**

**Let us journey into Advent together**

***Illuminating Advent:***

Through our Advent journey,  
we bring the light of Christ with us.

Each week, this light reminds us  
of the blessings of travelling together  
in faith and in life.

Last week, Christ's light showed us Hope.

*(light the Candle)*

This week, Christ's light moves to the candle of Peace

*(light the Candle)*

In a world filled with broken relationships,  
broken hearts and broken spirits  
**we are called to build God's dream of Peace**  
We are called to offer God's Peace to all  
**sharing care and love where ever it is needed**  
We are invited to accept God's Peace  
**to see God's light before us**  
**on our unknown journey ahead.**<sup>4</sup>

**✠Hymn: ♪ VU#7 Hope Is A Star** (Verse 2 )  
**Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,**  
**Giving a promise of safety and worth.**  
**When God is a child there's joy in our song.**  
**The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,**  
**and none shall be afraid.**

***Scripture Reading(s):***

**Isaiah 40:1-11** Common English Bible/Inclusive Bible  
Comfort for God's people

Comfort, comfort my people!  
says your God.

2 Speak compassionately to Jerusalem,  
and proclaim to her that  
her compulsory service has ended,  
that her penalty has been paid,  
that she has received from the Lord's hand  
double for all her sins!

3 A voice is crying out:  
"Clear the Lord's way in the desert!  
Make a level highway in the wilderness for our God!"

4 Every valley will be raised up,  
and every mountain and hill will be flattened.  
Uneven ground will become level,  
and rough terrain a valley plain.

5 The Lord's glory will appear,  
and all humanity will see it together;  
the Lord's mouth has commanded it."

- 6 A voice was saying: "Call out!"  
And another said, "What should I call out?"  
All flesh is grass;  
all its loyalty is like the flowers of the field.
- 7 The grass dries up and the flower withers  
when the Lord's breath blows on it.  
Surely the people are grass.
- 8 The grass dries up; the flower withers,  
but our God's word will exist forever.
- 9 Go up on a high mountain, messenger Zion!  
Raise your voice and shout, messenger Jerusalem!  
Raise it; don't be afraid; say to the cities of Judah,  
"Here is your God!"
- 10 O, Lord God, you come with power,  
And rule with a strong arm!  
You bring your reward with you,  
and your reparation comes before you.
- 11 Like a shepherd, you feed your flock,  
Gathering the lambs and holding them close,  
and leading mother ewes with gentleness.

### **I wonder...**

If we are to be the comforters or the comforted?  
Which hills and valleys we are to smooth out so that we are  
all travelling the same road?  
Where God's breath is blowing life into us if we will just  
breathe in?  
If we are raising our voice enough to show that we are God's  
caring people?

### ***Prayer for awareness and Grace:***<sup>HR</sup>

Holy One,  
In the busy-ness of December,  
it can be hard to find Peace.  
In this time of preparation to recognize  
the anniversary of your coming to be among us,  
we find ourselves in a wilderness,  
an unfamiliar place  
where we should find solace  
and a place to hear your voice.  
Instead, we scatter ourselves away from your word  
instead of gathering around it,  
we have left behind those whom you invited into your story.

**Forgive us, God**

Slow us down.

**Help us to consider who we push aside.**

**Show us who waits for our invitation to come in.**

Help us to consider how we offer Peace to your world.

Help us take many moments to think about  
your story, your love, your peace.

**May we hear Peace and be Peace  
on this journey together.**

**Amen.**

### ***Words of Assurance***<sup>HR</sup>

The words of the prophet remind us  
that God speaks to us through  
different people and different places in life.  
That God can breathe life into the weary,  
That when we hear and live God's word  
Peace is possible,  
Peace of mind, Peace in our soul, Peace in God's world.  
Let us remember God's promise  
and the hope of faith that we know.  
**God is with us. We are never alone**  
**Thanks be to God.**

## **Mark 1:1-8 Common English Bible**

### *Beginning of good news*

1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, God's Son, happened just as it was written about in the prophecy of Isaiah:

*Look, I am sending my messenger before you.*

*He will prepare your way, a voice shouting in the wilderness:*

*"Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight."*

### *John's preaching*

4 John the Baptist was in the wilderness calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. 5 Everyone in Judea and all the people of Jerusalem went out to the Jordan River and were being baptized by John as they confessed their sins. 6 John wore clothes made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey. 7 He announced, "One stronger than I am is coming after me. I'm not even worthy to bend over and loosen the strap of his sandals. 8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Scripture is our song for the journey, passed on from Generation to Generation to guide and inspire.

**God calls us to be doers of the word  
and not hearers only.**

### ***Message/Reflections***

Our scriptures today are connected by the words of the Prophet Isaiah

*Look, I am sending my messenger before you.*

*He will prepare your way, a voice shouting in the wilderness:*

*"Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight."*

Many, many years before John the Baptist – who became known as fulfilling this scripture – there was another voice to be reminding people to follow God's ways.

These words of Isaiah were written to a people who were living in exile but also a people who would be returning home from exile. They offered a reminder of the comfort that God continually offered in times of great trial. They offered a reminder that the people had a role to play in making space for God, and in accepting the words and ways of God to bring them out of exile and into new living.

The people were already in a wilderness and so we might see that the comfort that is offered does not stop the waiting and wandering in unfamiliar places. These words shared today, encourage the listeners to look forward to what is to come.

Every week, we say words from our United Church Song of Faith that encourage us to be 'doers of the word', and the words of Isaiah encourage us to do what needs to be done to move forward.

The words of the Prophet Isaiah share the wisdom of God and ask the people to dive in to do what needs to be done to prepare God's way.

In the reading from Mark, we hear again that call to be doers.

Again, these words are written to a people in trouble. There were revolts against Rome, the seat of the Emperor was empty as those who would take it were assassinated, the soldiers were scared and scary, in fear people looked around villages that now contained Jews and Gentiles with neighbours fearing and blaming one another. In the midst of the turmoil tensions are high.

Mark invites the words of Isaiah forward into life and uses them to identify Jesus who would try to raise the valleys and level the hills. He uses John the Baptist to show that being the prophet for God can be hard work, that people don't listen and don't want to hear. But John also shows us the

awe and dedication it takes to look to God's way which is different and difficult and that we must give ourselves to it.

On this Peace Sunday, we hear words that were spoken centuries apart, but to people who were living in times of great challenge and trouble. We hear words that were meant to inspire and guide through the problems into future possibilities. We hear words that God walks beside us, speaks to us through unlikely people, and breaths life into us when we are ready to let ourselves go and let God take over.

We, too, find ourselves feeling as though we are being exiled – although, honestly, our few months is nothing compared to the 150 years of Judah in Assyria. We, too, find ourselves feeling as though we are battered from all sides as people slip into distrusting each other, blaming each other, protecting themselves in uncertain times.

Those who work in Health Care are feeling as though they are on the frontline with an invisible enemy and that they have been abandoned as everyone else backs away to protect themselves or put their head in the desert sands.

Our Peace has been shattered. How do we bring it back?

Isaiah tells us to level the travelling field. He said that God offered wisdom to know how to make things equal... some may have to rise to the occasion, some may have to stoop to the occasion, but if those people could do that, it is entirely possible that something amazing could happen, that we could feel the breath of God move over us and through us.

How can we rise or bend to bring peace?

John the Baptist, doing the best that he could with what he had, recognized that there was one with better skills than he, that it was important to recognize that and create space for that person to do their work well, that by doing so we could feel God's spirit to move over us and through us.

How can we step aside and honour the skills of those who can do this work, and support them as they point us to peace?

We bring Peace by being Peace. We recognize that blaming people isn't helping. We recognize that the scared need to be comforted, that the sick need to be healed, that we need to assure each other that we **can** make decisions that take us out of the chaos and violence, that we **can** flatten the pathway forward so that all can travel it together.

We bring back Peace by focussing on others, on God; by loving our neighbours – friends, family and strangers; by realizing that when we spark a fight there is no peace, someone will get hurt.

We bring back Peace by realizing that we don't need the fanciest anything, we just need each other.

We bring back Peace by being God's doers. Not just hearing that we should love, but loving all people the best that we can, the way that we want to be loved, the way God loves us. Together, with God beside us, we can do this.

**☞Hymn: ♪ Let There be Peace on Earth**

### ***Offering Invitation<sup>HR</sup>***

We are called to be the voice  
that makes a way for God in the wildness of life.

We do this by offering what we can so that others will  
experience the presence of God through us.

Sometimes we can offer a card of welcome or remembering.  
Sometimes we can offer hospitality  
with a quiet place to just 'be'

Sometimes we can share our treasure so that God's church  
can help those in need whom we may never meet.

Let us share the light of God's Peace in the world  
as we what we can today.

## 🎵 Music

### ***Prayer of Dedication:***<sup>HR</sup>

God of Peace,

**We respond to your voice today**

**with these gifts of treasure and promises of time.**

**May all that we offer be enough**

**to shine the light of Peace into your world today.**

**Amen.**

### ***Offertory:*** 🎵

*Tune: "Good King Wenceslas" Sandra Jenkinson, Zion U.C., Sunridge, Ont. Gathering O/C.E. 2016/17 (Year A) Music for Worship page 54. Used with permission.*

**Here our gifts we offer, God,**

**thankful for your blessings.**

**Take them, Spirit, use them to**

**spread the hopeful message.**

**That Christ comes to bring to us**

**life for all creation.**

**May our gifts help bring to all**

**love and transformation.**

### ***Prayers of God's people, for God's people:***<sup>HR</sup>

🎵VU#34 Come Now, O God of Peace

**Come now, O God of peace,**

**We are your people,**

**Pour out your spirit**

**That we be one body.**

Holy One,

on this journey toward the fulfillment

of your promise to be with us,

to guide us, to show us the way,

we offer our prayers for all of your people.

**As we look around the world you have given us,**

**we see that there are many opportunities**

**for Peace to be created.**

**We pray for Peace.**

We hold in our prayers  
All those who experience violence in their living.  
Those for whom home is not a safe place.  
Those who have no home to go to.  
Those who have watched their loved ones  
be injured or killed because of  
the actions and decisions of others.

♫VU#34 Come Now, O God of Peace  
**Come now, O God of peace,**  
**We are your people,**  
**Pour out your spirit**  
**That we be one body.**

We hold in our prayers  
All those who hold the power to create peace:  
Leaders in the world who can choose  
to find peaceful ways to reduce conflict.  
Followers in the world who can choose  
to follow peaceful ways to reduce conflict.  
Teachers, First Responders, Care givers,  
Peace-keepers, Peace-makers

♫VU#34 Come Now, O God of Peace  
**Come now, O God of peace,**  
**We are your people,**  
**Pour out your spirit**  
**That we be one body.**

We hold in our prayers  
those for whom silence has become  
less than peace-filled  
For those isolated for the health and safety  
of themselves, their family and friends,  
For those who are missing the presence of  
simple rituals and traditions such as  
Christmas cookies and pies.  
For those who grieve loved ones

and the silence of missed heartbeats is deafening.  
May your peace seep into their silences,  
filling them with love and hope.

**We pray for ourselves.**

**That we may never take for granted the power of Peace  
That we will accept the gift of your presence  
and the guidance of your love to be Peace in the world.  
That we will remember that the prayers of our hearts  
must be joined with the prayers of our actions  
May we become the doers of Peace in your world,  
rejoicing in your light and love with us always.  
Amen.**

***✠Blessing***

May the God of love  
inspire us to live in harmony with one another.  
May the God of Peace fill us with  
Hope and joy in believing,  
so that we may abound in Love  
by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

***Changing the Christ Candle:***

The light of Christ, shining into all the corners of the earth,  
showing us where we are and where we are meant to be.  
The Spirit of God. Breathe it in...and know that God is with  
us wherever we go.

***✠Sending Song:***

**♪ MV#222 May the Peace of God Be Your Peace.**

***Acknowledgements***

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