

# Peace on Earth, Goodwill to All.

## Isaiah 11:1-10

The Second Sunday of Advent is the Sunday of peace. Our Advent litany is a litany for peace, and it's very apt that it is as we hear our Bible readings today:

In Isaiah 11, we hear the promise of the Messiah who will mediate peace in a land beset by war.

In Romans 15, we hear that the gospel is for both Jew and Gentile. The gospel is God's radical word of peace to bring hope and peace for all... especially those who had been separated. Our connection to the first Advent candle of hope in these verses...

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

*Romans 15:13*

And in the gospel reading we hear John the Baptist's call to all to repent, and to turn to the one who alone brings the peace of God for all who turn back to God.

Today we are going to focus on the story in Isaiah 11.

But first, some background. God had chosen Mt Zion



with its temple as the place where he would meet his people, where he would call people from all lands; from the east and west; from the north and from the south to meet him at the holy place, to be blessed by God and his peace.

Later in Isaiah, we hear God speak words of gathering people together:

Do not fear, for I am with you;

I will bring your offspring from the east,

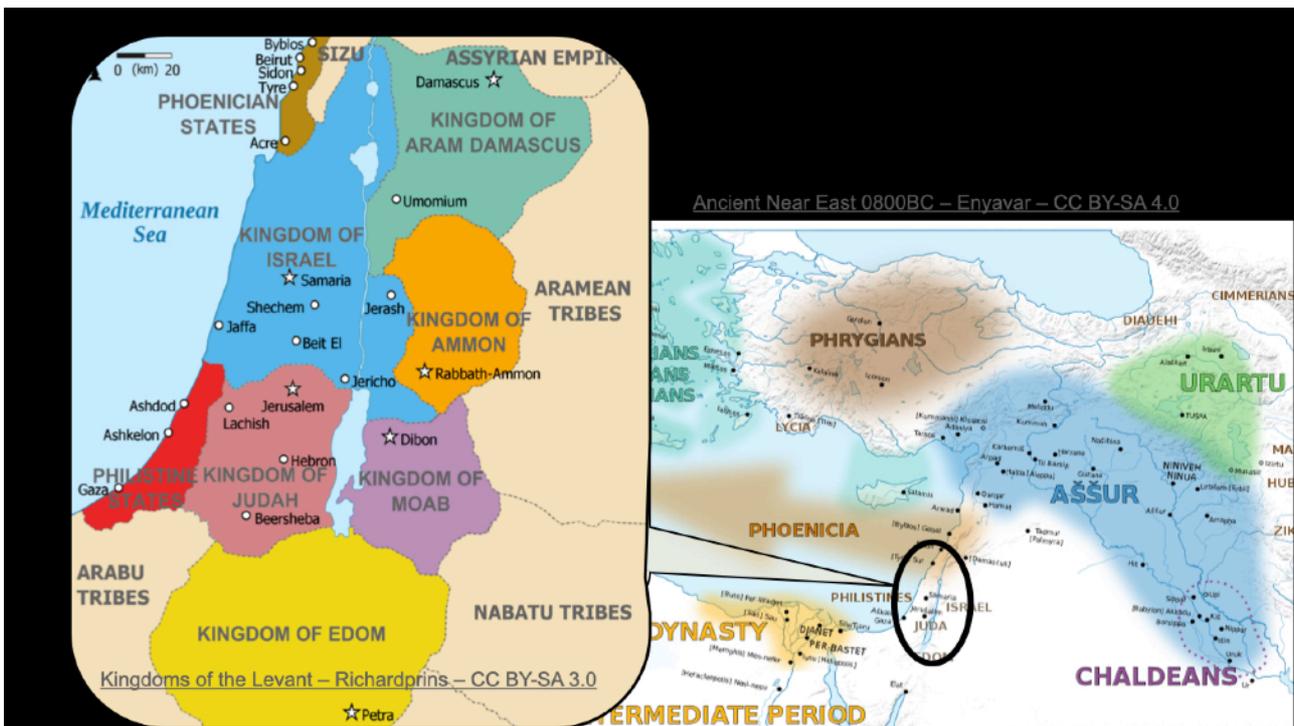
and from the west I will gather you;  
I will say to the north, "Give them up,"  
and to the south, "Do not withhold;  
bring my sons from far away  
and my daughters from the end of the earth.

*Isaiah 43:5-6*

From all the corners of the earth, God will call and gather people. He himself will bring peace, and this peace will be shared by the people, and the people will share it with each other actively.

The problem was that the people of Judah turned their backs on God. They didn't need God (the Original Sin), and went from being a community of faith to being a community of politics and power. They fell into idolatry. In doing so, they set themselves against God, breaking the covenant relationship of love.





The setting for the call of Isaiah in mid 700's BC is that of Judah, God's chosen nation, and its holy mount Zion. Judah, where the temple is under siege from neighbouring Syria, and the northern kingdom of Israel.

Eventually these warring nations were themselves besieged and subdued by the powerful Assyrian empire, which then is used by God in his judgment on sinful Judah.

God used the Assyrians to judge the people of Judah who no longer worship God, and who have turned from him and who practice idolatry, and have corrupted Zion and its people.

The little nation of Judah, where Isaiah the messenger prophesies the Word of the Lord, then, is hardly a place of peace. It's a place of sin and selfishness, of idolatry, fear, hatred, turmoil and war. Mmm, kinda reminds me of much of today's world.

But as we read these early chapters of Isaiah, we also find amazing promise and hope from God, too. There is promise of One who will bring peace — and not just then, but to our world today too!

In amongst the ugly and stark reality of sin, the destruction it causes, and the lack of peace and hope, God speaks three very clear words of promise into this scene and context. Listen carefully.

Promise 1:

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.

*Isaiah 7:14*

The promise of rescue in the coming of the Saviour. As Christmas approaches, does this sound familiar?

Promise 2:

The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness —  
on them light has shined.

For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**.  
His authority shall grow continually,  
**and there shall be endless peace.**

*Isaiah 9*

As Christmas approaches does this sound familiar?

Hope for peace in the coming of the promised one, the Messiah. The people in Judah, living in darkness, will see the light of God's rescue and peace.

And the third promise which is our Old Testament text today —

Promise 3:

A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse,  
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

The promised one of God from the line of Jesse (and we'll hear all about this line of Jesse again in a couple of Sundays) will bring peace in amazing ways:

The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze,  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,  
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

They will not hurt or destroy  
on all my holy mountain;

*Isaiah 11:1-10*

They're probably familiar verses to you because we hear them at or around Christmas. The same words of promised peace said back in ancient Judah and said to you and me, to us today.

The amazing imagery announcing the coming Saviour,  
the Prince of peace!

Hear it again:

The wolf shall live with the lamb.



The leopard shall lie down and live at peace with the little goat.

The calf and the lion led by a little child.



The cow and the bear grazing together, and not just then but in generations to come.



The lion, the ox, the little child, and the venomous asp. They shall not harm nor be harmed. For they will live in peace on my holy mountain.

What amazing imagery! But what amazing peace God, in the coming of Christ, has for people!

Peace in the face of the deepest grief at the death of a loved one, or in facing death!

Peace somehow despite the deepest desire unmet.

Peace in the word of forgiveness which breaks down the barrier of brokenness.

Peace in the hug of love; in the listening ear and the heart of care.

Peace in the invitation to be welcome.

Peace in a church with different understandings of ordination through a shared love for the gospel, a shared commitment and confession of faith that the Word of God alone is the authoritative Word, a shared listening that together we are called to be messengers to share.

For that is who we are. People called to peace through faith in Christ, and to be messengers of that peace for others. For not everyone knows this peace. For not everyone knows Jesus.

Peace for us! Peace in our ears and in our hearts and in our lives.

Peace in our voices, from our hearts, in our deeds!

Jesus comes, restores us to peace with God by giving his life on the cross, drawing all peoples to himself as people flock to see the babe in the manger, and the true man and true God on the cross, who when he is lifted up draws all people to himself to receive peace in forgiveness.

Peace on earth. Good will to all. Here in Christ is peace. Here in Christ is the message.

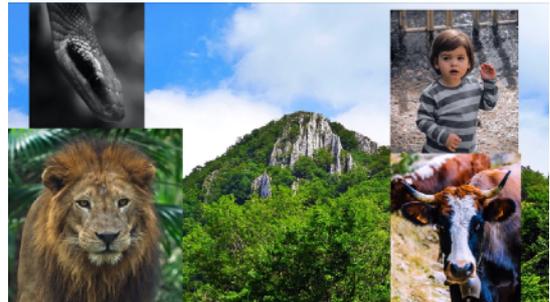
And here in Christ, we are all the messengers.

Who is God calling you to bring his peace to, this Advent and Christmas? Don't let this be a time when hurt and hate is made worse. Bring the peace of God as God's messenger.

You and I have been gathered by the Spirit to come to this place, this meal of peace. Jesus says in Luke 13 when he speaks of the heavenly banquet:

“Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God.”

*Luke 13:29*



You and I are called to be God's Christmas messengers of peace...

Invite people from every direction and place in your life to come to the manger; to come to God's grace feast of peace...

We share a moment now of silence for us each to reflect on the gift of peace in the coming of Christ, his restoring us to peace with God, and the call we have to be messengers of this peace this Advent, this Christmas, and as the Church prepares to come together in Synod early next year. And after this time of silence, we'll pray.

We pray: for peace in the world; for peace in our communities; for our church; for peace in our homes and for peace in our hearts. Come, Lord Jesus, come into this weary world, and give us your peace. Amen.

And the peace of God which passes beyond human understanding WILL guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Video of the service including the above address: <https://youtu.be/X3RGKi9mvK0>*