

Advent #4

12-19-2021

J.V. Trautwein, Pastor

Celebrate (Introduction)

“Candle and cross are inextricably connected on the fourth Sunday of Advent. Between a lovely tribute to the little town of Bethlehem and Mary’s magnificent song of praise, the letter to the Hebrews reminds us in no uncertain terms that Christ’s advent is for “the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” It is the kind of tension in which the church always lives as when in Holy Communion – with high delight - we proclaim the Lord’s death.”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“Comfort, Comfort Now my People”](#)

Psalmody: Luke 1:46b-55

““My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.

For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

⁵⁰And his mercy is on those who fear him
from generation to generation.

⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm,
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts,

⁵²he has put down the mighty from their thrones,
and exalted those of low degree;

⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent empty away.

⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his posterity forever.”

Hymn of Praise: [“The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that binds us, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.”

1st Reading: [Micah 5:2-5a](#)

2nd Reading: [Hebrews 10:5-10](#)

The Gospel: [Luke 1:39-55](#)

Hymn of the Day: ["O Come, O come, Emmanuel"](#)

(The third week's Angel Tree results will be sent later today)

The Message: ([Video Link](#))

It's the fourth Sunday in Advent during which we just lighted the fourth advent wreath candle. In our tradition we celebrate it as the candle of peace. Peace when we hear it most likely brings to mind the absence of war. But of course I know within my lifetime there were only a few moments in time when the absence of war barely existed. Probably worldwide it never existed during my 84 years. Throughout history war has been a trademark of man's existence. This brings me to the thought that although one of man's desires is always for peace. Then why is there a propensity for war? Why are there endless wars since in most cases there is the basic desire for peace within the common man?

Why war when the basic desire is for peace? Peace is too often overwhelmed by the need for power and the motivation of greed by those who are in power. It is through war that those in power gain more power and the rich gain more wealth. The few benefit greatly during war while in many cases the great majority are left to suffer its consequences. But even though there is that stated desire for peace it seems to be in a constant battle with the need for one to get his or her own way regardless of what it may take whether it be for the good of all or not. It is the internal battle between good and evil which we all may experience from time to time.

When peace is only seen in the absence of war there will never be peace. But still the longing for peace exists and can be seen even in the ancient prophets. The Prophets longed for a life of peace or the absence of war as seen in Micah's prophecy that Israel would become a kingdom again and live a long life of peace under a God sent leader. "And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace." This was to be the long awaited and hoped for messiah and as Isaiah related, "The Prince of Peace."

The prophets' concept of the messiah was out of the need to have the power and might of an earthly kingdom. Their concept of peace was that a powerful new kingdom would create peace. How often have we heard that but yet even with the most powerful nations in history peace never followed but some of the most violent wars were the result. In a very real sense the prophets' perceived messiah never happened yet it was hoped that with the birth of Jesus he had come.

Everything seemed to line up as to Jesus being that chosen messiah. Just listen again to the prophet Micah, "But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient of days," Jesus of course is recorded as being born in Bethlehem. It was thought that the messiah would come from the lineage of David which was Joseph's Lineage. Mary was considered to be a virgin and a virgin was to bear the messiah Isaiah prophesied, "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel." Isaiah also proclaimed that the messiah would have the ground work prepared for His ministry by a forerunner who was John the Baptist. "See I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you."

To the Jew of that day, with this background and the fact that he performed impossible miracles, Jesus could very well be that earthly messiah who would fulfill Isaiah's prophesy,

"The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shined.
³Thou hast multiplied the nation,
thou hast increased its joy;
they rejoice before thee
as with joy at the harvest,
as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.
⁴For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
thou hast broken as on the day of Mid'ian.
⁵For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.
⁶For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government will be upon his shoulder,
and his name will be called
"Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."
⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom,
to establish it, and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and for evermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this"

Surely this had to be the long awaited messiah who would not only establish the new kingdom of Israel but bring it lasting peace. In reality Jesus did not turn out to be the messiah that the prophets longed for, that is the king of the new kingdom of Israel bringing lasting peace. In fact He once stated, "Do not think I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." He also predicted the further downfall of the Jews in predicting the destruction of the Temple. History certainly and emphatically proves that He didn't establish an earthly utopia which peace dominated life nor was that ever His intent or seemingly the intent of God. The Nativity and the incarnation were not to erase man's free will.

The reason for the incarnation was to be that messiah of a spiritual life being lived within a world of freedom to choose between good and evil. This spiritual world does not dictate for it is a motivational force of love as it interfaces within the world. If strong enough, it can bring peace when there seems to be none. In light of man's nature the motivational force of love must continually be active and alive.

Why then is Jesus referred to as the Prince of Peace when He never intended to wave a magic wand in order to establish earthly peace. Maybe it can be understood in His appearance in the closed room after His resurrection. His greeting to His disciples was "Peace be with you." Prior to this He clearly indicated the distinction of the peace which He came to proclaim and the peace among warring people. John records Jesus telling his disciples what was to come for Him as well as the pronouncement of God's continual presence through the Advocate, the Holy Spirit. With this he gave this pronouncement, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives." This peace is an inner peace which can only come through a life of living in and by God's love that he proclaimed.

This inner peace is when we are free from the products of bitterness, hate, revenge, and guilt. It is when we can sit down and be at ease with ourselves and feel the freedom of being alive with a sense of joy. It is the peace we find when we are able to share our love with each other and even with life around us. It is that peace which overcomes us as we celebrate the message of the angel on Christmas Eve while in the darkened surroundings, holding our candles and singing "Silent Night." This is the inner peace of the Prince of Peace. But this inner peace can happen throughout our lives when we take the time to free ourselves in order to do this. You never know when it will occur. Oddly enough I found a glimpse of it on a post on Facebook. It is a post which has been around at Christmas for a couple of years. It is not a post of just an individual or individuals but a post between a young woman, softly playing her guitar, quietly singing almost as a lullaby, a Christmas song from "A Charlie Brown Christmas," "Christmas Time is Here." She is not singing it to herself or to someone else but to her beloved little dog who sits entrance as they both show a deep affection for each other. Although it may not be between humans it portrays a deep sense of inner peace for those who watch it for it was present between the two of them. It was almost as if this inner peace of love crossed the boundary between humans and the animal kingdom

As I said, this inner peace can happen when you least expect it but it is always there if we choose to experience it. It is this inner peace that we seek through our preparation for the Nativity during Advent and which makes the celebration of the angel's message so important in our lives. It is this inner peace which gives us the comfort during times of trial and distress. It is this inner peace which gives us the will to make a difference in this world. "It is the peace of God which surpasses all understanding" and which give us the joy of living God's love through the Nativity;

Anthem: ["Someday At Christmas" Jackie Evancho](#)

Offering*: ([On-Line giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

Ever loving Father, in the midst disaster, factionalism, and confusion we come to you not only for healing and comfort but for a peace which gives our soul rest and hope. May this peace lead us to live our lives in actively showing forth your love to those who are in need of life's essentials as well a hope in despair. Bring us patience during this time of another surge of the pandemic so that we may continue to live our lives with restraint and compassion. Thus let us take all the precautionary measures not only to protect us but all those around us. Let us understand your presence is with us during this time of preparation for and the celebration of the Nativity.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, the Elshafei family, the Fultz family, Dotty Gibson, Kraig Greff, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Charles Larsen, Donna Mayhew, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Della, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein,, Wyatt Lee Wolf, Pastor Jack,
We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make His face shine upon you;

The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters

Live on knowing God's love,

The joy of living this life of love,

And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["Blessed Be the God of Israel"](#)

Announcements

All services are being held indoors in the sanctuary. Masks and social distancing is required.
Community Caroling Night at the Outdoor Chapel. Sunday December 19th. 6:00 PM

Christmas Eve Candlelight-Carol family Service – 7:30 PM

Please note that Masks are required at all services

Add an angel to the Angel Tree by giving a donation to The World Hunger Appeal. Either give on-line https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291 Or send directly to either address below.

*Offering and World Hunger Contributions to be sent to

Robert Brackbill

10274 Raleigh Tavern Lane

Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church

9122 Sybert Drive

Columbia Hills

Ellicott City, MD 21043

<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291