



December 18, 2022 – “Peace Possible” – Isaiah 26:1-9

OPEN

I want to share sincerest thanks for all the giving of late: regular donations, (allowing for gift cards to WCES), Facilities Fund, Adopt-a-family Hampers, WCPC Christmas Blessings donations, and many personal gifts to encourage others. Thanks to those took part in **Neighbourhood Christmas** last week.

Cape Breton-based group the Barra MacNeils do a wonderful rendition of [Here We Come A Wassailing](#). To wassail means “to enjoy yourself by drinking alcohol with others.” Wassailing involves hot mulled cider, ale, or spiced wine. It also means “to go from house to house at Christmas time singing carols.” The term comes from the Old Norse salutation *ves heill* meaning “be in good health”. ([Oxford Dictionary](#)) Interestingly, in OT Scripture we see an important **salutation** which communicates “peace” or “blessing”.

Shalom is one of the most important theological words in the OT...occurs over 250 times...“shalom” means “absence of strife”...[but] “Peace”...means much more than mere absence of war...Completeness,, wholeness, harmony, fulfillment, are closer to the meaning. Implicit in *shalom* is the idea of unimpaired relationships with other and fulfillment in one’s undertakings. (*Theological Wordbook of the OT*, R. Harris, G. Archer, B. Waltke, Moody Press, 1980, 931)

“Gideon built an altar to the Lord there and named it Yahweh-Shalom.” (judges 6:24). Jerusalem comes from the term *Yireh* (“abiding place”) and *Shalem* (“Place of Peace”). Today we consider **peace possible!**

At Christmas, we are drawn to Luke 2:14 where we read the angelic announcement, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” Our Advent series is **The Promise of Christmas**. So far, we have considered three themes:

Hope of the OT saints for the coming Messiah, reflected in our hope of Jesus second coming.

Faith as seen in Mary and Joseph who opened themselves fully to God’s grace and guidance.

Joy of the shepherds as they heard and discovered Jesus. Were you *surprised by joy* this week?

DIG

To ponder **peace** today, let’s turn to an ancient Hebrew song, found in **Isaiah 26:1-9**. As we must do with “The First Noel” (originally nine verses!), we will look at only part of this song (which includes Isaiah 25).

It is a song that is oriented to God’s future deliverance of Israel. It contrasts the end of cities of the nations (see 25:3) with the blessed future of Jerusalem. And this song offers us an insight into the result of peace.

[A] Peace produces stillness – vv. 1-4

In this section we are promised “perfect peace” (v.3) which is literally read, “peace, peace”. Where do we find peace? [Still, Still, Still](#) is an Austrian Christmas carol and lullaby, based on a folk melody from Salzburg. Music and the words capture the peacefulness of the sleeping Christ child.

*Still, still, still, He sleeps this night so chill. The Virgin's tender arms enfolding,
Warm and safe the Child are holding. Still, still, still, He sleeps this night so chill.
Sleep, sleep, sleep, He lies in slumber deep. While angel hosts from heaven come winging,
Sweetest songs of joy are singing. Sleep, sleep, sleep, He lies in slumber deep.*

But there is something far greater than the peaceful sleep of a baby in view when God promises to establish peace in our lives. Jesus, Himself, is our peace, we are told in Ephesians 2:14. In what way?

Jesus has fully and forever dealt with the guilt of unrighteousness. Because of the cross, grave, and resurrection He can impute to us His righteousness, allowing our restless souls to be stilled. People are struggling and straining for stillness and peace in their lives, but often do so in chaotic ways.

A Florida woman has sued the makers of Velveeta Shells and Cheese, claiming the dish takes too long to make. The Kraft Company markets its microwaveable cups as “ready in 3.5 minutes” but Amanda Ramirez says it takes longer. The \$5m...lawsuit claims the time advertised does not include preparation time - opening the lid and sauce pouch, before adding water and stirring. Kraft Heinz Foods Company described the lawsuit as “frivolous”. [read more](#)

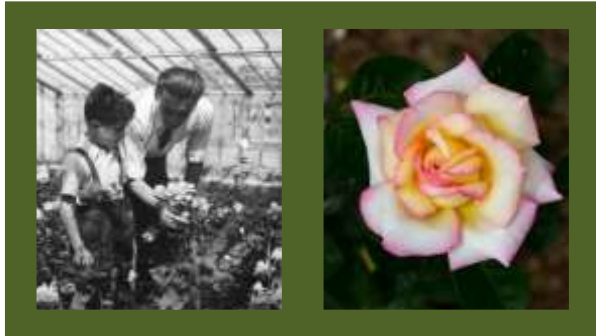
Any pursuit of peace that does not build upon a relationship with Jesus Christ will ultimately fail. As Augustine put it, “you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” (**Confessions**)

[B] Peace produces security – vv. 5-7

As Jesus was preparing to leave this world, He instructed His disciples to anticipate unrest. Living for Jesus is not congruent with our fallen, broken world. In John 14:27 Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

In our text, we are told that God is powerful in battling those who oppose Him (vv. 5-6). And when God is powerful against those who are unjust, those who follow Him are blessed – their way becomes smooth or level (v.7).

Francis Meilland was a French horticulturist who was concerned about a looming German invasion. During 1935 to 1939 he was working on a new variety of rose which has large yellow or cream petals, slightly flushed with crimson-pink on the edge. It was also hardy, vigorous, and fairly disease resistant. Because of his fear of war, he shared cuttings in Italy, Turkey, Germany, and to the US on the last flight available before France was invaded. In 1945 Meilland wanted to honor British Field Marshal Alan Brooke for his part in France's liberation by naming his new rose after Brooke. Brooke responded that his name would be forgotten but that the rose be named "Peace". [read more](#)



Jesus is the promised Prince of Peace. Without question, this role will take on greater glory in God's eternal plan. There will be an ultimate deliverance for God's people from this corrupt and chaotic existence. However, there is also a protective aspect Jesus gives now.

"No weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, declares the LORD." (Isaiah 54:17)

[C] Peace produces seekers – vv. 8-9

Peace helps us move beyond stillness and security to be seekers. There is a sense in which God's peace is an *ending* (to our longings) but also a *beginning* (to greater, but healthier longings). Do you remember Simeon? Luke described him as righteous, devout, and *"waiting for the consolation (same term used for Holy Spirit – Comforter) of Israel"*.

When Simeon saw Jesus, he glorified God (see Luke 2:29-32) for the fulfillment of Messianic hope. God had promised redemption in Christ in passages like Isaiah 40:1, "comfort, comfort my people."

Notice that for Simeon and any other follower of God, His redemptive peace not just an end to longing, though it is certainly that.

Coming to know God's forgiveness pushes us forward in faith. The Holy Spirit creates a healthy discontent which drives us forward in dependence upon Him. This is reflected in our text – note the ways in which Jesus followers seek God: eagerly, desiring (v.8); longing, diligently (v.9).

REFLECT

Look at this powerful painting by Iranaeus Yurchuk. He was born in Ukraine during Worle War II but grew up in the US.



This painting captures an "all is well" scene of the nativity, set amidst the carnage in the Ukraine. Do you know the "all is well" of God's peace in your life, regardless of what is happening around you?

Ponder peace by listening to the powerful Christmas song, [All Is Well](#)

*Master, speak Thy "Peace, be still"
To the tumult of the will;
Walking on the restless wave,
Come and save.
Wind and wave obey Thee, Lord:
Speak, O speak the calming word;
O command the tossing will:
"Peace, be still."*

- Amy Carmichael