During this second Sunday of the season of Advent, we celebrate and wait for the Peace of God that comes with the birth of Jesus. The Prince of Peace has come into the world. His arrival was announced with peace (Luke 2:14\*). His departure was announced with peace (John 14:27\*\*). And yet peace seems to be lacking in our world. But, Christian, I want to remind you this morning of a crucial truth: Peace is not something we find; it's someone we know. The true Peace is not something that the world gives but the shalom found over two hundred times in the Old Testament and nearly one hundred times in the New. It is the overall experience of well being found in relationship between God and His people. It begins with Jesus, is provided by Jesus, and nourished by Jesus, “For He, Himself is peace” (Ephesians 2:14). And “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Roman 5:1).

 It all begins with how we view Christ and ourselves in light of His holiness and the finished work of the cross. The response of the shepherds is our response: “When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about” (Luke 2:15). We are to come to Jesus. God’s glory and man’s peace rest in a manger. We can walk and live in peace because reconciliation and redemption have been made possible. We have peace because of days planned in eternity: The birth of Jesus at Christmas, the death and resurrection of Jesus at Easter, and the day of His coming again—confirmed in the promise that He has not left us alone. This eternal plan makes continually available His peace. It is the peace of God, when we have peace with God. Family, we need to stop expecting to find peace in a world that knows absolutely nothing about it. The plan for our peace has been established in the pages of eternity by the Author of peace: “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people” (1Corinthians 14:33).

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\*Luke 2:14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

\*\*John 14:27 “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

 Family, for many of us, it’s time to take a fresh look at the manger. The King of Glory lies in a feeding trough, a table set for sheep. As well, we need to take a fresh look at the cross, responding to the Holiness of God, in repentance, newness of life, and renewed hope. We discover peace that surpasses understanding because we rediscover Christ. We make a fresh commitment to follow Him. Any time in scripture when any person encounters the gospel, that person encounters Christ and simply can’t remain the same. This advent, this time of preparation is an opportunity for examination. We are reminded again that it is not about our comfort, our preference, or our agendas. It is absolutely about allowing the Spirit of the Most High to kindle in each of us a fresh perspective, one that reflects upon and confirms that my life is in His hands. Added to that, each Christian knows that He cares personally and that He Himself is the peace we seek.

 In Philippians 4:8, we receive from Him instruction for our thought life: “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” These considerations should occupy our minds as we learn to appreciate and act in response to His peace. Accepting His gift of peace is a choice. It’s here; He’s here! His peace is available because He is! But what do we focus on? Even this morning in the midst of worship, on what are we focused? This peace is not something we feel but *someone* we experience. “How is my fellowship?” we each should ask. “How is my relationship with Him?” We each need to stop majoring in the minors! We need to take comfort in the truth of Emmanuel—God with us! Many of us here today are in great need of peace. In 2020, the YouVersion Bible app saw searches increase by eighty percent. Interestingly, Isaiah 41:10 was the most searched scripture: “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Clearly, people are seeking answers; they need peace amidst the turmoil.

 Family, I believe with all my heart that it is time that the bride of Christ—the Church—revisits the manger. It should take a fresh trip to the cross and to the empty tomb. This look will necessitate self-examination, a putting aside of pride and pretense to experience the Prince of Peace (Luke 2:15-16\*). We need to engage in this self-examination without delay, fixing our eyes on Jesus and allowing His peace to position our hearts. And, listen, Church, this is a message we never outgrow. It is for all of us all the time. This morning I encourage you to allow the Holy Spirit to examine your heart. Ask, “Have I been neglecting receipt of peace because I have been majoring in the minors? Have pride, busy-ness, a myriad of weak excuses kept me from encountering the Prince of Peace, who loves me so very much? Have I forfeited the peace available in Christ?” Oh! Do! Let Him heal your heart. Remember that while Earth is preparing for war, Heaven is preparing for a wedding. Let us wage peace as we anticipate the advent. Let us be united in purpose, in love, and in truth. Let us have Peace within ourselves, peace with one another, and above all, peace with Almighty God.

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\*Luke 2:15-16 “When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” 16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.”

Passages in Support of this Message:

Philippians 4:4-9

Final Exhortations

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Luke 2:10-16

10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” 13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” 15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” 16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.