

Advent Home Study:

Peace in the Prophets

Sunday



“My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes. They shall live in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, in which your ancestors lived; they and their children and their children’s children shall live there forever; and my servant David shall be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary among them forevermore. My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

-Ezekiel 37:24-27

Covenant

With our second week, we will look at what the Bible teaches us about peace. In this passage, we find that everlasting peace flows from our covenants with God. A covenant is like an alliance where two or more come together and agree on things that will be of mutual help. In the beginning of the Bible, covenants show us how the relationship began with God and the people. Here, in the prophets, covenants describe a deepening of that love and connection.

Monday

“We look for peace, but find no good; for a time of healing, but there is terror instead. We acknowledge our wickedness, O LORD, the iniquity of our ancestors, for we have sinned against you. Do not spurn us, for your name’s sake; do not dishonor your glorious throne; remember and do not break your covenant with us. Can any idols of the nations bring rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Is it not you, O LORD our God? We set our hope on you, for it is you who do all this.”

-Jeremiah 14:19b-22



Healing

We remember today that peace and healing go hand in hand in scripture. Peace doesn't just mean safety or a lack of war. It speaks to wholeness, well-being, feeling secure and tranquil. So, the healing that we need is not just an end to violence, but also a disruption of sin. Just as the land needs the rain to be healed and restored, so, too, do we need God's help to soothe our brokenness. God is our remedy and our deliverance.

Tuesday



“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 days. Therefore the Lord shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. 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.”

-Micah 5:2-5a

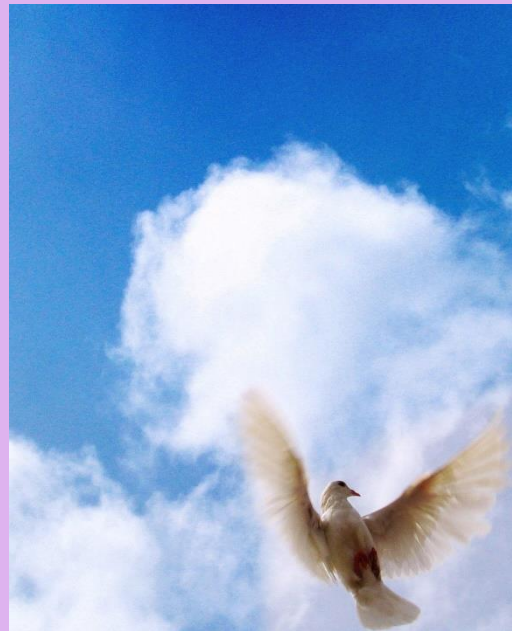
Flock

Nowadays, when someone calls you a “sheep,” it’s more likely an insult than a compliment about your spiritual life. But in this passage that looks forward to the coming Messiah, the people of God are described as a flock – one people, held together and cared for in God’s strength and in God’s majesty. When we stand as one people under one shepherd, then we know peace – not a peace that comes from the power of a war, but a peace that flows from God’s throne. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said that, “peace must be dared.” Part of that daring comes in trusting the shepherd to make a way in uncertainty and to keep the flock together.

Wednesday

“Instead of bronze I will bring
gold, instead of iron I will
bring silver; instead of wood,
bronze, instead of stones, iron.
I will appoint Peace as your
overseer and Righteousness as
your taskmaster. Violence shall
no more be heard in your land,
devastation or destruction
within your borders; you shall
call your walls Salvation, and
your gates Praise.”

-Isaiah 60:17-18



Righteousness

This passage talks about the hope for God’s restoration of the people of Israel after their time of exile. Instead of violence, devastation, and destruction, the people will know peace, righteousness, salvation, and praise. Let’s zero in on, “righteousness as your taskmaster.” It would probably be clearer to say that the people will be driven by righteousness or ruled by righteousness. Continuing on our theme of peace as encompassing all of our wholeness, righteousness is a lot more than just being right (or self-righteous!). Righteousness includes justice, moral virtue, honesty, righteous deeds, truthfulness, and vindication. True righteousness undoes violence, injustice, and sorrow as it inspires us to praise God.

Thursday



“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’”

-Isaiah 52:7

Messenger

We talk a lot about messengers in Advent. After all, “angel” means “messenger of God.” But this passage isn’t talking about divine beings. It’s talking about people of faith: prophets and faithful followers who hope in God’s promises. Speaking peace and making peace are two ways that we can preach the good news wherever we are. Let us marvel at the good news of God’s salvation – whoever the messenger might be!

Friday

“For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”

-Isaiah 9:6-7



Endless

This passage has a lot of unending words in it: everlasting, continually, endless, forevermore. More than this – it’s talking about perfect peace and perfect justice. So often, our consciousness strains at notions of infinity. How could something truly be unending? We are so used to finding limits and shortcomings because that’s all we’ve ever known in this world. But everything of God breaks through our limitations and partial understandings. God is endless, Christ is endless, the Spirit is endless, and peace will be endless.

Saturday



“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the LORD for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

-Isaiah 55:10-13

Led

This is a great passage to wrap up “Peace” week and lead us into “Joy” week since it features both ideas! The passage starts out by reminding us of God’s power and presence in every day of our lives. God sends not just cold fronts and warm fronts, but also messages and miracles that guide our paths and shape our world. This prophecy was given to the people when they were in exile. It is a promise that they will have celebration and that God will lead them back (home) in peace. But this isn’t just about faithful following – the word used for leading here is more like a procession, a parade! Not only will the people come home to freedom, to joy, to religious liberty, they will also carry on with some pomp and celebration when they go! This leading, this miraculous homecoming is prophesied to be so great that even nature will join in the song and dance! If the holiday season is hard for you, remember the hope of this leading – the peace that God prepares for all of us.

- Sunday
 - “Jordan River” by Samantha Villagran
- Monday
 - “Star Rain in the Desert” by Diana Juncher, Atacama Desert, Chile
- Tuesday
 - “Sheep” by Christian Nielsen
- Wednesday
 - “Pigeon Flight” by Manu Mohan
- Thursday
 - “Pine Trees, Lake, and Mountains” by Armand Niculescu
- Friday
 - “The Prince of Peace” stained glass window at St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church in Charleston, SC; Henry E. Sharp, 1872
- Saturday
 - “Tree of Life” stained glass by Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933) at Browne Street Community Church, Queens