

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, Wash
December 25, 2009**

‘Names of the Messiah’ – Christmas Day

Isaiah 9:6

His Name Shall Be Called... Prince of Peace!

- 1. He brings us peace for eternity*
- 2. He brings us peace for today*

Hymns: 62 – 61 – 67 – 56 – 58 – 36 –

Litany: 42, 34, 64 – Closing: 57

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

Isaiah 9:6 –

To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called... Prince of Peace.

Gathering together after a birth is an extremely peaceful time. One peaceful fact is that the labor is over. The stress and work of delivery are done. It's time for mother to relax and rest. It's time for guests to come quietly peer over the edge of the bassinet and watch the baby sleep. You can now see what this new resident of the world looks like. Perhaps you can even see the chest move up and down as he or she sleeps peacefully.

On this Christmas morning, we would like to capture that peaceful feeling. The buildup is over. The anticipation of Advent has given way to Christmas Day. The waiting candles of Advent no longer are lit; only the pure white Christ Candle in the

center of the wreath burns today. Hopefully, this will be a day when you have little planned in the way of work and activity. It's time to feel peace.

How fitting it is that we are completing our sermon series this morning on the names of Jesus from Isaiah 9:6 with the name ***“Prince of Peace.”*** We have heard about Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and today... ***“Prince of Peace.”*** **As we contemplate the peace that Jesus the ChristChild has come to bring, let's consider:**

- 1. He brings us peace for eternity**
- 2. He brings us peace for today**

1 – We live in a rather warlike world. War is far too common. The war against terrorism continues. Many U.S. soldiers are in Iraq today who wouldn't mind spending Christmas with their loved ones and families. But nations are not the only ones who are at war:

- Many husbands and wives are at war with each other. They hurt each other. Marriage vows are broken.
- Parents and children war against each other. Disobedience is displayed. Shouting matches are held. Tension and stress are felt.
- People in our society hate and hurt each other. They have jealousy over things they wished they had.
- Others hate and hurt each other because of differences in social status or skin color.
- Even in a church, members can war against each other when they're supposed to be united as

God's people. A congregation can be filled with disharmony and conflict.

We could talk a long time about the various ways that people are at war, but to understand why this is true we must know what the root conflict has been. Where does the concept of war come from? It's spelled out clearly in certain passages of Scripture:

- *"The sinful mind is hostile to God." (Romans 8:7)*
- *"Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear." (Isaiah 59:2)*
- *"The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain." (Genesis 6:5,6)*

God's Word teaches us that the root problem causing all the trouble and conflict was SIN. Our first parents declared war on God. They sinned against God and became his enemies. Because of this, we have been conceived and born in sin. Therefore, it's natural for us to be at war with God. If you don't think that this is true, the proof is our sinful behavior every day. This war that we have declared on God has separated us from God and earned us nothing but condemnation in his eyes! It's also the reason that we exhibit a warlike attitude in our relationships with others.

Enter the Prince of Peace! The solution appears as we peer over the edge of – not a bassinet – but a manger. The solution

comes in the peaceful sight of a sleeping baby this morning! Do you see him?

However, we must realize today that the magical event which brings us real peace does not happen in our Christmas celebration. This is a wonderful day, to be sure, but we must look at other passages of Scripture to see why we are so joyful today in Jesus' birth! Listen to how these verses talk about PEACE that we have forever:

- *"He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)*
- *"(Christ Jesus) himself is our peace, who has made the two (God and believers) one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility." (Ephesians 2:14-16)*
- *"Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)*
- *"God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them... God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:19,21)*

- “*Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests!*” (Luke 2:14)

We are at peace with God because we flash forward to a cross. There God the Father waged war against his own Son whom he damned in our place so that through faith in him we might be justified. We could not fight this battle over sin and death and win the victory ourselves. Only the Prince of Peace could. Because of him, we are no longer God’s warlike enemies. We can have peace forever in heaven because of Christ.

The Hebrew word for “peace” is SHALOM. It’s a very involved word. Shalom means that all is right with a person. In its full context, it can mean perfect safety, perfect health, perfect completeness, a perfect life! The basic meaning is “peace.” Jesus has given us this gift that will be ours forever! The verse after our text says, “*Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.*” Our status with God has changed forever because of the Messiah’s ministry. His death and resurrection give us the hope of heaven.

Vivid pictures of this abound in the way of worship before the Messiah came. Imagine coming to the house of the Lord in the OT and not being able to enter it! You had to stay outside. Only the priest could approach God’s altar. Now we are free to come into God’s sanctuary. You probably didn’t even give it a second thought this morning.

Another noteworthy difference about their worship was the concept of sacrifice. Can you imagine coming to God’s house

and seeing animals die and be burned? What a vivid picture of what the Savior would do for us! Can you imagine explaining this to your young children? What a grim reminder of the seriousness of our sin and what would need to be done to have true peace with God! Yet today our altar stands empty. We never use it for what altars are intended for. Jesus has fulfilled the sacrifice for sin completely.

Another vivid picture is the Temple curtain at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion. You may remember that when Jesus died on the cross, the Temple curtain, which closed off the Most Holy Place of the Lord and was inches thick, was torn from top to bottom. Do you see the symbolism of this in light of what had just happened? **Peace with God!** No more separation! It would almost be hard for an Israelite to fathom that he or she could now approach God in ways that had liturgically been condemned before! But Jesus, in paying the debt of sin, broke through those barriers.

This is why we can sing in our service today:

<p>Hark the herald angels sing Glory to the newborn King <u>Peace on earth and mercy mild</u> <u>God and sinners reconciled</u></p>
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The reason we must emphasize this today is because there have been huge misunderstandings in our world about the peace that the Prince of Peace brings us. This “simple” teaching has had false teachings corrupt it, for example some say:

1. The ultimate peace Jesus has come to bring is peace from war and racism. People hear the words “Peace on earth, goodwill toward men” and think this is about world peace. Or another

passage that has been often quoted is from Isaiah 2, *“They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”*

Peace from war and racism are wonderful, desirable things! But that verse is merely an earthly picture of the peace that Christ achieves for us in heaven. His sad prediction about *“wars and rumors of wars”* in Mark 13 will come true, just as he said.

2. God will make Jerusalem the capital of the world in an earthly Millennium. After all, God does say in Isaiah 65, *“I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.”* But in the verses that precede this one, the Lord says through Isaiah, *“I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”* Those who would like to see this world capital will be disappointed, for God speaks often about his “Jerusalem” which is the new heaven and earth that he will create at the end of time.

**Don't sell your true peace short!
Don't exchange it for anything else! You
have true peace forever in your Prince of
Peace from sin, death and the devil! It
will last forever!**

2 – Some of you may hear about this news today of “peace forever” and say wistfully, “Oh, I can't wait for that day when I will have this peace!” But can we say anything about peace for today? Or does it only lie in a distant future?

Dear friends, the effects of the peace that the Prince of Peace brings don't begin at Judgment Day. They begin when a person comes to believe in Christ as their Savior. We have this peace this morning. How?

I'd like you to hear the words of a man who was not at peace, King David in Psalm 38: *“Because of your wrath there is not health in my body; my bones have no soundness because of my sin. My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly. I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning. My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body. I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart.”* Have you ever felt this way over your sin? Have you ever been “crushed” by it? Have you ever lost sleep over it? Have you ever felt that you would not be forgiven until you did some penance? For the repentant sinner, there is total peace that we are assured of! This changes your life because your conscience is silenced!

This peace will change your view on life as well. Can you characterize your life as “peaceful?” Have you had other things so dominate your life that things haven't been so peaceful? Have you felt the “Christmas rush” this year?

Two artists once set out to make a picture representing perfect peace. The first painted a canvas depicting a carefree boy sitting in a boat on a little lake without a ripple to disturb the surface. The other

painted a raging waterfall with the winds whipping the spray about. On a limb, overhanging the swirling water, a bird had built its nest, and sat peacefully over her eggs. Although she was so close to the falls that she could feel the spray, yet she sat there protected from all outside attacks. The first picture was only stagnation; the second was peace. This signifies the peace we have in a “whirlwind world” that rushes around us. Our anchor will always hold firm in Christ, who keeps us centered and at peace.

But there’s more. A final way this changes your life now is by this peace being extended to those around you in your world:

- Have you been at war with your husband or wife? As the love and peace of God fills your heart this Christmas, you will be moved to show love and peace to them, forgiving them, and experiencing the healing God has for your marriage.
- Have you been at war with your parents? Or your children? Peace that you have experienced at the manger and the cross can now be extended!
- Have you been at war with others in your church? God’s peace to you will lead you to have peace with them as forgiveness and love is shown.
- All humans who have been at war can learn to love, forgive, and serve each other as they are given the gift of peace with God by the Prince of Peace.

So, dear Christians, rejoice this Christmas morning because God has sent the Prince of Peace. He brings us:

- 1. Peace for eternity**
- 2. Peace for today**

Make the Prince of Peace the center of your life and home. Experience the peace that surpasses all human understanding. And have a truly peaceful Christmas Day! Amen.