

Isaiah 9:2-7

PEACE

[1]

Children's Sermon:

If all the kids, in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade, could come up here and sit with me on the carpet, I'd like to talk to you for a little bit!

Good morning, boys and girls! I'm going to ask you a few questions, so please raise your hand if you have something you'd like to say, ok?

Do you know what a "nickname" is?

Do you have a nickname?

Some nicknames are just versions of our name that are fun – my name is David, but people in college called me Dave, and my mom still calls me Davey Crockett. My daughter Clara, I call her "clara-lara"

Some nicknames are silly – like, if I called Mr. Jared, who's really tall, if I called him "shorty." Like Robin Hood's friend, "Little John" – he was actually huge! Or Chewbacca, when Princess Leia calls him a Walking Carpet, and Han Solo calls him Fuzzball. One of my nicknames was "Gazelle," because someone thought I looked like one running across a soccer field, then all my friends started calling me that! Sometimes, nicknames are for something that we do. Like, Mr. Scooter – who used to scoot around real fast as a little boy. Or a basketball player who was called Pistol Pete – he was a great shooter, so that nickname described him!

Even though a nick name isn't your REAL name, it helps describe you in some way. It could help people know something about you when they meet you.

In the Bible verses I'm going to preach from today, there's a lot of names for the Messiah, the Savior that God promised... and they're kind of like nicknames. They each tell us something about the Messiah, so we'd recognize Him when we see Him, and we'd know something about him without ever meeting him.

The prophet Isaiah said that the Messiah would be a wonderful counselor. What is a counselor?

Isaiah said he'd be the Mighty God – what does Mighty mean?

Isaiah also said he'd be the Everlasting Father – what do you think that means?
And lastly, Isaiah said he'd be the Prince of Peace – what is Peace?

This Christmas, you'll hear LOTS of names for Jesus – Mary's baby, Immanuel, the infant, the Messiah, the Christ, the Lord, and the ones we've already talked about – so as you hear these names, which are kind of like Nicknames for Jesus, remember what each name says ABOUT Jesus – he's so amazing that we need ALL These names to try to describe how amazing He is!

Can I pray for you?

As the kids head back to their seats, Would you stand with me as we read our text this morning, from Isaiah 9:2-7

[2 – 5] Text

This is the Word of God for the people of God – you may be seated.

[6] This morning, we will spend most of our time focused on just one name of the Messiah, the Prince of Peace. This short text, part of a much longer prophecy delivered by Isaiah to Ahaz of Judah, is LOADED with powerful truths. Each of the descriptions of the Messiah here is its own sermon. Each of these names is woven throughout the Scripture pointing to Jesus as the promised Messiah. For today, we will focus most on the Peace that is Ours because of the Messiah.

Pastor Brad will be preaching through the book of Isaiah in 2018, so consider our brief time today as a teaser for what's to come. The book of Isaiah records Isaiah's prophecies during 3 different kings of Judah – Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah... whose names I will always remember because of Matthew's Begats, the song based on Matthew's genealogy of the Messiah. There is such irony in Jesus' lineage because these 3 were pretty terrible rulers, all contributing ultimately to Judah being conquered by Babylon and the kingly line of David dissipating such that it seemed that there would NEVER be a King like David...

Isaiah is heavily quoted in the NT – 83 times, by some counts. Jesus quotes from Isaiah 8 times. The most significant one may be the text that Jesus reads, in his hometown of Nazareth at the beginning of his ministry.

[7] “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

The book of Isaiah is All about the Messiah – in 3 parts, Isaiah gives us 3 big-picture views of the coming Messiah, in light of the coming judgments on God’s people. Isaiah is a prophet, speaking God’s words to the people of God, and especially to the rulers of God’s people. Unfortunately, people don’t always listen to what God has to say, do they? This human tendency is highlighted by the choices that these Kings make through Isaiah’s teaching – we have the historical accounts of Kings and Chronicles that show us the other side of the story, as it were.

Ben McGuire read this text, Isaiah 9:2-7, as he lit the candle of Hope last week – the fullness of this picture of the Messiah is our sure and certain hope. At the right time, God sent His Son, through a miraculous birth, to fulfill the Law of God and to fulfill the Prophets. Each week of Advent helps us remember a particular theme, and last week was Hope – even in the pit of despair, God is able and indeed DOES work all things to his glory for our good. There is Hope, as we see perfectly pictured in the fulfilled hopes of the first Advent, and as we see perfectly anticipated in the second Advent, Jesus return.

[8] This week’s theme, as we have seen, is Peace. Peace is a prominent theme throughout the Scripture, especially peace as it is understood in Hebrew – the word ‘shalom’ – say that with me! Even the way the word sounds brings a measure of peace to the temperament of the speaker. We will explore more of the importance of this word in a few moments.

[9] As you may have picked up a few minutes ago, these names of the Messiah in Isaiah’s prophecy are quite a bit more than nicknames – they are facets of the power and character of the Messiah. Wonderful Counselor – Mighty God – Everlasting Father – Prince of Peace... Each name tells us something about who the Messiah IS, or for the original hearers, who the Messiah WOULD BE.

And it takes ALL these names, plus many more throughout the Old Testament, to properly attempt to name the Messiah!

My granddaddy was an amazing man. He passed away 3 years ago, and one of the things that my uncle John, who delivered the eulogy, pointed out was that my granddaddy had a LOT of names. He was James Ercelle Stephenson, born here in Angier, so I don't know where the Ercelle part came from but there it is. Some people called him James... just like sometimes folks call Pastor Brad Carl – usually people who don't know him yet! But my granddaddy was James, and he was also more commonly called Ercelle. He was sometimes called Erk, short for Ercelle. He was also given the nickname Steve, from the last name Stephenson. He was Daddy to his son and three daughters, he was Granddaddy to his 8 of his grandkids, and Buddy to the other 3 grandkids.

It takes ALL of those names to describe my Granddaddy – James Ercelle Stephenson, Erk, Steve, Daddy, Granddaddy, Buddy – and the fullness of what each name brings... then you get a slight glimpse of who he was and how he lived.

It takes ALL of the names here in Isaiah – Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Immanuel—God with us, Suffering Servant, and the rest of the Bible - Messiah, Son of Man, Son of God, root of Jesse, Lion of Judah, Lamb of God... Yeshua, JESUS – which means Yahweh Saves... all of those names give us a facet of the beauty of the perfect, holy, only son of God the Father, but even taken all together they're only a glimpse of who he is and how he lived, and what he'll be like when we live with him forever.

Let's look closely at our text for a bit.

[10] This section in chapter 9 is the climax of a section that begins in chapter 7 – where we also find a prophecy of the Messiah quoted during this time of year – and the virgin shall deliver a child and you will call his name Immanuel, God with us. This specific section here is an oracle of Isaiah that is shaped by what the Lord does, what the people of God enjoy, and the so what – the long-term implications of what God has done.

This first verse is translated into English in the past tense – but this is a Hebrew way of communicating the certainty of hope in God’s Words. It’s not quite as simplistic as “God said it, I believe it, that settles it,” but it’s actually pretty similar. God said that the people WILL SEE a great light, and the prophet then records that as the people HAVE SEEN a great light. It’s a forward looking, predictive prophecy, but the prophet is so certain of God’s Word that he wants the people hearing to share that hope. God said it, it’s gonna happen, might as well say it happened.

It’s like saying, the Panthers will win today, by saying, the Panthers have won. If only, right?

As I mentioned previously, ALL of Isaiah is pointing toward the Messiah – glimpses of the One who was to come are built into every part of this prophetic book. Each part of this prophecy in particular alludes to Jesus, specifically, the one who perfectly fulfills every Messianic prophecy.

In our very first verse, the Messiah is described as a great light. In John 8, Jesus says, I am the light of the world. Those who follow me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

Verse 3 continues to describe the reaction of the people as the work of God is described. God has multiplied, God has increased joy. Recall John 15, where Jesus speaks of the Vine, and says that he has said these things so that HIS joy would be in us, that our joy would be FULL.

[11] In verse 4, GOD has broken the power of the oppressor. The oppressor is described in terms that would immediately remind the people of Israel and Judah, the first hearers of this prophecy, of the Exodus. God’s triumph over the enemies of God’s people, the important annual remembrance for God’s liberated children. Before we had Jesus birth and resurrection to celebrate, God’s people had Passover. The pivotal moment of the Passover is the obedience of God’s people to cover their doorposts in the blood of a lamb, that God’s judgment would pass them over. JESUS, the Messiah, is the lamb of God whose blood causes God’s judgment to pass right over US.

Verse 5 is a picture of military imagery, the boots and the garments rolled in blood. Because of what GOD has done, the military victory that HE has accomplished, the people may enter into the fruits of victory – a victory they did not win – that’s why Midian, and God’s provision of victory to Gideon, is mentioned. It is the Lord of Hosts who has won the victory over the enemy. This verse is in some ways reminiscent of the vision John has in Revelation – God will have his victory as the Messiah ultimately conquers EVERY enemy. God has won through the Messiah, both now and in what is to come. The victory is so sure that again the prophet can use verbs in the past tense – the rod and staff of the enemy have been broken.

[12] By what way do the Lord’s people enter a salvation they don’t earn? How does God prepare the way for His people? By the mere fact of the King’s birth. Here in verse 6, the emphasis rests not on *to us* but on *a child is born*. Our American tendency is to read, for to US a child is born. The text would actually read, for to us, a CHILD is BORN. And not just any child, but a son who has the full inheritance of the Father.

And the government shall be upon his shoulder. This has multiple meanings. The sign of rank is worn on the shoulder – so upon his shoulder, he shall bear the rank above any other rank. There is also the more literal meaning, that the Messiah will physically bear the weight of governing. Rather than the yoke or staff of the oppressor’s government, or the failed governing of the kings of Israel and Judah, The Messiah will bear the government, ruling in perfect justice. And as the church father Justin Martyr reminds the Christians of the 2nd century and US, Jesus carried the cross on his shoulder. Jesus’ obedience to death on a cross is the reason why God has exalted him and given him the name above every name – at the name of Jesus, the Messiah, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that he is LORD, that he is the ruler above all rulers. Because he has borne the cross on his shoulder, he is worthy to sustain the government.

And his name shall be called – these names are the essential characteristics of the Messiah. He is literally a wonder of a counselor, one with unfailing wisdom. He is the Mighty God, moving in the very power of God himself to accomplish victory. He is the Everlasting Father, who will care for his subjects, his children, forever. And he is the Prince of Peace, who will administer peace to his entire kingdom, which is all of creation.

Motyer describes that,

[13] The perfection of this King is seen in his qualification for ruling (*Wonderful Counsellor*), his person and power (*Mighty God*), his relationship to his subjects (*Everlasting Father*) and the society his rule creates (*Prince of Peace*).

What beautiful names for our Messiah – what comforting truths about our God, the Father who would send his Son to be this Messiah, then leave the Spirit to continue the work until the Messiah's return.

[14] And the rule that the Prince of Peace creates, it will continue to increase until all of creation recognizes Him.

This Davidic connection is key for understanding both the Messiah and the promises that God made. Remember, God promised that the Messiah would be of David's line – but Literally NO ONE other than Solomon had sat on the throne of David – the kingdom fell apart upon Solomon's death. So the people of God had already been longing for someone to sit on that throne for a while. When Isaiah gives this prophecy, there are two Kingdoms, a divided nation with rulers who, although they are FAMILY, do not recognize the other's place of authority. All of the people longed for a ruler who would be a new Solomon – a wise counselor. The name Solomon is derived from SHALOM – man of peace. The people of God longed for a true man of peace, for David's perfect heir to come and rule, and Isaiah confirms that this Prince of Peace will rule with justice and righteousness forever and ever.

And the people can't make this happen – the zeal, the passion, of the Triune GOD will do this.

The Peace of God is Ours – through this Messiah, who will be the Prince or administrator of Peace.

But what does Peace mean? What is Shalom? (say it with me again)

When we think of peace, generally, we think of the cessation of fighting. We may think of 'peace and quiet,' and all the moms say amen. Peace in our house is attained when all children are asleep. And maybe if we are then not arguing. So we may passingly refer to peace as when it's quiet in our house and no one is fighting, right?

We've been hearing about Jerusalem recently – the city of peace. The people of Israel and the Palestinians both long for peace – but not just the cessation of fighting. That's not what these folks have in mind when they use the word "peace."

[15] This is yet again an unfortunate translation issue from Hebrew to English... the English word Peace has these connotations – no more fighting, stillness, quiet. The Hebrew word SHALOM, and its Arabic cognate Salaam, is much more full - *Peace* in the OT is personal fulfilment (2 Kgs 22:20), well-being (Gen. 29:6), harmony (Exod. 4:18), peace with God (Num. 6:26; 25:12; Isa. 53:5). This is so much more than stillness or the cessation of fighting.

The verb, *šālēm*, means 'to be whole, to be finished, to fulfill, to be fulfilled, to be complete'. So a biblical peacemaker, as Jesus refers to as blessed, are those who seek to fulfill, who seek wholeness and the wellbeing of others.

The Peace that the Messiah brings is Peace with God, peace with others. The Shalom of God is Shalom WITH God, and Shalom with creation. And THIS is what we deeply long for, all of us. Believer and unbeliever alike – we all long for completeness, for wholeness, and that is accomplished through the Messiah, through Jesus, whose birth we celebrate.

Let's examine a few places in Scripture that remind us of the Peace of God that is Ours because of the Messiah.

[16]

Micah 5:2 - But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose coming forth is from of old,
from ancient days.

³ Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has given birth;
then the rest of his brothers shall return
to the people of Israel.

⁴ And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth.

⁵ And he shall be their peace.

Surely you see Jesus in that prophecy – the one from Bethlehem, the shepherd?
...and Jesus shall BE peace. Jesus is our completeness, our wholeness, our well-
being. He is the perfect son of God and Man, who exemplified what it means to be
truly human.

Luke 2:14 – Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with
whom he is pleased. The angels sang this song, soli deo gloria, gloria in excelsis
deo, because God sent wholeness, completeness, to those who recognize Jesus as
the Messiah. From the shepherds who first heard that song, to every person who
has heard the gospel, there is well-being and health for those who believe.

But before we get confused about what this well-being, this safety, this wholeness
entails... it's not a completeness found in material gain or wealth – the treasure is
the child who was born!

Eph 2:14 - For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken
down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility

Jesus has broken down the dividing walls that humans love to erect, especially humans in positions of power. As God's children, through Jesus Christ, we are one... because of what Jesus did in His incarnation, his life, his death, and his resurrection, those hostilities are eradicated. Jesus himself is our wholeness.

John 14:27 - Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

The Peace of God is ours – because God himself, Jesus Christ, has given His peace to those of us who follow him. Right after explaining that He is leaving the Spirit to lead us in all truth, Jesus says these words in John 14. Right there, plainly stated, the Peace of God is ours – because Jesus himself is our peace. God gave us a priceless gift in the birth of His Son, Jesus. And God has continued to give us Himself through the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of every believer. He has reconciled us, has made us right, and is making us whole and holy, until Jesus' second advent.

[17] So What?

I had a professor who would ask this at the end of every class. He'd lecture for 40 minutes about whatever, then stop just before the end and ask the rhetorical question, so what?

If we wanted to provide an answer, we had to have been paying attention – because what he was lecturing about ultimately had some point, or some use for us in ministry.

The fact that the Peace of God is OURS has a point – and there is much use for us in ministry. Remember, the role of the staff here at GCC, the job that Pastor Brad is tasked with as he preaches, the job that the Elders have as they shepherd, is to equip the saints, YOU, for the work of ministry.

[18] The peace of God is ours SO THAT people in Darkness will see Light.

- One of the church fathers, the venerable Bede, said that Christ's peace is brought to fruition through the ministry of the church.

That's why we light the Advent wreath, and why we light our individual candles from the Christ candle at Christmas Eve. The light has come and the Darkness CANNOT overcome it. We light another candle each week of Advent to visibly remind ourselves that the Darkness is pushed back, that His government will

increase, and he will reign in light forever. We light our candles on Christmas Eve to be reminded that the Church is the body of Christ in the world, until Jesus returns. We each bear His light into darkness, and we best not hide it under a bushel, or behind our convenience, or let the winds of culture cause us to flicker. The darkness cannot overcome the light. The peace of God is ours so that others will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.

[19] Our Peace, our wholeness, is IN Christ.

The only true wellbeing and wholeness our world will know is under the coming Lordship of Jesus, and it is our privilege to proclaim that Lordship already, though it is not yet completely here. The Church is an outpost of light, a beacon both warning everyone of the danger of sin and illuminating the glory of the Risen Jesus. Because of the baby born to die, we have peace WITH God, and peace IN God – and this is our message to the world. Come, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and Jesus will give you rest. Come, all who have fallen short, all who have sinned, and find peace, wholeness, in Jesus.

Would you stand as I pray, and remain standing as we sing together.