

Title: Peace on Earth
Text: Isaiah 11.1-16
Theme: The King of Peace has come
Series: Isaiah #16
Prop Stmtnt: God has kept his promise to send a king who is peace, whose work is not yet complete.
Aim: The King of peace is returning. Get Ready!

Baghdad was rocked on Thursday with 4 car bombs and 10 improvised explosive devices that killed over 60 and injured another 185. The fragile government is turning on itself as the Shiite and Sunni factions struggle for power in the wake of US forces leaving the country. Can't people just get along? From over here, it seems like a reasonable request – doesn't it? You want to ask people what they have really gained from generations of violence, assuming that people are rational and logical.

But, then, look at your own family. Many of you know tension and hostility even within the walls of a house, or within the short branches of a family tree; especially around the holidays. All it takes is one comment to get the snowball rolling down the hill, doesn't it? *"Your family is so weird. Your cousin gives me the creeps."* *"Not like yours is the standard of intelligence. In 14 years, I have yet to hear one rational thought uttered from your siblings."* And on and on it goes, doesn't it? Some of you just dread the holidays because you get thrown into situations with people who have backstabbed you all year long, and now you are supposed to be nice to them, when you would rather be at the dentist getting a root canal without anesthesia.

For those who willing to dig a little more, the angst goes deeper than that. It is not just the fact that nations and factions and even families do not get along, we, as individuals make sinful decisions that cause us much inner turmoil, regret, sadness, loneliness and emptiness. Last Sunday, I talked with a man after the service who had recently been diagnosed with a disease that attacks his autoimmune system. He has a condition in which his body is essentially at war against itself. What is happening in his body is what goes on in our souls. His physical diagnosis is an illustration of our spiritual condition. Sin causes us to be at war, not only as nations and families, but we, ourselves, are at war against ourselves. We are not at peace with ourselves and that is why the holidays can be so difficult because instinctively we know that this is not how we are supposed to be. This is not what we were made for. This is not how want our lives, our families, our world to be, but this is what we are. Will there ever be peace on earth? Will there ever be good will toward man? Or are these just nostalgic words in songs that we sing, but no one really believes?

For those of you are visiting this morning, we have been studying through the Old Testament book of Isaiah on Sunday mornings, which thus far has been a phenomenal study. What is helpful to know is that in the Old Testament, which is the story of how God dealt with and related to the children of Israel, is a picture of how he desired to relate to the world. He uses them to put his character and glory on display. But, the children of Israel treat God, the way the world treats God. For the most part, they/we are demanding,

spoiled, and arrogant. Their history is marked by rejection of God followed by chaos, repentance followed by peace, then rejection of God and chaos again, and over and over it goes. But as time goes on, their rejection is deeper, the consequences are worse, the repentance is less and the peace is not long-lasting, until, in Isaiah's day (around 725 BC), the children of Israel are a people divided into two different countries, both on the verge of being destroyed, it appears, by the Assyrian empire. Their only hope is God. Isaiah is a prophet to the southern kingdom, known as Judah. He cries out to them and pleads with them to turn to God. In fact, the theme of this entire book is: Our God Saves! This book is full of warnings to the people, coupled with promises of deliverance, if they would turn to God. Recently, we have been studying through a section that was written while Ahaz was the King in Judah. He was a major failure. He led the people to reject God, and to trust in the King of Assyria, who will, as history has shown, betray them. Not only that, but we saw last week in chapter 10, that Assyria, the destroyer, will be destroyed. In fact, her destruction will be so intense, that (as 10.18 says) she will be like a forest that has been completely wiped out with such force, that even a child could count the remaining trees. So, at the end of chapter 10, things look hopelessly bleak for the nation of Judah, and catastrophic for Assyria. Then we read these words:

Read Text:

This is a great text for Christmas, because this chapter is one of the great Old Testament prophecies that promises us that God is going to send a Savior, not only to Israel, but this Savior is going to impact the world. When we understand what Christ accomplishes, then we can not only see why the angels declared, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace to whom his favor rests" but we see why we can add our voices to theirs and declare this from our hearts because God has seen our misery. God has seen our sin. God has seen our failure, our need, and our total inability to save ourselves and has come to provide for us a way out. This text combines two ideas that we long for, but are not used to. Here is a ruler, a king whose concern about his people is greater than his concern about his comfort. And yet, this merciful king has a ferocious might and power that is unequalled. His concern and tenderness does not come from the fact that he is a soft, pushover type. He is so strong, that there is no need for him to crush anyone.

Can you imagine a leader, who is so powerful that no one can match him, dethrone him, intimidate him or stop him, who, at the same time is perfect in knowledge, perfect in character, perfect in wisdom? A person like this would be divine. Do you see our dilemma? Do you see the dilemma of the world? We long for a leader like that, but the only one like that is God – and he is far, far away. All of our kings are flawed, and the nice ones get run over, or they get killed. We need a leader who is Divine, but who is here, on earth. And Isaiah says...He's coming!! And we celebrate Christmas because He came like he said he would. And He is coming back, like he said he would to take back that which he put his name on. Here is the good news...

Peace on Earth will come:

1. **But not like you think** (1)

a. **His origin is mysterious** – *from the stump*

The picture here is that of a dead-looking stump that lies dormant in the ground. From its outward appearance, no one gives this thing any hope at all.

Some of you may know this story, but years ago (probably about 8) when we were building this building, my daughter, Arianna planted a maple seed in our garden in order to grow a tree that could be planted here to help out with our landscape needs. Well, that tree did rather well and after a couple of years it came time to transplant it. I'm thinking, how difficult can it be to transplant a tree? I live pretty close to the church, so I figure, that this will be a quick process, but a fun one. We had a landscape plan already drawn up and I had it marked on the ground where this tree was supposed to go in front of the church. I dug out the tree, which was pretty easy since it was in our garden, put it, my shovel, a bucket of water, Arianna and neighbor girl into the van and came over here. It was August. When I went to dig the hole, the ground was like concrete. I've done landscaping before, and thought that I knew how to dig a hole, but I could not get the shovel to go deeper than one to two inches. I even used the water from the bucket on the area, all to know avail. I worked on this for almost an hour while the tree is dying, my daughter is pretty disappointed and I am in full-scale panic. I cannot imagine too many things worse in this world than letting my kids down, and I am failing, massively failing because I can't dig a hole! The best I could come up with, was run to the store and buy some bags of dirt and put the tree into the two-inch hole and try to build up the ground with dirt. Folks, it did not look good. The leaves wilted and fell off. And I thought that I had ruined her tree. In fact, she went home and either that day or soon thereafter, she planted another seed. From time to time I would go out and check this tree. I literally put my hands on it and prayed over it. I figured if Jesus could make people rise again from the dead, he could make this tree live. By this time, the center branch fell off, but I kept hoping. One day, the next spring, I saw a little shoot. It didn't look like much, but it turned into a branch. It lived! In fact, when you look at the ground in front of the library, you will see that funny looking tree on the left and the second tree that she planted on the right. (I had a landscape guy dig the hole for that one).

Here Isaiah says, that a shoot is going to come from Jesse's line, which is exactly how the birth of Christ took place. He was from a rather obscure family line in David's lineage, but it was there.

b. **His beginnings are humble** – *of Jesse*

Salvation and rescue is going to come but not like you think. In fact, that is why I think Isaiah speaks of Jesse (David's father) instead of David, because Jesse was the humble, average man, not the royal, crowned king that his son became. The point is this. From the line of Jesse, in a way that no one would ever imagine, will come The BRANCH. The family in which Christ was raised did not look like much. But, what man thinks is so impressive is usually what God is NOT impressed with, and that is certainly the case here. But there is no doubt that it is going to happen...

c. **His line is promised** – *shall come forth*

He will not only be born, but he will accomplish what he set out to do...

d. **His advent is unstoppable** – *shall bear fruit*

But now we come to the heart of this promise and why this is so encouraging. It is more than just the fact that a king will be born, but look at what this king is and look at what his kingdom is going to bring.

Peace on Earth will come:

2. **Through a King who is not like this world** (2-9)

Judah, like every nation was full of disappointments when it came to national leadership. As I mentioned earlier, if we are ever going to get a leader that we can really believe in, then, quite frankly, we need God himself. We have made such a mess of things that we cannot fix ourselves. People running for president are asked: What are your plans for the political crisis in Russia, the economic crisis in Europe, the epidemics in Africa, the debt crisis here at home and (of course) what is your peace plan for the middle east? (2700 years later, the eyes of the world are still on Jerusalem). No one can fix all that! And that is exactly what God wants us to realize. It is not only true on a national scale; it is true on a personal level. We need a Savior. We need to be rescued. I need someone who will help me stop hurting the people that I love. I need someone who can change my heart. I need someone who will love me even though I am sinful. I need someone who will come after me even though I try to hide. Who can do this? Who has the character and power to do this? Isaiah says, this promised One can. Notice how he is described.

a. **His character is Divine.** (2-3a)

This King will have the very breath of God upon him and in him. He will be marked by understanding (has the right information and empathy) and wisdom (he knows exactly what is the best course of action). He has both counsel (good advice) and the might to carry it out. His knowledge is complete and he fears the LORD. That is, his leadership is so full of God, that he will not degenerate into a self-serving bully, like so many do. What do these promises do? Don't they awaken in us a longing for Christ; the One who rules with truth and grace? He delights in the fear of the LORD!!! (3a) This is his very nature – What a Savior! What a King!

b. **His rule is just and might** (3b-5)

This King will make decisions based upon the fact that he knows beyond what the eye can see and the ear can hear; he knows all. He knows hearts. He sees what others have never seen and hears what others haven't. He knows it all. And not only that, but he has the authority to act upon it. We all know stories of advisors who have the right

information, but whose counsel is ignored. But, this king has it all. It reminds me of the prayer children learn to recite before meals. God is great, God is good – He is! And what a joy it is that He is both.

If you are going to have absolute justice, you have to have absolute knowledge. And, if your justice is going to mean anything you have to have the authority to be able to carry it out (4b). I love v. 5. Righteousness and faithfulness are the belts that hold everything else together. Wow! He is righteous. There is no flaw to this King. He is also faithful; he will never bend, never disappoint, never quit, never stumble and never change. I would love to be a husband like that, or a dad like that, or a pastor like that. Do you realize that we have a king like that? And look at what his kingdom is going to be like.

c. **His kingdom is perfectly safe (6-9)**

Wow! Look at the contrast. Wolves and leopards are ravenous beasts. Here the most helpless and most vulnerable are living with what used to be the most violent and dangerous. That which used to be the occasion for fear and insecurity is gone! Can you imagine living where there are no locks on doors? In fact there will be no need for doors! There is nothing that you have to keep out.

The idea of “dwelling with” means to sojourn with. It speaks of a relationship where the one is depending on the other to get to the end. These former enemies are living in harmony with each other. This speaks of a time, when peace is so prevalent, that it is not a peace that is violently imposed – and that’s it, but a peace that comes from the fact that nature itself has been changed. V.8 – wow!! Can you imagine getting a Christmas card with the picture of a child playing with his pet snake?

While these verses symbolize a time of peace that Christ will establish on this earth, it is my personal opinion that this will literally be fulfilled. Revelation 19 speaks of the day when Christ returns. This time, not to die in our place, but to take the throne that rightfully belongs to him. His kingdom on this earth is the very reason why God made the earth. And though he rules over all now, and rules in the hearts of his children now, the full extent and impact of his kingdom will be unfolded in that day. Look at v.9. We do missions now in view of that day! We have a taste now of what that day will be like, but this day pales so badly in comparison to that day. And yet, God does things and has done things that point to that that. There have been a number of events that have shown God’s involvement in the world and that he is carrying out a plan. We see that in this next section.

Peace on Earth will come:

3. **Through a King who is peace.** (10-16)

The promise of peace on the earth can only be made and kept by one who can secure peace between man and God. Until you are at peace with God, you are not at peace. When you are at peace with, then you have the foundation to be able to be at peace with

others. All peace that leaves God out of the equation is merely a lull in the fighting while everyone reloads their guns. All peace treaties are suspect since they lack the power to be enforced. How do you force someone to be at peace? This King is different. This King (root of Jesse – v.10) is the grounding of peace because He himself is peace. When Isaiah writes about this, he states what he will do, but even Isaiah does not yet know exactly how this is going to be accomplished.

He is peace...

a. **Between God and man (10)**

Verse 10 speaks of the Branch, the King who shall stand as a signal for the peoples. That statement is very important because it makes it clear that this King not only comes for Judah, but he comes for the nations. He is not only going to restore the children of Israel, he is going to be desired by and inquired of the peoples of this earth. We find out in John's gospel that the signal, the lifting up of the banner for the world to see, was the lifting up of Christ upon the cross. His lifting up put him in a position between heaven and earth. He stood between God and man. And in his death, he absorbed the wrath of God that was intended for us because of the offensiveness and pollution of our sin. At the same time, he represented us before God. He is the God-man. He is the priest who offered up the perfect sacrifice when he offered up himself in your place. His life and death was in your place between God and man. In his death, he demonstrated his authority to be able to secure our peace. He put on display what kind of a King he really is. Anyone can tear things apart, but who can forgive sin? Who can restore to life? Who can make one live forever? Who can call to the nations and rescue his people from all over the world?

He is peace...

b. **For the lost and outcast (11-12) (promise and poetry)**

Go back and look at what God did in the Exodus. He was able to rescue his people out of a hopeless situation and restore them to the land that he gave them. Here, the promise is that he can do that again. Our God saves and he loves to save the lost and the outcast. He saves those who know they are a mess and are willing to admit that they have no other hope. Judah's military, economic and social problems were the direct result of her rebellion against God. God ordains and uses the increasing pressure of their circumstances as a means to turn their hearts to him. The day will come when a remnant will see and believe. And when they have peace with God, they will be at peace with each other.

He is peace...

c. **Between people (13)**

Ephraim (north) and Judah (south) will no longer be enemies. Notice that this peace happens at the heart level. “The jealousy of Ephraim shall depart.” What would you give if you could rid your family of jealousy? What would we give if we could rid this world of jealousy? Some day... But not all will bend the knee. Not all will surrender and love the King. But this King will not be denied and His kingdom will not be stopped and his peace will not be thwarted.

He is peace...

d. Who destroys the enemies of peace (14-16)

The rest of the chapter speaks of how Christ will deal with those who are against his people and against his peace. Those who used to be the enemies of God’s people are now the staging area for their rescue and return.

This chapter is one of the most amazing promises in the Old Testament. It tells us that a King is going to come from obscure beginnings and is going to rule the world. In his first coming, he made a way for you to be at peace with God. But as the spiritual says, “we didn’t know who you was.” “We didn’t know you’d come to save us.” We killed you. But it was in his dying that he brought us life. In his dying he paid the debt of our sin. But he did more than die. He rose again. Do you know what means? That means that he is not done with this world. His plan is not finished. While he is King by virtue of his person, and by virtue of the position that his Father has given to him, not yet is he sitting on David’s throne. Not yet is back here, physically on the earth, but one day, one day, that day will be this day. One day, the one who died between earth and heaven, will make them one, even as he has provided a way for you to be at peace with God. How can lions and lambs be at peace? Because the Lion of the tribe of Judah became the Lamb of God who took your sin for you. This Lion is your king. This Lion is your Savior. This Lion is your Redeemer. This Lion is Almighty. This Lion is to be loved, to be worshiped, to be followed, to be trusted, to be obeyed, and to be honored. But, if you don’t, you will find out that this Lion will not be messed with. This is the Lion’s country. This is the King’s land. This earth is his. He made it. He owns it. He put his name on it. And he is coming back for it. And He will NOT be denied.

So, you can live for yourself and all others who are imposters and pretend lions, or you can bow to the King. And when you bow to the King, one day, you will ride with the King.

Revelation 19.11-16