

# Peace (Fourth Sunday of Advent)

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Date: 20 December 2020

Preacher: Pastor Sherry Mahar

[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 2 : 30 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[ 5 : 29 ] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[ 9 : 39 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We're going to be Thank you.

We know that we are in the world, thank you. We know that this is a season of gift-giving. And I think many people feel a little given out, not because of gifts but because of energy and chaos. So we come to this time of offering with the invitation to quiet ourselves and to be mindful that we are in the midst of remembering that we received the greatest gift ever.

And that all that God is asking of us is our heart, our lives, our service, and the ability to convey that love and care to other people no matter where we find ourselves.

[ 12 : 14 ] So I invite us, we'll have a couple of opportunities to be reflective. I invite us to join in the doxology and the prayer, and then there will be a time of quieter, thoughtful meditation.

Oh, wonderful God, all that we are and all that we hope to be, we receive from you.

So receive now so many gifts. Generosity, toys, blankets, food, comfort, friendship, cards, phone calls.

We give you thanks for all of these gifts and the opportunity to praise you. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Amen. I heard the bells on Christmas Day Their old familiar carols play Mild and sweet their songs repeat Peace on earth, good will to men And the bells are ringing

[ 14 : 44 ] Peace on earth Like a choir they're singing Peace on earth In my heart I hear them Peace on earth Good will to men In despair I bowed my head There is no peace on earth, I said For hate is strong and mocks the song Peace on earth, good will to men But the bells are ringing Peace on earth Like a choir singing

Peace on earth Does anybody hear them Peace on earth Good will to men Good will to men Then ring the bells more loud and deep God is not dead, nor does he sleep Peace on earth Peace on earth The wrong shall fail The right prevail With peace on earth In will to men Peace on earth Then ringing, singing on its way The world revolved from nine to eight

A voice, a voice, a chime, a chant So blind Peace on earth Peace on earth Peace on earth Good will to men Peace on earth And the bells are ringing Peace on earth Like a choir singing Peace on earth With our hearts we'll kill them Peace on earth Good will to men Peace on earth Good will to men Do you hear the bells are ringing Peace on earth Life the angels singing Peace on earth Open up your heart and hear them Peace on earth Good will to men

Peace on earth Good will to men Peace on earth Peace on earth Peace on earth Peace on earth Will never give a will to me Amen that was wonderful

As we come this morning church We are indeed in a space Where we are focused This day On the advent theme of peace And with peace On our minds Peace in our hearts Peace in our spirits Peace that only comes from God We are able to Go to God in prayer today Mindful of that peace Because in our world In our circumstances That are so free Or devoid of peace One place where we know we find it Is when we are in connection With our God Amen So let's open our hearts And go to God together In prayer Gracious and loving God We are amazed by grace Amazed by the grace That still flows to us Amazed by the grace That sustains us Amazed by the grace

[ 19 : 54 ] That gives us Such joy Such hope Such peace As we go through each day When our days Can be chaotic Full of news Of the ongoing pandemic Full of news Of ongoing economic strife Full of news From individual Friends and family members Who are dealing with Particular problems And circumstances We stand amazed By the grace That gives us peace In those circumstances So Lord We know that our peace Is deeper than our feelings We know that our peace Is more Than our circumstances Our peace Is a gift from you Our peace Flows from you That sense of

Your truth In the midst Of what the world Tells us That sense of Your presence In the midst Of all that is happening That sense Of you For who you are So with so much That is on our minds Today Thank you For the gift Of peace We pray peace Over those Who are struggling With this virus Struggling in body And need your healing touch We pray peace Over all of those Who need healing Today Whether it be Something physical Or whether it be Something mental Whether it be A relationship Or anything That is broken And needs healing Today We pray for those Who are in need We speak peace Into their hearts And souls as well Those who are not sure Of how certain Bills or obligations

Will be fulfilled Or those who are worried Where their next meal Will come from Let them know The truth of your peace And let your people Be willing to step Into that gap Whether you provide Miraculously on your own Or whether you work Through us And Lord In terms Of all that we face So much in our world We continue to pray For leaders Who must make Difficult decisions We continue to pray For those Who are Weighed down By whatever Is happening In their lives Those who are grieving Those who are hurting Those who simply need The energy For the next step Or the next task Let them know Your truth That they might know Your peace The peace that we Celebrate today The peace That we hold up today And Lord For those among us

For whom peace Feels far away Break through In a new way Remind them Of who you are And the gift Of your son To the world And the truth That we celebrate This week All of this We ask In the name Of Jesus The Christ Who makes All things possible The true Prince of peace Amen killing Xin gifts feelings Good morning.

The scripture this morning is from John 1, verses 1 through 5, and Isaiah 9, 6. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

[ 24 : 21 ] He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made. Without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. And now from Isaiah. 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. This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Thank you, Elizabeth.

So how many of us, when we hear those words, start singing to ourselves, Handel's Messiah? Oh, I love it. I love it. For unto us a son is born, unto us a son is given.

[ 25 : 30 ] And these are the words from Isaiah, Isaiah's words of expectation and hope for the coming Messiah. Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Jesus is the Prince of Peace. And the word peace is a word that means a lot more than what we usually understand it to mean.

It's a word, it is shalom. Have you ever heard that word before? Say it together. Shalom. Shalom. Shalom. In the Jewish culture, people say it when they greet one another.

Shalom. And what shalom means is more than just peace in the way that we have created it in our minds, but it means fullness, completeness, wholeness, restoration.

Jesus is our completeness. Jesus is the peace of Christ who makes us whole. Shalom. Shalom.

[ 26 : 34 ] And through Jesus, we have peace with God. In Colossians 1, 19 through 20, it says, For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Jesus, and through Jesus to reconcile himself to all things, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.

So we have peace with God through the cross of Jesus. So we have that, but then Jesus also gave us his peace.

On the night in which Jesus was preparing for himself to go the next day to be crucified, he's in the upper room with his disciples. And he's talking to them and sharing with them his last words, and in the midst of that he says, Peace I leave with you.

My peace I give to you. I give it to you. My peace is there for you. Jesus is our peace, abiding peace within ourselves, and peace within the world.

As the angels sang the first Christmas, Peace on earth, goodwill to all. Peace. Jesus gave it. It's always available to us, and yet we often do not see peace in the world.

[ 27 : 57 ] Amen? And often we don't even have peace within ourselves. I mean, I say that in 2020, there are challenging times, challenges to our peace.

I have this garden stone, or rather I had this garden stone. It's a stone, and it had a carving on it. It was a gift to me, and it had a carving of a cross on it, and then it said, Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

And I loved it. It was on my back patio, and I would look at it and meditate upon it, and sit there with my cup of coffee, doing devotions and things, and it was just there as a reminder.

And it was a source of comfort. It was a source of hope. It was a source of peace. I really enjoyed it. And then one day I walked out, and it was just on the ground in a pile of rubble, just a big pile of broken pieces.

And I have no idea what even happened. I have no idea. Did a storm come and take it away? Did the cat knock it over? I have no idea. I have no idea what happened, but all of a sudden this thing, this solid rock, is now nothing but a pile of broken pieces.

[ 29 : 15 ] And I think that's the way it can be in our lives sometimes, too. You know, one moment we're all at peace, and we're living like a solid rock, and then the next thing we know our peace is shattered, and we find ourselves in pieces instead of being in peace.

And when that happens, that doesn't mean that God's peace ever left us. But too often we're just not understanding or we're not trusting, we're not seeking, we're not experiencing the peace of Christ.

Jesus continued when he said, my peace I give to you. But he also said, I do not give you peace as the world gives. And yet, so often, instead of seeking the peace of Christ, we do go after the peace of the world by what that definition is.

The world's peace is darkness, darkness, and it's formed by the enemy. It's fragile and it's false. It quickly and easily crumbles into many broken pieces.

The world's sense of peace is completely based upon circumstances. Falsely believing that peace is when I don't have any troubles, when everything's going my way.

[ 30 : 36 ] Everything's peaceful, right? Well, it's easy to be in peace when that happens. Peace. Everything's perfect. How many of us have a perfect life at all times?

No. What happens then is when everything starts not going our way, when we start having difficult circumstances, we start getting upsets, we start getting pain, disappointments, fear, all these things in life start happening, we end up in pieces because we falsely believed that our circumstances defined our peace.

And then we still continue to seek after the world because the world's solution to that, you're in pieces. Let me show you the way to get some peace. And we go after things that numb us for it.

You know, what do they call it? Retail therapy? You know, you're not feeling okay and so you're just going to go out and spend a lot of money? Or maybe we gorge ourselves with food or drink too much alcohol or we use drugs or we just, you know, lose ourselves in the middle of social media, whatever it may be for you or for me.

We end up going in this direction because we're seeking to numb ourselves, a momentary relief, a distraction. Believing that when we don't feel anything at all, we're at peace.

[ 32 : 02 ] But the thing is, when the numbing stops, we face the reality that we really had no peace through any of that really. And too often, then the cycle just starts over and over again and we just continue in this way.

As the troubles continue, we continue to be in pieces and not in peace. The world and the enemy do not bring peace.

Only Jesus, the Prince of Peace, brings us peace, real peace, lasting peace, eternal and sustaining peace. Jesus continued saying, my peace I give to you.

I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. But then the next sentence he says, in this world, you will have trouble.

What? And again, I'm saying this in 2020. Can we all recognize that there is trouble in the world? Amen? There is trouble in the world. There is trouble.

[ 33 : 07 ] I mean, we're facing Christmas 2020, which is going to be different. And for some of us, it's going to be painfully different. And yet, Jesus is saying that peace is not based on those circumstances.

That it is possible to have peace through Christ even when there's trouble. Jesus said, in me you may have peace.

Yes, there's going to be trouble. Yes, there's going to be difficulties. There's going to be pain. There's going to be conflict. There's going to be all this stuff. But take heart. I have overcome the world.

You see, we have the trouble and the conflict. But peace through Christ is the ability to go through it with the peace of Christ.

To cope with it. To stand strong in it. To remain whole. Shalom. Through it. And not be in pieces, but be in peace.

[ 34 : 15 ] And there are troubles in the world that threaten to break us and leave us in pieces instead of in peace. It can happen to any of us. So, we need to protect ourselves.

We need to protect ourselves from it and we need to learn what to do if and probably when this does happen to us. peace on earth. Whether it be a long-term eroding and wearing down or an instantaneous breaking that takes us unaware and it's just suddenly you find yourself in pieces.

Whatever it is, we have to be ready. It's so important. It's so important. Not only for ourselves, but for others. Peace on earth.

Goodwill to all. Well, peace with others requires us to have peace within ourselves. God called us to be peacemakers, to carry the peace of Christ within us to others.

The light shining within us into the darkness with others. And when relating to others, dealing with conflict and brokenness in relationships, it begins with peace in us.

[ 35 : 27 ] The peace of Christ within us. So that we can respond to others in difficult relationships with shalom. And if we don't, what happens is we react.

Our broken pieces, we're in broken pieces and those are often used as weapons, places of harm. We end up having those broken pieces that have not yet been healed and we cast them out and we hurt.

Too often we've been in pieces and not in peace within ourselves and with others. And so I invite you to a prayer of confession along with me.

Please repeat after me. Jesus, I need you. I've not always sought you. I've not always trusted you. I've tried to handle things on my own.

I've believed the lie of the enemy. I have made wrong choices. I have sometimes hurt others. Forgive me, Lord.

[ 36 : 41 ] Fill me with your peace that I may live in your shalom forever. Amen. Amen. See, when we feel ourselves crumbling, breaking down in pieces with life out of alignment and needing to be restored, we need to choose restoration.

We need to choose wholeness. We need to choose shalom through the peace of Christ, which takes time, takes intentionality.

It takes an awareness so that we catch it soon enough so that it does not take root in our heart. It does not take root in our mind. It does not take root through our mouth.

When we get in pieces, we need to pause. We need to pray. We say, okay, yeah, I do that already. I pray already. But there's more to it than that because especially in that moment, we have a hard time where you just say to God.

This is an intentional way of praying. And in the moment, it's hard to remember. So I came up with an acronym to help us all remember so that we can experience shalom.

[ 38 : 07 ] So the acronym is for peace and the first thing is P is for presence. get into God's presence. It's more than just saying, you know, to God.

It's then taking the time after to soak with God, to experience God, to be filled with the power of God, to have the presence of God dwell within us.

When we start feeling this way and we start having ourselves feeling like we're in pieces, we have to ask ourselves straight out, how's my prayer life? How's my prayer life?

Because we need to shift and get into the presence of God. And when we get in the presence of God, E is for exalt. To exalt God. Who God is.

God, you are my wonderful counselor who gives divine wisdom and guidance. mighty God who is stronger than anything we can face. Everlasting Father who loves his children forever.

[ 39 : 10 ] And Prince of Peace who gives us shalom, wholeness, and restoration. Jesus the Christ who is there in the beginning. Our life, our light shines in our darkness and the darkness will not overcome it.

We exalt God in his presence. And then A is for acknowledge. Acknowledge how we have already been blessed. And in times of trouble that can be so difficult because it's so quick to forget.

We go right to the situation and we think everything's bad but really we are richly blessed and we need to acknowledge that. We need to acknowledge that we're richly blessed and we need to acknowledge who we are in Christ.

The truth of who we are. See when our peace begins to crumble it can usually be traced back to some stinking thinking. Believing the lies of the enemy instead of the truth of God.

We need to acknowledge the truth. Wonderful counselor what lie am I believing that makes me feel this way? What lie am I believing that makes me react this way?

[ 40 : 24 ] What am I believing about myself or others that is a lie? Am I believing that I'm not forgiven or I'm not worthy or that I'm not loved or that God won't provide or that God isn't there for me?

Am I dwelling on and focusing on guilt or shame or condemnation or unworthiness or powerlessness or anger or bitterness the list goes on. Am I dwelling on things that are not of God?

Am I dwelling on things of the past with sorrow and the future with fear? What are the lies that I'm filling my head with? And I acknowledge in this time the truth.

The truth. Because it goes back to stinking thinking. The truth. And God says to me and God says to you hear me child I know you I forgive you I love you and I am here for you.

Hear the good news. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners and this proves God's love for you and for me.

[ 41 : 42 ] In the name of Jesus Christ your sins are forgiven. Glory to God. Amen.

My sins are forgiven. Your sins are forgiven. And that's an important thing to remember. Because when dealing with others then we acknowledge not only what's true for us but we also acknowledge what's true for them.

That they too are made in God's image. That they too are loved. And it can be so difficult in challenging relationships but we have to take the time and intentionality to really acknowledge that.

Because when we acknowledge that it changes the way we connect with others. Instead of reacting with hurling our broken pieces we respond in peace in difficult relationships.

Responding with love forgiveness and grace knowing that we have received that as well. Because we can do it from a place of wholeness of shalom.

[ 42 : 53 ] And so C is for center. Center we're going to put Jesus at the center where Christ is at the center of all we do. We have our mind and our heart focused on Jesus' presence with us in the situation not on the situation itself.

If we start looking around at the situation itself we're going to go further into pieces this is not it. We're going to say Jesus I know you're here with me. Where are you? Show yourself to me. It's a question of trust.

It's practicing trust. When Jesus is at the center we receive the counsel of God and we ask ourselves okay God all of this is going on you're here in this moment show me what's my part in this.

What do you want me to do? What do you want me to change? Lead me guide me I want to focus on your way what you want for your will what do you want me to do?

Because when we're in pieces and not in peace we react to a situation and usually the first thing that comes out is our will and our will is usually not pretty our will is usually not good it comes out as anger as fear as doubt whatever but with Jesus as the center we're seeking Jesus' will and Jesus' will is much different much different than what we usually react to put Jesus in the center and then Jesus is in control and when Jesus is in control we come to an acceptance to that there are some things in this broken world this world full of troubles that can't be changed but in the midst of that we can lean into the peace of Christ for endurance for strength from our mighty God Jesus at the center of it all confirms that Jesus has it

[ 44 : 57 ] Jesus has got this and so E our very last letter which I find to be the hardest of all of them is exhale let it go oh that's so hard you know we say we pray and then prayer ends up being not only praying but and I will worry about it and I'm gonna fret about it and I'm gonna wring my hands about it and I'm going to freak out about it and I'm not saying it's not okay to be concerned about something but concern leads to an action that's how caregiving happens right but the other the carrying of all this turmoil the broken pieces inside of us it leads to brokenness further it's like Jesus is standing there with us in that moment and we're saying all this stuff and Jesus is like I hear you I'm here give that to me and we say yeah and Jesus yes

I hear it give that to me give that to me and so often we say no no I'm gonna keep that I'm gonna hold that I'm gonna carry that we need to go exhale trusting that God has it within ourselves every trouble every circumstance exhale with others in difficult relationships exhale and exhaling includes forgiveness let those things go letting go of the past let that go releasing ourselves from bitterness let that go all those things that we want to hold on to but cause us to be in pieces we let it go exhale and when we exhale letting go and letting

God have it it releases us it frees us to seek shalom for the other person and between us peace on earth good will to all probably the first way to start that peace within ourselves and then whenever we start thinking of someone that we're having an issue with instead of regurgitating all of the negativity in our minds let's pray let's pray let's think shalom let's pray shalom shalom to them shalom seek peace you see peace is always always available to us God wants us to be in his peace and not in pieces within ourselves and with others we need to make it a practice it takes time it takes intentionality it takes awareness

Philippians 4:7 says and the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus so that when troubles come because they will we can be protected and we can stand strong abiding in Jesus peace and when we find ourselves starting to crumble or experiencing unexpectedly broken pieces within ourselves or with others we go to Jesus who has given us shalom completeness wholeness restoration peace that passes all understanding and through us transforms the world peace on earth good will to all amen amen amen the Lord be with you lift up your hearts let us give thanks to the Lord our God it is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to raise our voices to you tuning ourselves to you the creator of heaven and earth you filled the night of creation with music and light setting in motion the rhythms of sunrise and sunset sound and silence you formed us with your love song and breathed into us the breath of life sometimes our voices are choked and we cannot find your melody but you keep the bass line humming waiting for us to rejoin the chorus you show up in the worst of times offering us the way to freedom in you your voice breaks through and prophets whose songs wake us up to the kingdom you desire and so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn holy holy holy lord god of power and might heaven and earth are full of your glory hosanna in the highest blessed is he who comes in the name of the lord hosanna in the highest holy are you and blessed is your son Jesus Christ breaking forth into light from the blessed darkness of a womb he brought light that illumined a path so we could see our way to beloved community your spirit anointed him to raise his voice to preach good news to the poor and to proclaim release to the captives recovering of sight to the blind to set at liberty those who are oppressed and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people he healed the sick fed the hungry and ate with sinners and invited us to do the same born into a world of suffering he suffered born into a world of senseless death he died born into a world that needed hope he rose delivering us

and proclaiming light and life triumph for the living and the dead when the lord ascended he promised to be with us always in the power of your word and holy spirit holy savior lighting our way on the night which he gave himself up for us he took bread gave thanks to you and broke the bread and he gave it to his disciples and he said take and eat this is my body broken for you do this in remembrance of me when the supper was over he took the cup gave thanks to you and gave it to his disciples and said drink from this all of you this is my blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me and so in remembrance of your mighty acts in Jesus Christ we offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith Christ has died Christ is risen Christ will come again pour out your holy spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and cup make them be for us your love and light so that our hearts may be open in service to you and to the world by your spirit make us one with Christ one with each other and one in ministry to all the world mix our voices in harmony with each other until we all sit at the same table and all sing in the same choir in your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven through your son Jesus Christ with the holy spirit in your holy church all honor and glory is yours almighty God now and forever amen let's join in the Lord's prayer our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever amen as we take the cracker and you carefully take off your masks for just this minute the body of Christ broken for you and the blood of Christ shed for you amen and by the way and I'll be and I'll pray

[ 56 : 18 ] It came upon the midnight clear That glorious song of old From angels bending near the earth To touch their harps of gold It's all the earth could will to men From heaven's all-gracious tea The world in solemn stillness played To hear the angels sing For though the days are hastening on

By prophets seeing the bold When with the ever-circling years Shall come the time  
foretold When peace shall over all the earth Its ancient slanders flee And the whole world  
hear back the song Reach down the angels sing When I first saw that stone that said,  
Lord, make me an instrument of your peace Was shattered.

My first response was honestly, Great. Now I've got to throw it out. It's garbage now. And  
then I recognized just how ridiculous that is Because it is in many ways a symbol Of how  
often I feel.

I don't know about you, But I certainly do. And so I'm going to glue it all back together. I'm  
going to do my very best. And I'm going to look at that And say, you know what?

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. And yet in the midst of this, I know you are  
the one Who mends the broken pieces. Who is the healer.

[ 58 : 49 ] Who is my shalom. And Lord, make me an instrument of your peace Is from the prayer of  
St. Francis. And I'd like to end with that prayer.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love.  
Where there is injury, pardon. Where there is doubt, faith.

Where there is despair, hope. Where there is darkness, light. Where there is sadness, joy.  
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek To be consoled as to console.

To be understood as to understand. To be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we  
receive. It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen. Shalom to all of you, my friends.  
Go in peace.

[ 59 : 51 ] Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.