

## **“Christmas Peace”**

### **Isaiah 2:1-5**

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Today, we lit the candle of peace on the advent wreath. This is the first Christmas in almost thirty years that the candle of peace has been burning while our nation is at war. Perhaps no candle on our wreath holds more significance for us this year.

Peace is a major theme in the Bible. Our text today reflects this and it is one of many that does. Why is peace mentioned so often?

This is what God wants. According to Isaiah, He wants us to live in a world of harmony and security, not chaos and fear. He envisions a world where “swords are turned into plowshares, spears into pruning hooks and nations do not train for war.”

I like this image and the God who inspires it. This is the kind of world I want to live in, too, and I believe the potential exists.

This dream and hope raise two questions that must be answered this morning, though. **Why doesn't peace exist in our world and how can it?**

We do not live in peace and harmony because there is an evil influence in this world that wants the very opposite. This evil manifests itself in many ways, selfishness, jealousy, hatred, suspicion, abuse, exploitation, dishonesty, disrespect, intolerance, corruption, control, arrogance, pride, a lack of discipline and a lust for power. It lurks in the heart of every person hoping to find someone who will turn order into chaos, good into bad and security into fear. What is tragic is that all of us are susceptible and at times contribute to the problem.

Strangely enough, Paul's words in Romans 7:15,18,19,21,24,25 have disturbed and comforted me. *“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not, but what I hate, I do. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do. No, the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing. So, I find this law at work. When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*

I am disturbed that good people can do bad things but comforted to know that even the most devout disciples have struggled and still do. How I appreciate Paul's honesty.

This brings us to the second question. **How can we promote peace and bring about harmony?** Heed Isaiah's advice. Live according to God's Word and rely upon His power.

*“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways so that we may walk in His paths”* Isaiah 2:3.

Peace will be accomplished when people study and live by His Word. Peace and brotherhood will be the result of arranging values, relating to people and handling temptations, problems, challenges and enemies His way instead of ours. Isaiah believed this and so do I.

However, the awareness of right is not enough. Even Paul knew what he should do, but failed. The other key ingredient is power, His power. We must rely upon God not

only for enlightenment, but also power. We cannot resist the temptation to do wrong and be evil. We must have help and lots of it.

Recently I spoke to a businessman's employees. Actually, it was more of a question and answer session. They asked a lot of questions that morning, but none more important than, "How do you handle difficult people?" I shared with them the Pendulum Principle. Every encounter with man must be balanced by an encounter with God. If not, our lives will get out of sync, and so will the world.

I have no doubt that the God who wants us to walk in harmony and help each other through this life will provide what we need in order to do so. He will grant wisdom, patience and love in abundance. You only have to look to Jesus, the Prince of Peace, to know this.

On September 11, a man fell while running from the World Trade Center. He looked behind him and saw the buildings collapsing and the smoke billowing. He was in shock and unable to move. Another man stopped and knelt beside him. He carefully helped this man to his feet with encouraging words and a helping hand. Both fled to safety. What was so unusual about this? One was a Pakistani Muslim and the other was a Hasidic Jew.

This is the kind of world I want to live in. This is the kind of world God wants us to live in and will help us if we let Him. I hope we will.