

Jesus will Bring Peace (Isaiah 2:4)

Prepared and preached by Pastor Steve Rhodes for and at Bethel Friends Church in Poland, OH on Sunday, December 4, 2022

The book “Team of Rivals” ends writing about Lincoln’s impact. I found a similar account in a New York Times article. The Times quotes Tolstoy.

Tolstoy said:

Once while traveling in the Caucasus I happened to be the guest of a Caucasian chief of the Circassians, who, living far away from civilized life in the mountains, had but a fragmentary and childish comprehension of the world and its history. The fingers of civilization had never reached him nor his tribe, and all life beyond his native valleys was a dark mystery. Being a Mussulman he was naturally opposed to all ideas of progress and education. I was received with the usual Oriental hospitality and after our meal was asked by my host to tell him something of my life. Yielding to his request I began to tell him of my profession, of the development of our industries and inventions and of the schools. He listened to everything with indifference, but when I began to tell about the great statesmen and the great generals of the world he seemed at once to become very much interested.

The conversation continued. Descriptions of the Czar. Napoleon. Frederick the Great. But the Circassian chief was clearly unhappy. Something was missing.

‘...You have not told us a syllable about the greatest general and greatest ruler of the world. We want to know something about him. He was a hero. He spoke with a voice of thunder; he laughed like the sunrise and his deeds were strong as the rock and as sweet as the fragrance of roses. The angels appeared to his mother and predicted that the son whom she would conceive would become the greatest the stars had ever seen. He was so great that he even forgave the crimes of his greatest enemies and shook brotherly hands with those who had plotted against his life. His name was Lincoln and the country in which he lived is called America, which is so far away that if a youth should journey to reach it he would be an old man when he arrived. Tell us of that man.’

[Remember who is telling the story. Not some run-of-the-mill humdrum storyteller, but the supreme master of Russian literature. Indeed, the Circassian chief as quoted by Stackelberg sounds more like Tolstoy than how I imagine a Circassian chief might sound. Regardless. Tolstoy told him

everything he knew about Lincoln. But the Circassian chief was not satisfied. He wanted something more. The story tells us that mere words are often not enough. He needed a photograph.]

I can hardly forget the great enthusiasm which they expressed in their wild thanks and desire to get a picture of the great American hero. I said that I probably could secure one from my friend in the nearest town, and this seemed to give them great pleasure...

One of the riders agreed to accompany me to the town and get the promised picture, which I was now bound to secure at any price. I was successful in getting a large photograph from my friend, and I handed it to the man with my greetings to his associates. It was interesting to witness the gravity of his face and the trembling of his hands when he received my present. He gazed for several minutes silently, like one in a reverent prayer; his eyes filled with tears. He was deeply touched and I asked him why he became so sad. After pondering my question for a few moments he replied: 'I am sad because I feel sorry that he had to die by the hand of a villain. Don't you find, judging from his picture, that his eyes are full of tears and that his lips are sad with a secret sorrow?'

Abe Lincoln did a lot of good, but did he bring peace, I mean real peace? Will politics bring about peace? Will our next President bring peace? Who is the hope of the world?

We are in an Advent series titled, "Jesus is the Hope of the World."

Today, I want to focus on Jesus bringing peace.

My theme: Jesus was prophesied as the hope of the world, Who will bring peace.

Advent candle:

The Advent wreath is a tradition of generations that represent the longing for the coming of Jesus, Our Savior. A candle on the wreath is lit each Sunday to signify the promise of the arrival of Christ, the Light of the World.

On this second Sunday of Advent, we light the candle of Peace. We live in times of challenge, of fear, of darkness. The world weighs heavy and there seems to be no hope of peace.

But we are promised peace. Jesus, our Light of the World, comes into our hearts now, if we accept Him and his saving Grace. As we struggle through the trials of

this world, we know that the peace that passes understanding is our hope for the future. In Christ, there is Hope and Peace.

Hope is Born Again

Let's read: Isaiah 2:1-4:

Isaiah 2:1–4 (ESV)

¹*The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.*

²*It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it,*

³*and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

⁴*He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.*

- I. Jesus will bring peace.
 - a. This passage was written some 700 years before Christ. This is a prophesy that still hasn't been fulfilled.
 - b. By the way, you can find, almost the exact same prophesy in Micah 4:1-3.
 - c. I want to mainly focus on verse 4, but let me give some background.
 - d. I stand here and say that Jesus is the hope of the world, and you may be wondering, how is He the hope of the world.
 - e. Listen, Jesus is the hope of the world in that He will bring peace.
 - f. I know you may be thinking, "Why don't we have peace yet, what is He waiting on?" I will tell you He is waiting for more to be saved. When peace comes judgment will also come. You can see 2 Peter 3:9 (ESV)
 - g. ⁹*The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*
 - h. In this passage Isaiah is writing about a future day. Many think this is the Millennial Reign which you can read about in Revelation 20:2-7. This could be talking about a time after that.

- i. Either way, it says that the Mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest mountain. In that day and age, it was a big deal for the mountain to be the highest.

The Weidner Chronicle declares that the city of Babylon should be elevated and exalted in all lands. In addition, Assyrian building inscriptions often talk about elevating the temple by restoring it and increasing its height. In Babylonian literature the Marduk Prophecy (from several centuries before Isaiah) announces the future elevation of Babylon with the temple doubled in height. That text also mentions returning the scattered ones (by which it means the statues of the gods that have been disenfranchised from their temples). It continues by describing a period of peace, justice and prosperity, including the dismantling of fortresses. This general language of city restoration and elevation is therefore familiar in the rhetoric of the ancient Near East.

- j. That imagery would be familiar to the people.
 - k. The passage says that everyone will come to Jerusalem. God will teach, the Law of the Lord will go out.
 - l. Then we get to verse 4: He will judge. He will settle disputes.
 - m. They will beat their swords into plowshares.
 - n. This means that instead of swords, you'll need a plow.
 - o. You won't need to be prepared for battle or defense.
 - p. Beat their spears into pruning hooks.
 - q. Instead of spears for defense, you will need to farm.
 - r. Jesus the hope of the world will bring peace.
- II. Let's apply:
- a. Who is your hope? Jesus is the hope of the world.
 - b. Will a politician bring peace? No, the baby in Bethlehem will bring peace.
 - c. Will a business leader bring peace? No, only Jesus, the Messiah who did not have a home, or business (Matthew 8:20; Luke 9:58).
 - d. What if we could get the right economy, will that bring peace? No, Jesus' economic policies were about self-sacrifice and giving and He will bring peace (Matthew 10:39; 16:25; Luke 9:23; 17:33).
 - e. Only Jesus will bring peace, He is the hope of the world.

Close:

In 1864, one of America's great poets, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, wrote the poem which became the well-known carol, "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." When I first heard this song, I wondered, "Why does he suddenly shift from joy at hearing the Christmas bells into such deep despair?" It starts with:

I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men!
Then he says:
And in despair I bowed my head:
“There is no peace on earth,” I said,
“For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men!”

The question is clearly answered when we see two verses of the original that are not included in our hymn. In these verses Longfellow speaks of the horrors of the American Civil War that was tearing the country apart. In fact, his son had been seriously wounded in that conflict not long before he wrote the song. (The death of Longfellow’s wife two years earlier may have contributed to his mood too.) Listen to what they say:

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good will to men!
It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearthstones of a continent
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

Little wonder he is tempted to despair. And yet he concludes with the resounding affirmation, "God is not dead, nor does he sleep!" Through the Savior whose birth the angels celebrated, God will accomplish what he has promised.

Jesus will bring peace.