

Prince of Peace

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ, fellow believers, gathered at the manger to worship the baby who is God, the infant Savior, the almighty Creator, wrapped in human flesh and in swaddling clothes,

When the Lord inspired the prophet Isaiah to record the words of Isaiah chapter 9, 700 years before Jesus was even born, he gave us some of the most beautiful, some of the most meaningful descriptions of and names for Jesus that we have in the entire Bible. **“To us child born, to us son given.”** God has given Jesus to us as the greatest gift we could ever receive. And everything Jesus does, he does for us. He came from heaven for us; he was born for us; he lived for us; he died for us; he rose for us; he opened heaven for us; he is for us. And **“the government will be on his shoulders.”** The government is his Church, God's people, you and me. And instead of forcing us to carry him and bear his weight, instead Jesus in love carries us. He bears us on his shoulders; he carries our sins to cross; he bears our burdens. He carries us.

Then there are four names Jesus is called – four marvelous names. He is **“Wonderful Counselor.”** Everything Jesus does is wonderful. He's a wonderful Savior, especially when he counsels us and comforts us with the gospel of full and free forgiveness of all our sins. He is our **“Mighty God.”** This baby in the manger is God! And he's mighty! He's powerful; he's a fighter; he's a warrior; he's a champion. He fought and won the battle against Satan that we could never win. And he is our strength when we are weak – he is our Mighty God. Jesus is the **“Everlasting Father,”** which is an unexpected name for the person of the Trinity that we call the Son. But Jesus is fatherly toward us; he loves us like a father. There's a lot of deadbeat dads out there who don't know how to be a father. But Jesus is the perfect father who protects and takes care of his children – just like the Good Shepherd, who protects and takes care of his sheep. Jesus is a father to us, forever. He's everlasting; he's here to stay; he's not going to leave, like some fathers do. He will always, always be there for you as your Everlasting Father.

For the last several years here at St. John's, my Christmas sermons have been based on this passage. We have focused on this Son given to us, who carries the government on his shoulders. We have unwrapped these marvelous names Isaiah calls him, one name – one sermon – at a time. This morning, after several years, we finally make it to the last name for Jesus recorded in this passage. **Is 9:6.** Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

A prince, the way we use the word, is the son of a king; he is royalty; he is monarchy; he is heir to the throne – someday he'll be king. A prince lives in a palace; he lives in luxury; he has the best food, the best clothes, the best education, the best everything. A prince has servants who wait on him and subjects who adore him – that's what it means to be prince. Probably the most famous princes of our time are Prince William and Prince Harry of the British royal family. They are the sons of Princess Diana and Prince Charles, who himself is the son of Queen Elizabeth. William and Harry are princes. I believe that William, as the older brother, is the second in line to the British throne, after only his father Charles. So that means someday Prince William will be king of England.

In what sense is Jesus a prince? Jesus is the royal Son of God the Father, the king of the universe. Jesus is a heavenly monarch; he lives in the palace of heaven, with angels who wait on him, with subjects (Christians) who worship and adore him. We sing, “Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.” Jesus is our Lord and our King. He rules over his kingdom which is the Church, and over his creation which is the universe. He's a king. And yet here he's called a prince, the son of a king – the Son of God.

But what makes this prince different from earthly princes is that our prince doesn't just stay in heaven; he comes to us. He doesn't live in posh pomp and ostentatious luxury; he comes here to us, to live among us. Just think about the difference between living in heaven and living here on earth. There the angels worship him; here people want to kill him. There he's got cherubim and seraphim that serve him and do his bidding;

here he's got Roman soldiers torturing him. There he's on the throne at the right hand God; here he's nailed to a cross, with a sign above his head that actually mocks him as king. There he lives in the palace of heaven; here he's born in a barn and placed in an animal feeding trough. This is what our prince left in order to come and save us.

And did it willingly. Living this human life of suffering and sorrow, sickness and pain – he did it willingly. It was not beneath him. Php 2 says it best: **“Being in very nature God, [Jesus] did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage”** – like, “I’m the Son of God; I’m not going down there, to do that, for those people!” No, **“Rather, he made himself nothing, by taking the very nature of a servant” (6-7)**. The prince becomes the servant. The prince of heaven leaves his throne on high to die on a cross for the sins of the people that nailed him there. It’s outrageous! But it shows you the love of this prince for you. Look at what he’s willing to do for you! He stoops to this, to death on a cross, to save you, because he loves you! This is your heavenly prince.

He’s called a prince elsewhere in Scripture. In the Old Testament book of Ezekiel it says, **“I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them” (34:24)**; and later it says, **“David my servant will be their prince forever” (37:25)**. And it’s not talking about literal David. King David was a type or a foreshadowing of Jesus, who is the Son of David and sits on the throne of David. Scripture draws a close connection between Jesus and David. So here in Ezekiel it says, **“My servant David will be prince among them”** – and that’s talking about Jesus, the prince. And then in the New Testament, in Acts 5, Peter says, **“God exalted [Jesus] to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins” (31)**. That tells you what Jesus’ job is as our prince. He proclaims law and gospel, to bring us to repentance and to forgive our sins, so that we can live in his kingdom in heaven forever. But we will not live in his kingdom in heaven forever unless we repent of our sins, and he forgives us. But that’s exactly what our prince has come to do; that’s what he wants to do; that’s why he was born for us. So, dear Christians, trust in this little baby, lying in the manger. Put your faith in him. He is the royal Son of God, who left his home in heaven to come here to save you. He is your Savior, and he is your prince.

Furthermore, he is the Prince of Peace. We all long for peace. If your nation is at war, you long for the war to be over; you long for peace! God uses the end of a war as a picture of his perfect peace. In verse right before this one (so in Is 9:5), it 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.”** That means it’s like soldiers coming home from a war, and they’ve got their camo and their tactical gear, and they throw it all into the fire, because they don’t need it anymore. The fighting is done; the war is over; there’s peace! Or you think of Is 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” (2:4)**. We’re going to turn our weapons into farming tools – that’s a picture of peace! The problem is we still have wars, and we always will have wars, until end of time, because sinful people fight against each other. Nevertheless, God uses this emotional picture of the end of a war to describe a much greater peace – his perfect peace, peace between God and man. In the verse right after our passage (so Is 9:7), it says, **“Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.”** Jesus brings us endless peace. In fact, the only way for us to have endless peace in our hearts is to have Jesus – because only Jesus can give us real peace.

There’s a Hebrew word that you might know; it’s the word shalom. Shalom means peace. Hebrew speakers greet one another with this word; it’s a very meaningful greeting: “Shalom, peace be with you.” In English, it can be spelled as Salem. The church I grew up in was called Salem. Maybe you’ve been to a church called Salem. It means peace. The city of Jerusalem ends with the word Salem, because it’s the city of peace – not the literal city, because Jerusalem has seen plenty of wars over centuries; but the New Jerusalem, in heaven – that’s the city of peace, real peace.

As we close out 2020, we all long for peace. This year has seen so much trouble, so much heartache, so much uncertainty – many among us have lost loved ones or friends; others have lost jobs; it seems like we've all lost something. We long for peace. Only Jesus can give us real peace – not the end of war, not the end of Covid, but peace with God. At his birth the angels sang, **“On earth peace to those on whom his favor rests” (Lk 2:14)**. On night before he died, Jesus said to his disciples, **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you” (Jn 14:27)**. On night of his resurrection, Jesus greeted his disciples, **“Shalom!” “Peace be with you!” (Jn 20:19)**. Jesus is the Prince of Peace; he comes to bring us real peace. And how does he do that? Listen to what else Isaiah says about peace. In Is 53 he writes, **“The punishment that brought us peace was on him” (5)**. To give us peace, Jesus took our punishment upon himself, on the cross. Then comes Is 54: **“Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed” (10)**. So not even the hardships you've faced this past year, or the hardships you're afraid you'll face this next year, can shake God's unfailing love for you or remove his covenant of peace with you through Jesus. Paul said that nothing **“in all creation”** would **“be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:39)**. That's real peace! Christ Jesus loves you; he forgives you; he died for you; he rose from the dead for you; someday he will raise you from dead; and he will bring you to eternal life. That's real peace! And you have all of that in the manger with this Christ child. You have peace from the Prince of Peace.

If you're feeling like you just need some peace, if you're longing for peace, but you don't know where to find it, look no further than the manger. With Jesus as our Prince of Peace, how could we not have peace? What could possibly vex our anxious hearts? Sin can no longer plague us; Christ has already paid for it all. Satan can no longer accuse us; Christ crushed him on the cross. Death cannot scare us, even with Covid and mortality on everyone's minds – death cannot scare us, because Christ has defeated death. So what else is there that can trouble us or steal away our peace? We have shalom; we have the Prince of Peace! Don't let anything come between you and this baby; don't let any fears, any frustrations, any setbacks of any kind rob you of the peace that is yours through the Prince of Peace.

The words of Isaiah chapter 9 have been treasured by God's people for hundreds, no thousands, of years because here we see the very heart of God – his gift to us, a baby, his own Son, the prince. Put yourself at the manger, and look upon this baby, and be at peace. **Is 9:6**. Amen and amen!

Isaiah 9:6

⁶For 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 Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.