

Christmas Eve – Year A - December 24, 2010 – Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY

Based on Isaiah 9:2-7 – written by Pastor Paul Horn

“From Heaven Above to Earth He Came... to Bring Us Peace.”

Aaron, Abner, Abraham, Adam, Adan, Ahmad... Every day, expectant parents around the world ask, “What should we name the baby?” And so they read books like “The Very Best Baby Name Book Ever” and “Biggest Book of Baby Names.”

Mary and Joseph didn’t have to go through all that. Gabriel told them what to name the baby: Jesus, which means, “He saves.” But even before the angel announced his name, this little baby had already been given a name. 700 years before he was born the prophet Isaiah gave him several names. And every one of them fit perfectly.

This evening we heard the prophet share with us those names: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Tonight we’ll focus on one of those names, Prince of Peace, and we’ll see how he came from heaven above to earth below *for us*, to bring us lasting peace.

“And he will be called... Prince of Peace,” Isaiah says. **“Every warrior’s boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.”** The soldiers’ boots and bloodstained clothing could be burned in the fire because they would no longer be needed. When the Messiah would come there would be perfect peace.

But wait a second! Jesus did come! He was born more than 2000 years ago! So where is this perfect peace? Our Soldiers of 3rd Brigade 1st Infantry Division deploy in a few days. There are still civil wars in Africa. The Israelis and the Palestinians were firing rockets at each other this week. Who knows what Iran and North Korea are up to? There are still conflicts on the streets; gang activities, murders, rapes, child abuse filling the headlines. And even in our own homes there seems to be little peace: bitter fighting between spouses, parents and children, sickness and surgeries, and financial troubles that leave us feeling anything but peaceful. And we may feel like shouting at Isaiah, “You have no idea what you’re talking about!”

John Lennon imagined a world with no conflicts and perfect peace. But God has never promised a world like that. The LORD, speaking through Isaiah, wasn’t talking about a physical or political peace or a world without problems. He was talking about peace with God. Christ Jesus had to come at Christmas because of your sins and mine. Because of our sins, we were at war with a holy God, a God who must pour out his wrath against unholy sinners. Because Christ Jesus came at Christmas, this allowed for Good Friday. We cannot gaze into the manger without looking up at the cross. Through Christ’s death on the cross, God’s wrath was poured out, but not on you, not on me, on his Son Jesus. Because Jesus died in your place, God has forgiven each and every one of your sins, the sins of fighting and warring against each other. Because Jesus took God’s wrath on himself in your place, you appear holy and perfect to him. And so we are no longer at war with a holy God. We have perfect peace. The perfect peace of knowing that you and I are free from our sins, free from death and our graves, and free from the fires of hell. We have the perfect peace of knowing that heaven is ours. No matter what turmoil we must go through before we get there, *this* peace can never be taken away.

Isaiah says, **“Of the increase of his... peace there will be no end. He will reign... over his kingdom... upholding it... from that time on and forever.”**

We may fight to win a war and establish peace in some country, but as soon as we leave, some new enemy can quickly rise up and destroy that peace. But that's not the case with God. Just as God has no beginning, so he has no end. Jesus always was, always is, and always will be. And so, because ***"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever,"*** (Hebrews 13:8) his work will always last. The peace with God he won for us will never be lost.

In fact, the peace he's established can only increase. His peace will increase as we grow in our faith and learn more and more to put our trust in him and in his promise ***"that in all things God works for the good of those who love him..."*** (Romans 8:28) His peace will increase as we let go of the petty arguments and the worthless stuff we cling to and realize that heaven itself is ours. His peace will increase as we share the message with others—the message of the manger and the cross and why he came from heaven above. And finally, his peace will increase and become perfect peace with no more war, or suffering, or struggles or pain, when he takes us to heaven forever.

Dear friends, amid the hustle and bustle of this holiday season, remember this little baby's name: ***"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given... And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*** Remember that your sins are forgiven. Satan's been crushed. Hell conquered. Because Jesus came from heaven above, you have a perfect victory in him! So no matter what burdens weigh you down, rejoice ***"as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder,"*** because one hundred years from now, whatever troubles you today won't matter. You will enjoy the perfect, eternal peace that he brought when he came from heaven above to earth below. Amen.