



Sunday, December 13, 2020

The Third Sunday in Advent

Rev. Dr. Michael R. Fitzgerald, Senior Pastor

“A Throne for the Prince”

Isaiah 9:6 – King James Version

Good morning! It's a great day to be in God's house! Amen?! There's a beautiful crowd here, and we extend a special thank you to those streaming with us. You're absolutely part of the congregation today, along with those listening in the parking lot by FM signal. There are lots of ways to be the church of the living Savior, Jesus Christ, and we're grateful to be here and meet our God together. I'm thankful today we have hope—the hope of Jesus Christ. This hope became part of my family as my wife Gwen's mother, Willa Mae Foster, went to heaven this past Wednesday. Giving evidence to the word she knew Jesus, and we know she's in the arms of the Lord. I'm so thankful Gwen had the opportunity to be with her in that moment of going home. She brought Gwen into the world, and Gwen walked her to gate. Mrs. Foster's service will be this Thursday in Maryland with family only due to the restrictions. My prayer for you is that you will lift us up that day; I'll be conducting her funeral. It's great to hear children in the church today! Families, thank you for coming back with your children. We certainly want to protect them and give them a safe environment.

As we go through this Advent season, we're preparing our hearts, minds, and souls to celebrate a King who came to be among us. He came in the lowliest way—a baby born in a manger. Why a manger? I believe God was indicating to the world that Jesus came in the lowliest way because there was no one that God wanted to gloss over or miss in the coming of the Christ Child. He came to the lowliest person among us because He came in the lowliest way as a Savior. We're thankful for a Savior who came to give us life, Amen! We gather today in that celebration. Certainly, we enjoy a holiday with trees, presents, lights, family, etc.—there's nothing wrong with that. But we're here today to keep the proper mindset and perspective of what this season is all about—the coming of a Savior to the world, and we're never to lose Jesus as the centerpiece of His own birthday. The world has largely kicked Him out of His birthday, and we, the remnant of God's people, are to lift Jesus up as Lord and Savior and not lose Him in the celebration of His own birthday. Do that in your homes, in public, and with your family as they come to be with you. We who know Jesus as our Savior are especially mindful that over top of “happy holidays” and “season's greetings” this is a holy time of year as we celebrate Jesus Christ coming to us. We honor and worship our God for this unexplainable, ineffable, awesome way that God sent Himself, that God sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. It was a plan only God could create and devise that His Son, a part of Himself, God Almighty, would come to a manger bed so we could have forgiveness and eternal life. Sadly, much of the world misses that sublime message by looking at the mundane—simply seeing lights, trees, presents and missing Jesus. We want to celebrate a living Savior this year!

In last week's sermon, I led us in the study of the one name God gave to His Son—Jesus. Jesus is the one earthly name that God gave to His Son. We know before Jesus was born in the manger, He gave the name to Mary and Joseph so there would be no discussion or dissension of the name of the Son of God. We know His name is going to stand forever and ever. Hebrews 13:8 says “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.” We see Jesus revealed in the Book of The Revelation. His name will always stand for all eternity. His name was recorded by the gospel writers over two thousand years ago. His name is at the heart of our worship today. I reminded those at the 8:30 a.m. service if you're approached by anyone who says we're going to worship God and not mention the name Jesus, they're in trouble! Jesus Christ is the centerpiece of all we worship, not just at Christmas, but throughout the year. He is the way, the truth, and the life—we cannot leave Him out! We don't simply worship, we worship in the name of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, because that name will never lose its place or power in

all eternity. While Jesus is His one given name, as I reminded you last week there are many titles for the Savior throughout the Bible. They begin well into the Old Testament and continue in the New Testament—Christ (the most important), the Messiah, Jesus Christ, Son of David, Lamb of God, Light of the World, Bread of Life, the Redeemer. Someone researched the Bible and said there are over two hundred titles given to the Son of God.

Today, I want us to focus on one title. I did a study about three years ago at Christmas of the titles given to Jesus in **Isaiah 9:6**. I'm going to repeat one of those today, but I didn't pull out a three-year old sermon! This is brand new! God has given me some insight this year as I read and prayed over this Scripture. I've asked for His revelation to give me a nugget of truth I need to hear in these titles. Once again, He led me to the title I want to preach on. Hear these words from the prophecy of Isaiah: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Eight centuries before Jesus came to the manger, God gave that word to the prophet Isaiah. In this one verse Isaiah says a child will be born as a gift to the world, and the day will come when all the government and guidance of all the people of all the ages will rest on His shoulder. Why the shoulder? In the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament, the shoulder is a point of strength on the body. When a shepherd would go seeking the one lost sheep that wandered from the fold and found it, he would take the sheep and throw it over his shoulder and carry it back to the flock. In the same way that point of strength on the shepherd is the same as the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd because He found me and brought me back to the fold in forgiveness. If you are a child of God today, He found you and brought you back to the fold in forgiveness. Amen! He gave us life, and we worship Him today. The government will rest on His shoulder. He carried us home on that shoulder of strength. The prophet Isaiah gives Him four or five titles; in some translations such as King James and American Standard they read as "Wonderful, Counsellor"—two titles. In other versions like Holman Standard or New International, the comma is not there—"Wonderful Counsellor." In the Hebrew language either of these titles works; there is no right or wrong. Isaiah lists three other titles given to this child, this baby to be born among us—"The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

Every Christmas season, this title grabs me and means something every year. The title today is "the Prince of Peace." We know He is the Prince of Peace by the word of God. I think this is one of the most misunderstood titles for Jesus in the entire Bible; I don't think the world understands it. The title "Prince" comes from the Hebrew transliterated "sar." The word means leader who is preeminent in all things. Sar, the Prince, means one who is of noble birth. Jesus was born in a manger, but it was a noble birth because He is the Son of God. He is entirely worthy of our honor. He is lifted up in importance in all the humanity of the world because He alone is the one Son of God. He alone is the one Lamb of God who lived sinless, and the one who laid down His life that we might have forgiveness. He is lifted up in importance. He is the Prince today! As we look at this Hebrew word Isaiah writes, it can also be translated as King, Ruler, Commander. As Isaiah says this child born among us will be the leader and commanding officer of peace among us. The word peace in Hebrew is Shalom. Jerusalem or "Jeru" is settlement or city, so "Jerushalom" is Jerusalem, city of peace. Shalom means harmony, wholeness, completeness—all that culminates in God's gifts to us find its meaning in the word peace. When you and I truly know God, no matter the circumstances of life, we will know peace because God is the giver of peace—shalom. In English, it could be translated as completeness, the ruler of wholeness, the king of harmony or satisfaction.

For over two thousand years we've had Jesus the Prince of Peace. The gospel writers recorded His life as the Son of God. Over the course of those years, the world has looked at Jesus and has considered this title and the fact there is no peace. The world says Jesus, this is Your title given by God Almighty through the prophet Isaiah but You have failed to bring peace to the world. If You're the Prince of Peace, why do we not have peace? Ever since Jesus came to a manger, there has never been one moment in history where the world has been at peace. Wars have not

ceased; people have not been together in forgiveness, peace has not truly come. The world says Jesus, you've failed us as the Prince of Peace. Outwardly, the world's view is correct. How do we put this together as God's word? There's one moment there was complete peace on earth. After God created Adam and Eve, they lived in the garden and before Satan approached them as the serpent, beguiled them, and led them into sin, there was perfection and peace on earth. I don't think it took Adam and Eve long to fall into sin and rebellion against God. But there was a moment of total peace and harmony. The vegetables grew from the ground; fruit fell off the trees—they could have all they wanted to eat without doing any work. All the animals were tame; no fear of being attacked. There was no hunting, no bloodshed; roses didn't have thorns. Everything was good and at peace. But the very millisecond Adam and Eve fell into sin, there has not been a moment of peace on earth. We humans dream about peace; there's something that's born in us that desires and yearns for peace. We talk about and want world peace to come. There was a song from 1971 by the New Seekers and had these verses: "I'd like to build the world a home and furnish it love; grow apple trees and honeybees and snow white turtle doves. I'd like to see the world for once all standing hand in hand and hear the echo through the hills for peace throughout the land." A couple years later, Coca Cola got hold of that song and kept the first verse exactly the same. They changed the second verse to "I'd like to buy the world a Coke..." – like a Coca Cola is going to solve our problems! Every government official talks about peace in the world. We cannot get there by ourselves! Sinners cannot get to worldwide peace. We've never stood hand in hand, and according to the Bible and the prophecy of Daniel, we never will. As long as human history exists, things are not going to get better—they're going to go downhill and get worse. I think we see that happening in these days. It's been that way since Adam and Eve and will be that way until the end of time.

So here's the big question during this Christmas worship—has Jesus failed as the Prince of Peace? Is this title inaccurate? Has he not fulfilled what God said He would be as the Prince of Peace? NO! NO! NO! He has not failed us! The peace of Jesus Christ is entirely misunderstood by the world. The Bible never promises worldwide human peace. The Bible never says we're going to all stand hand in hand. Peace cannot find a resting place in a world of sin. Let's read **Luke 2:13-14**: ¹³"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Notice, the angels do not say peace, good will among men but good will toward men. That's a huge difference! The angels are saying God has a plan of peace, and He wants to extend that plan of peace to every single human being. The plan of peace comes toward us, to us—not among us but to us individually. The Lord God is not going to give peace among this world of sin and sinners. But God sent His Son toward us that we might be saved. Remember from the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus said if you really want to follow Me, you have to come to a narrow gate. That narrow gate means we go to Jesus one by one. You can't follow your mama, or granddaddy who was a preacher—that gate is for a single decision: Will you accept My Son, Jesus, as your Savior. The plan of peace doesn't come among us; it comes to us one by one to accept or reject Him. He wants to extend that offer of salvation to each of us and it comes by the grace of God when we respond in faith saying Lord Jesus, I believe You died for me on the cross. You came to me in a manger; You lived thirty-three years of a sinless life as the Lamb of God. The only human who lived sinlessly You went to the cross, shed Your blood, and died for me that the Lamb of God who was sinless could forgive a sinner like me. Not only did You forgive me, on the third day You rose from the grave that I might have life everlasting and I can live with You for all eternity.

What Isaiah is saying is Jesus will be the true Prince of Peace when He lives in my heart and yours as our Savior—that's when He'll fulfill the title. The amazing thing to me is yes, we can stand hand in hand, side by side, shoulder to shoulder in ministry because He does link us and bind us together when we're true believers, brothers and sisters in Him. Then there's that moment of peace when we can be together because the Prince of Peace joins us living in our hearts together. God's peace comes to every person individually. It can't be laid over the world like a blanket because the world is full of sin and sinners, but it comes to every person who comes to Him as Savior.

Do you know that Jesus is your Prince of Peace? Is there an assurance in you that He is your Prince of Peace—He lives in your heart, has forgiven you, has given you eternal life, and a purpose to live for Him every single day? There’s a reason we wake up every morning—if you’re a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you’re saved! If I don’t wake up tomorrow morning, I know I’ll be in heaven. If I do wake up, it’s because there’s one more day to serve Him, one more day to give my life to Him. This is true for you as well! If He’s your Prince of Peace, He has a plan for your life. Is He living in your heart? I believe when He does He will give you evidence He is there because: (1) You will be drawn to worship Him. You’ll want to surrender and lay down your life before Him because He is your Prince of Peace—He’s the commander of peace in your life. We need to worship Him—by streaming, in the parking lot, however... We’re to worship Him corporately. More important, we worship Him every single day that we belong to Him. We represent Him as a witness in this world every single day—at work, school, in a store. I believe as the Bible says in Psalm 23 “...my cup runneth over...” and when the Prince of Peace lives in our hearts, His presence runs over in us so that others see Him living in us. (2) You will have a love for people; you’ll want the best for them and see them be saved. We need to reach out with the gospel from the church—to those around our dinner table, those we work with or are in school with. You will want salvation for them and the will of God to increase above your own. One of my life verses now is John 3:30 “He must increase, but I must decrease.” When the Prince of Peace lives in us, we should want that. I want to lay aside my sinful will so that the will of Jesus will be played out. (3) When the Prince of Peace lives in you, you will have an overwhelming desire to be thankful for Him—that He lives in you and me; that He loves us so much He’s taken up residence and the Prince of Peace resides on the throne of my heart. I pray we have that desire right now simply to be thankful.

The sermon ends simply: How will you thank Him for being your Prince of Peace? All of us today have a way to say Thank You, Lord. Maybe some will choose to come to this altar or the altar of your heart. I can’t dictate how you do so but as people of God during this Christmas season will say Thank You that You came as my Prince of Peace and we can share that joy with our church family. Today, if you don’t know Him as Savior the Prince of Peace is poised, ready, and willing to move into your heart to show you His compassion and forgiveness. To show you He has a plan for your life; that He has a wholeness and you can lay aside your guilt and walk the walk of Jesus Christ. He’s waiting to move into your heart as the Prince of Peace. It’s a simple invitation: Just say Lord, I’m a sinner and I believe You came for me in a manger. You lived a perfect life and died for me; You rose that I might have eternal life. I open my heart to You and ask You to take the throne and live in me so that I will follow You. This is not a partial commitment—if you think you can live for Jesus and keep a foot in the world, you’re not ready to come yet. It’s total surrender. Jesus tells us in the closing words of Revelation “...whosoever will...” If you’re someone who needs Him, He’s ready to accept you as His son or daughter—just ask.

Let Us Pray: Father God, thank You that You are indeed the Prince of Peace. The world doesn’t understand that; the world thinks You’ve failed because we’re not standing hand in hand. But You have not failed! The plan of God as the Prince of Peace is that You’ll come to every heart and everyone who receives You, You will take up residence in the throne of their heart and become their Savior. In that place, Lord, you become the peace of our life. I know that peace; I still sin and fall out of that peace but You constantly restore it to me. That’s true for my brothers and sisters here; we’re a church together because we are bound together by the peace of Jesus living in our hearts. We’re some of the few who can stand hand in hand because Jesus holds us together. Lord, if there’s one person here today who’s a believer and simply wants to say Lord Jesus, I want to celebrate Christmas the right way. Yes, I love presents, trees, lights—all the joys of the season but this is about You coming to me so that I might be saved and have peace in my heart. I simply come today to say “Thank You.” Lord, if there’s one here who’s never received Jesus as Savior and whatever they’ve done, whatever their background the Prince of Peace can move into their heart this moment if they will simply say Lord Jesus, I am a sinner. I have done things which have stood between You and me. But I believe Jesus came to a manger, lived as the Lamb of God on earth, died on the cross to forgive my sin, and rose from the grave to give me eternal life. So in this Christmas time, I give You the only present that is worthy, my heart. I give You the throne and ask You to save me and to be my Prince of Peace. I pray that one will come. Bless us in these precious moments together. In Jesus’ name, Amen.