

## How the Prince of Peace Heals the World

Isa 9, LK 2, Rev 22

HoHoHo! Merry Christmas! Got your Christmas cards mailed? Got your house all decorated? Presents under the tree? Cookies made for Santa and carrots for the reindeer? Cool. You're ready for the big day!

But... did you know that right now, during this Christmas season, there are 44 major & minor wars going on in the world? These range from a civil war in Mozambique which claimed 110 lives this year, to the War in Syria which has claimed over 46,000 lives in 2016 alone.

Merry Christmas indeed. More like Bah-Humbug! Seems like peace on earth and goodwill towards men is in pretty short supply.

It's not because we don't want it...everyone wants world peace! In the 2000 movie, Ms Congeniality, Sandra Bullock plays an FBI agent going undercover as Ms New Jersey in the Ms USA pageant. My favorite quote from the movie is when she is asked: "*What is the one most important thing our society needs? Gracie: That would be... harsher punishment for parole violators, Stan.... And world peace!*"

It's a serious question though, how will the world ever experience peace?

Many, many years ago I took a class at BC in classical philosophy, and one of the great philosophers we read was Immanuel Kant. I do not believe I ever understood a single word he wrote. However, here's what he wrote about world peace: "*Perpetual peace is no empty idea, but a practical thing which, through its gradual solution, is coming always nearer its final realization...*"--- **Immanuel Kant**

Here, then is a man, obviously a lot more intelligent than most of us, who believes that essentially, mankind is evolving ever closer to this utopian ideal of world peace. What do you think? I think he's nuts. I mean, did he not read the newspapers? There were just as many

wars, conflicts, violent crimes, and murders in his day. Ironic that the solution he was hoping for was in front of his nose his entire life, and he never got it! His first name, *Immanuel*, God with us! World peace can only happen when God is with us... when Immanuel reigns.

A different approach comes to us from another great philosopher from a past age: **Conan the Barbarian** who said, "*What is best in life? To crush your enemies, have them driven before you and hear the lamentation of their women.*" Yeah! Peace through crushing things!

Peace on earth... so is it just an impossible dream? Peace between nations... peace between races... peace in our inner cities... peace in our homes... peace in our hearts?

That's where peace on earth has to start... with you... with me... right here, in our hearts. But how does that happen?

If I had to write a subtitle for the entire Bible, this would be it:

**The Bible**  
***"How the Prince of Peace Heals the World"***.

You see, we began this Garden to City series through the Bible last January with God's creation in Genesis 1. Kelly reminded us last week that everything God created was "*tov*" – It was all **Good**. We also saw that it didn't take long for human beings to mess up the **Good** that God had created. They went their own way. They messed things up for all of us. So that now, our relationship with God is fractured, our relationships with one another are shallow and dysfunctional, the environment of our planet has been polluted, and our souls are sick & tired.

This world needs peace. It needs healing on so many levels. And that is ***the rest of the story*** of the Bible: "***How the Prince of Peace Heals the World***".

A couple of weekends ago, Katie & I went to see a performance of Handel's Messiah... not just the Hallelujah Chorus, but the whole thing. It was amazing – transporting. All of the lyrics

come directly from the Scriptures, you know. One of my favorite songs is “For Unto Us a Child is Born,” which you just heard. The Scripture is Isaiah 9:2, 6-7;

*“The people who walk in darkness will see a great light.*

*For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine.*

*For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders.*

*And he will be called:*

***Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.***

*His government and its peace will never end.”*

600 years before Christ, Isaiah made that prophecy... that a child would be born... a son given... a son unlike any other... A son who would be called: Wonderful Counselor! The Mighty God! The Everlasting Father! ***The Prince of Peace!*** What a thrilling prophecy... And for 600 years the world waited in hope for the One who would usher in a government of **peace.**

**So...**

**How does the Prince of Peace heal the world?**

- ***He became one of us!***

He came in person... He didn't just send an ambassador. God Himself became a human being! “*When the time had fully come, God sent His Son!*” (Gal 4:4) We heard Linus tell the story of His Advent, but it bears repeating: (Luke 2:8-14)

*“That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. <sup>9</sup>Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified, <sup>10</sup>but the angel reassured them. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. <sup>11</sup>**The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!** <sup>12</sup>And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger...”*

*Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,*

*“Glory to God in highest,*

*and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”*

The birth of Jesus was heralded by armies of angels, announced to lowly shepherds, witnessed by barn animals, presaged by a star, and paid homage to by kings. His parents were ordinary. His circumstances were poverty. He grew up a carpenter with calloused hands. And until the day of His baptism by John in the Jordan, his life was unremarkable. But on that day everything changed. On that day, He was announced as Immanuel, the Son of God: **God with us!**

### **How does the Prince of Peace heal the world?**

- *He became one of us*
- *He loved us.*

In the gospels it was all **one on one** – one person at a time, one life at a time – one story after another of people who were healed in some way by Jesus. People who encountered the Prince of Peace were always changed... or at least offered the possibility of change. Some of my favorite stories involved His encounters with **lepers**... in those days, leprosy was seen not only as an incurable physical disease, but as a sign of judgment and the curse of God. Lepers were outcasts, they were unclean, no one in their right mind would associate with them... and no one would ever, under any circumstances, ever touch them; for to do so would be to become unclean and infected yourself.

Their lives were over. They were the Walking Dead. But then Jesus came. And every single time He encountered one of these poor unfortunates, He healed him... not just by saying words, not by demanding some act of contrition, but by **touching them**... by hugging them! Imagine! This person had not felt a loving human touch since the day the first spot appeared!

Jesus loved them, touched them, and absorbed into Himself all of their uncleanness. And they were healed... totally! Permanently!

**Jesus simply loved people!** His prayers were powerful. His teaching was revolutionary. His miracles were mind-boggling. His friends were whores & hooligans. His touch brought healing and His words brought freedom. His power gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and speech to the mute. His grace forgave sin. His love crossed racial, religious, and ethnic barriers and made heroes out of outcasts. He was unique among men, and His life was for us all the way, loving us all the way... even to the bitter end.

**How does the Prince of Peace heal the world?**

- *He became one of us*
- *He loved us.*
- *He died for us*

His suffering was horrible, but His death bought for us forgiveness and peace with God. And His resurrection... His physical resurrection from the dead gave us a glimpse of what God has in store for humanity!

The Prince of Peace heals the world by giving Himself up for her... by absorbing her guilt and shame and death and by replacing them with freedom, grace, and New Life... one person at a time. Just like the lepers... Peace through the healing of our souls even today.

That's all well and good one may say, that personal peace thing... but what about the world... the whole global mess? **How does the Prince of Peace heal the whole world?** Well, this may be the coolest thing of all:

- *He returns for us!*

He returns, He reigns, and He makes all things new! You, me, us, the planet... all of creation... not just renewed... **re-created!** He makes all things new! This is what the world groans for! This is what our souls yearn for! It's what we were made for. Listen!

*"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared.*

*"Look, I am making everything new!" ... "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true." "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life." Rev 21:1, 5-6*

*"Then the angel showed me a river with the **water of life**, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew **a tree of life**, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine **to heal the nations.**"*

The tree of life! This was the same tree that was in the center of the original Garden of Eden! And now we know why it's there: it's there for **the healing of the nations!** This isn't just the ceasing of hostilities. This is no temporary truce. This is the end of wars and animosities and ambitions and imperialism and totalitarianism. It is the end of poverty and hunger and disease and racism and injustice. This is the deep healing that our world desperately needs, and that no human government can ever provide. When the Prince of Peace comes again, the government will be upon **His** shoulders, and there will be no end to its peace. He comes again globally, to heal the nations.

*"No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. <sup>4</sup> And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever." Rev 22:3-5*

On Dec 25, 1914, Allied and German forces faced each other from trenches across a No Man's Land that was completely cratered, burned, and devoid of any living thing. Christmas morning dawned silently, and soon, with the absence of bullets flying through the air, heads popped up

out of trenches on both sides. Greetings were exchanged, and a truce was agreed upon for the day. German and English soldiers laid down their weapons, crossed over No Man's Land, and exchanged cigarettes and other goods. Christmas carols were sung in both German and English. A soccer game even took place. The truce lasted throughout the day and Christmas night.

It was magical. Enemies met and shook hands... and found that they were the same. They all were human beings with hearts and souls and loved ones waiting at home. Think of the pictures that were shared soldier to soldier of wives and girlfriends and children. They all wanted a better world for their kids. They all longed for the days of peace when farmers could farm and bakers could bake and life was normal.

The sad ending to the story is of course, that the peace was soon shattered again. Some officer gave an order and the bullets started flying once more. What a horrible waste. But for a brief interlude, centered around the **Prince of Peace**, we got a glimpse of **world peace**. When Jesus returns, that will be permanent!

*"I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." Rev 21: 3-4*

Wow. What a day that will be! Meanwhile...

***The Prince of Peace still heals the world...*** one person at a time. Do you know Him? *Do you know Him?*

His promises for your **future** include world peace and a New Creation ... but His promises for your **present** include ***peace between you and God. Soul peace.***

*Do you know Him?*

Someday He will come to right every wrong and to bring in a government of beauty and justice and love. But right now His promises for you are complete and total forgiveness for every sin you have committed, adoption into His family, and a totally reconciled relationship with God. Imagine: a clean slate... a new family... a fresh start... a whole new life begun in you.

*Do you **know** Him?*

The Prince of Peace is here... waiting for you to invite Him into your heart. Like the carol says, "Where good souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in."

If you don't know Him yet, open your heart! What better time to do this than Christmas?! You may be afraid of what will happen. You may expect harshness & judgment. But you will receive peace and you will experience love. He loves you.

And what if you do know Him already? If the Prince of Peace already makes His home in your heart? Well, then, don't just sit there in your Lazy Boy reading your Bible and waiting for His return. Get up! Do something! Do your job! Find your mission in this world... God knows there is plenty to do! Get out there and spread God's love somehow! Just do it! Do it till He comes! Love people till He comes.

**And that's how the Prince of Peace heals the world.**

Now let me send us off from this Christmas Eve worship service with the very last words recorded in the Bible. We started last January with Gen 1:1 "*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*" And tonight we end with this:

*"He who is the faithful witness to all these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon!" Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!*

*<sup>21</sup> May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you, God's holy people." Rev 22:10-21*

***Merry Christmas!***