



PRINCE OF PEACE

— 2018 Advent Devotional —



For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

— Isaiah 9:6, ESV —

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

— Luke 2:13-14, KJV —

When Jesus, the *Prince of Peace*, was born, His Father sent a birth announcement. His celebratory message declared glory to God and peace to the earth, and it was delivered to a handful of shepherds working the nightshift in the fields.

Peace on earth. That's what God said Jesus' birth was about.

But what does it mean? Peace seems hard to come by — then as well as now.

Someone else went by the name *Prince of Peace* in those days — Caesar Augustus. Caesar also called himself "Son of God," "King of Kings," and "Savior of the World."

So when God, the true King of Kings, announced the birth of His Son, the *Prince of Peace*, to the subjects of the powerful Roman Empire, this was kind of a big deal. Anyone listening would hear a strikingly subversive statement: the real Prince is in town, and His Kingdom is *exactly not* like the kingdom of Rome. Time to choose your allegiance.

A move like this probably will not result in peace right away.

So how does Jesus' birth bring the peace God's announcement proclaimed?

You're probably acquainted with our theme verse for Advent, the famous passage in Isaiah 9 foretelling

the birth of the Messiah, the Prince of Peace. But are you familiar with what comes before?

Isaiah 8 ends with these words: *Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness* (v. 22, NIV).

If I'm honest, this sounds more like the world I know. The word *peace* shows up on everything at Christmastime — in our songs, movies, and decorations — but too often it seems just a word we toss around, like a Christmas throw pillow to set the mood and then store away. Is Jesus' peace really here, living and active on the earth? Peace sounds idyllic during the holidays, but unreasonable in this world of darkness.

Then and now, our earth is wracked with pain, sickness, and death. Division, gossip, anger, distain, prejudice, and fear envelope us in utter darkness. No one needs to be convinced that something is off kilter in our lives, our families, our kingdoms. We know how dark darkness can be.

But don't stop reading at Isaiah 8:22. If you turn the page to Isaiah 9, there is a wonderful word: "Nevertheless."

Isaiah continues: *The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land*

of deep darkness a light has dawned ... For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given ... (v. 2 and 6, NIV)

The *peace* that the true *Prince of Peace* brings to this world of darkness and pain is so much bigger and more subversive than anything we could put on a cookie or ornament. Jesus' peace is rooted in the truth of God's Kingdom and how it stands in contrast to the injustice and greed of the world's kingdoms. This peace is not quiet, weak, or naïve; it is ready to take on all the pain and suffering and turn it upside down. God's peace is rooted in the truth that in the darkness He brings light; in the coldest season He brings comfort; in a world of suffering He brings joy; and in a time of despair He brings hope.

God's Kingdom has begun its peaceful takeover, calling Jesus' followers to love friends and enemies, to live without fear even as we lay down our lives in service to anyone in need; to serve the Prince of Peace and bring His Kingdom here even as we wait for Him to come again.

Are you overwhelmed by the world today? My prayer is that during this week of Advent you will meet the true *Prince of Peace* — and join His earth-shattering Kingdom, already set in motion.

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Questions for You:

- How does peace sound out of step with your experience of the world?
- How does following the Prince of Peace put you at odds with the world's kingdoms?
- What are some tangible ways you, your family, and your church/club can spread the good news of God's peace and His Kingdom during this season?

Questions for Kids:

- When do you feel peace?
- How is peace different from what you normally feel?
- Did you know that when Jesus was born, His Father announced that He brought "peace on earth?" How can you bring Jesus' peace to your family, neighborhood, or school?