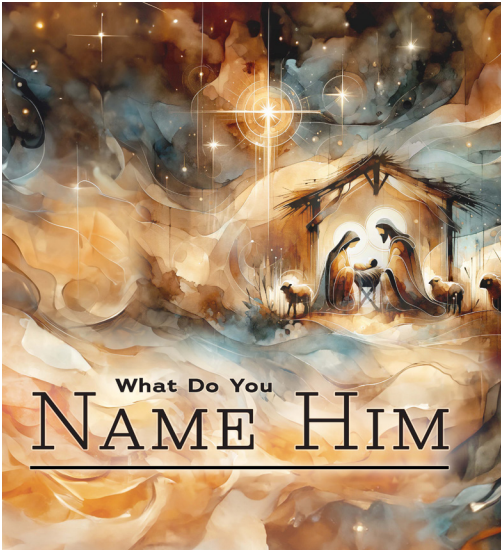


What Do You
NAME HIM

Sermon Growth Guide

December 22, 2024

Prince of Peace



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What Do You Name Him - Prince of Peace

Ephesians 2:12-22

Key Verse: Ephesians 2:14

“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.”

Foundations

When the prophet Isaiah spoke of Jesus, he called him the Prince of Peace. When the angels announced his birth, they sang of peace on earth. When Jesus comforted his disciples, he promised them peace despite heartache. When the crowds surrounded him as he rode into Jerusalem on a colt, they joyfully praised him: “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.” Paul extends peace throughout his writings— in greetings, salutations, and the body of his letters, even from his cold, dank prison cell. Peace. Shalom. The Kingdom of God drew near.

Perhaps at Christmas we long for the peace of Christ more than at any other time of the year. Yet, year after year, wars tear away at this hope. Hostilities grow as we focus on our differences. Is it any surprise that the most prestigious Nobel Prize is not the one for medicine, chemistry, or physics, but the one awarded for peace? In Ephesians, we read: “He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.”

Joyfully, we sing with the angels: “Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.” The Kingdom of God comes to us again and again.

Understanding God’s Word

Read Ephesians 2:12-22 together. Discuss any barriers that you have experienced that may have kept you from the peace Jesus. In Jesus, we can be reconciled to our Holy God and also to those around us. Is reconciliation with a friend or family member something you have experienced? If you feel comfortable, share it with your group. Is reconciliation something you desire? Pray with your group about this situation.

If you have time, read together Isaiah 26:3, John 16:33, John 14:25-27, and Philippians 4:4-7. Talk together about how this peace of Jesus is different from the peace the world offers.

Applying God’s Word

Mother Teresa wrote “If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other. All works of love are works of peace.”

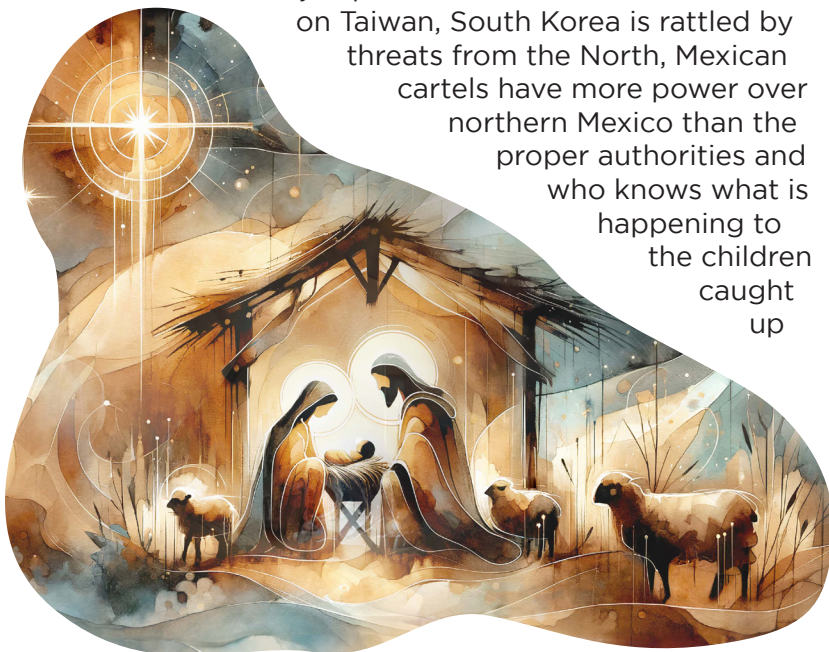
What part do you play in bringing God’s Shalom to your world?

Witnessing God’s Word

How can you live out the peace of Jesus? Some say even a smile can convey the love of God. In the hecticness of the few days left before Christmas, smile, sing, laugh... extend the joy of Jesus. Invite someone to experience the delight of worship on Christmas Eve. Set aside the differences this past year has highlighted and welcome once again the Prince of Peace into our world.

I remember years ago watching video of a Black Friday shopping riot. Online shopping has taken the edge off, but you remember these things. There was a “ready, set, go” moment, the doors opened and the shoppers poured in like a jail break, arms flailing, eyes darting around to find that TV. It was at a mall. There were injuries. Hanging up on a wall behind the melee was a Christmas banner, red and gold and glittery. It said, “Peace.” We don’t just want peace as a wall decoration. Jesus brings true peace. Hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus, the Prophet Isaiah wrote: “For 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.” (Isaiah 9:6) There are many names, many things people call Jesus. What Do You Name Him. Today we call Him Prince of Peace. The reign and rule of Jesus brings peace. Prince of Peace will be King of Kings and his Kingdom will be filled with peace. To name Jesus Prince of Peace is to trust in the hope of His promises. One day this world will know peace, and, because of that, today you can have peace.

War is heartbreaking, and confusing, isn’t it? It is hard (not always, but often) it is hard to figure out right and wrong. I grew up watching the Lone Ranger. Black hats, bad; white hats, good. Got it. This year, again, we have watched wars erupt and drag on and we feel the pain on all sides. War is tragic. How is the state of the world here at the end of 2024? Israel continues to struggle for its existence in the face of terroristic enemies on all fronts. Our hearts ache for the children and the innocents who get caught up in the violence and bloodshed. Russia continues its assault on the Ukraine and North Korea has jumped in. China seems zeroed in on Taiwan, South Korea is rattled by threats from the North, Mexican cartels have more power over northern Mexico than the proper authorities and who knows what is happening to the children caught up



in all that. An ivy-league graduate thinks it’s appropriate to gun down a business leader in the streets, and many in the public square seem to agree. What else? Should I go to local news? Thank God for our CSPD. Maybe in your own home there is unrest, a lack of peace. How well did you sleep last night? Where can a soul rest? Where can we find peace? Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Don’t you want to know the peace of Jesus Christ this Christmas?

Peace, Hope, Love, Joy, Faith. We decorate with these words. We send cards and emails with them. Our radio stations and playlists fill up with songs about these words. But you can’t just say these words. It reminds me of Jeremiah: “They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. ‘Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace.” (Jeremiah 6:14) We don’t want peace as a decoration or empty sentiment; we want real peace in our lives. We don’t need these words in glitter and glue; we need them genuine and true. How can peace be more than an empty word used to decorate our holiday, and become an actual thing among us? It comes with naming Jesus. One of His names is Prince of Peace. Want peace? Let me introduce you to the Prince of Peace. Our passage says, “For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.” (Ephesians 2:14) Jesus is our peace. “He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.” (Ephesians 2:17)

Naming Jesus Prince of Peace is no superficial matter. This is not glitter and glue or a catchy Christmas tune. This is the real deal. It is the only real deal there is, actually. Jesus’ peace is like no other. Remember what He said to His disciples, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27) Jesus says, my peace is different. This isn’t the empty promises or half-measures of the past. “I don’t give it the way the world gives it.

The world promises but never delivers. I give you real peace, my peace.” Therefore, do not be afraid. Or in Philippians, Paul wrote to his friends from the prison cell where he sat in chains in Rome awaiting his own execution, saying rejoice always, pray continually, put your requests before God in prayer, and, he says “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7) This is what we need. The peace of God that the world can’t even understand. The peace of God that Jesus alone can give. We need the Prince of Peace.

Let me offer four aspects of the peace being offered in Jesus Christ. Here are four points to be made about peace as offered and found in the Prince of Peace.

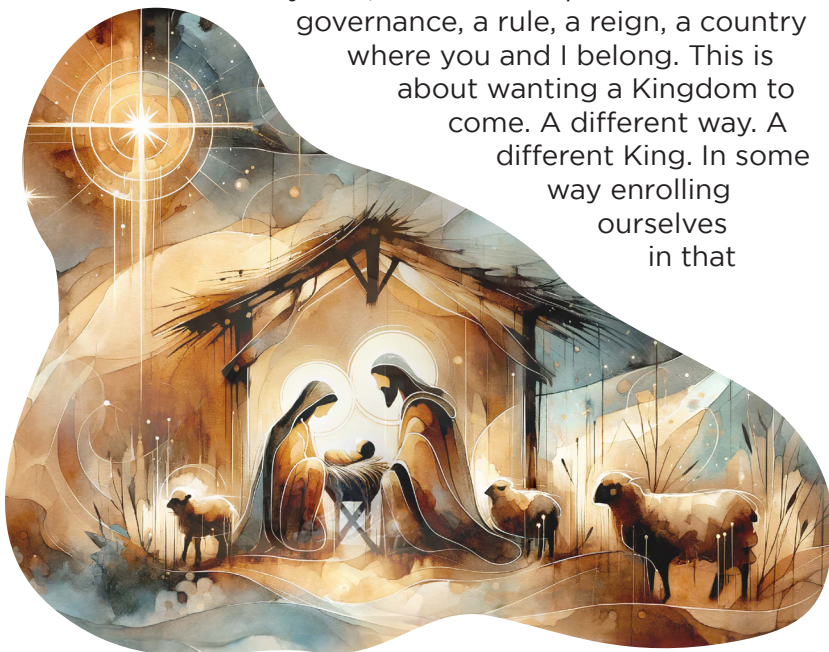
(1) Peace is the rule of Jesus. We name Jesus this morning and we name Him with Isaiah the “Prince of Peace,” Sar Shalom in the Hebrew. It’s not an empty title. Pastor Dave was just in England a few weeks ago, to see the King. I have a friend who worked for King Charles back when he was Prince of Wales. When you take a step back, isn’t it a little strange that the UK still has a Royal Monarchy? Royals have lots of titles; piles of titles. When someone is Prince, that means there’s some kingdom or some part of some kingdom that belongs to him. Jesus is Prince of Peace. It makes Peace sound like a place. Shalom is a place. Shalom is a rich word, a very important word in the Scriptures. It’s the Old Testament version of the Kingdom of God. Do you know that? And what’s the Kingdom of God? The Kingdom of God is where God is the King. Where God’s rule is the rule. Jesus is Sar Shalom, Prince of a land called Peace. Shalom isn’t just a place Jesus

knows about, or happens to visit from time to time. Shalom is where He lives; and not only that, He owns the place! Peace is a governance, a rule, a reign, a country where you and I belong. This is about wanting a Kingdom to come. A different way. A different King. In some way enrolling ourselves in that

Kingdom, becoming a citizen there, even though it isn’t here yet. We can see it coming though. We can taste it. We can smell the rain. It’s coming. When you name Jesus Prince of Peace you are part of that Kingdom to come, and it gives you peace today.

(2) The rule of Jesus unites you to God. When Jesus is Prince of Peace in your life, Lord of your life, ruler in your country—in the inner regions of your soul—you are united to God by this governance. For four weeks now we have read Isaiah 9, but did you hear this phrase “the government will be upon his shoulders”? Did you wonder what that means? It’s an odd phrase for a coming and promised king. What king wears His government on his shoulders? Maybe a crown on the head, maybe a diadem on the sash, maybe a ring on the finger, maybe a scepter, but across the shoulders? That’s odd. What do you even picture? But we know. Our Messiah King, our Prince, laid the wood of the cross on His shoulders and by the cross established His Kingdom forever. The government upon His shoulders is the Kingdom established by His sacrificial and atoning death on the cross to cover our sins and reconcile us to God the Holy Father. “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” (Ephesians 2:13) The illness that brings warfare, the sickness that breeds hostility, the source of unrest and sleepless nights—it’s not a lack of education, it’s not a lack of distribution of resources, it’s not a lack of moral effort or a shortage of human kindness, it’s the fact that you are in rebellion against the rule of Jesus Christ in your life. You are in rebellion. Until you lay down your arms, confess your sins, and accept what Christ has done for you on the cross to pay your debt before God, there will be no peace. But, when you do, the rule of Jesus, His government, becomes your peace.

(3) The rule of Jesus unites us to one another. Jesus is ruthless as sovereign Prince in the country he calls Peace. Sar



Shalom. He is ruthless against one thing: hostility. He is the killer of killing; the destroyer of destruction; hostile against hostility. “The dividing wall of hostility” He has destroyed, says Ephesians. “Killing the hostility,” it says, “putting it to death.” He kills it. The first one was the wall of hostility between you and God, but that’s not the only one. There is also the dividing wall of hostility between people, between you and your neighbor, between Jews and Gentiles, Barbarians and Scythians, slaves and free, men and women—that’s how the Bible talks about it. We have our own categories. Did you know we have a Pittsburgh Steelers fan on our pastoral staff? We have a Brown’s fan too. At least it’s not the Raiders. I happened to be back at my old church in Atlanta the day after the eight overtime game between Georgia and Georgia Tech. You actually don’t joke about that there! No, this is serious stuff isn’t it? We feel it right now. Between rich and poor, black and white, European and Arab and Asian and Latino and all the rest. How about between Republicans and Democrats? We can just keep on calling each other fascists or socialists or Nazis...or Nazis (that seems to cut both ways). We know how to make division instead of dialogue.

The rule of Jesus has no patience for these divisions in the family of God. You who were far heard the word of peace. You who were near heard the word of peace. Together now you come into one household, one family. “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.”

(Ephesians 2:19-21) Do you hear that?

No longer! The time is past for divisions. The season is over for racism, classism, or nasty politics that eclipses Kingdom unity.

Enough of childish games, the Kingdom of God is

real—more real than these petty divisions and hostilities you are using to build up hatred in your heart. Enough of it! “No longer,” says the Prince of Peace. We need that, don’t we? We can all slip back into patterns of division, especially when things get heated. Of course we have differences of opinion, of course there is diversity, beautiful diversity among us, but do you know what is more beautiful yet? The unity Jesus purchased by His blood. We can continue to cut at each other, pretending these human divisions are bigger than the Kingdom Jesus established. But Jesus says, no longer for you who are in Christ. The rule of Jesus unites us one to another. “And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:22)

(4) The rule of Jesus begins in your heart. The rule of Jesus as Prince of Peace begins in your heart. You say, “I want to see your rule in the world, Jesus. I want to see your rule in my city, Jesus. I want to see your rule in those people, in that relative, in those countries. Go rule over there!” The rule of Jesus begins in your heart. It is irrelevant and useless to expect or work for the rule of Jesus out in the world if you will not accept the rule of Jesus in the core of your being. When we pray “Your kingdom come,” we pray it into our own hearts. When we pray “Your will be done” we are first praying that the will of God supercedes our own will, not that we will see the will of God done by governments or princes or powers in this world. The place it begins in is your heart, right now, right here.

Naming Jesus Prince of Peace means opening your heart today and acknowledging Him. What do you name Him? He is roaming the halls, and “where meek souls will receive him still,” where folks will bend the knee rather than clinch the fist, the dear Christ enters in. Name Him Prince of Peace.

