

PEACE ON EARTH

ADVENT: FORETOLD & FULFILLED

Ben Deaver at Tallgrass at The Well on December 4, 2022

Isaiah 53:1-5

So what? Jesus did not meet expectations when bringing about peace.

Feel what? Joy AND sorrow

Now what? We are the ones to bring about peace as we wait for the Advent of Jesus.

VISION CASTING – Experience both joy AND sorrow this Christmas as we wait for the Advent of the Messiah to our pale blue dot.

MINGLE QUESTIONS:

1. What is your favorite family Christmas tradition? Writing our Word of the Year on a big white tablecloth with a Sharpie.
2. What small act of kindness was done to you that you will never forget? My friend, Jonalu, giving me a big hug at a moment of fragility.

Advent: Foretold & Fulfilled

- Let's get this traditional Advent thing right!
- Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love – Purple, Purple, Pink, Purple, and then a bonus White candle...for Jesus on Christmas Eve! Got it?
- Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love have been hijacked!
- Peace is not just the absent of war or commotion but wholeness in society.
 - The Bible has in mind “wholeness, when all the parts are joined together”.
 - Think of a piece of fabric that's beautiful and strong because of how it's woven together.
 - Or a mosaic where all the pieces come together to create something beautiful where everything fits and no piece is left out. That's peace, shalom, the Hebrew word in the Old Testament.
 - The first Christmas the angels declared, “Peace on earth and good will to mankind!” Yet almost 2000 years later, there is not peace on earth. What up with that?

The Pale Blue Dot by Carl Sagan (1994)

Carl Sagan was an American astronomer and cosmologist and agnostic. The following excerpt from Carl Sagan's book *Pale Blue Dot* was inspired by an image taken, at Sagan's suggestion, by Voyager 1 on February 14th, Valentine's Day, in 1990 (32 years ago). As the spacecraft was departing our planetary neighborhood for the fringes of the solar system, it turned around for one last look at its home planet.

Voyager 1 was about 4 billion miles away when it captured this portrait of our world. Caught in the center of scattered light rays, Earth appears as a tiny point of light.

The Quote:

Look again at that dot. (Right under the O of thousands.) That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar," every "supreme leader," every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there—on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.

It's on that pale blue dot that Jesus was born 2000 years ago. 700 years BEFORE Jesus was born and 2700 years before this quote, the prophet Isaiah put pen to paper extensively about the One who was to be born as King of the Jews, the Messiah. Messiah means Anointed One and the Anointed One is the King. Isaiah FORETOLD the Promised One and in Jesus that promise was FULFILLED.

Isaiah 53:2a

He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!

Luke 2:13-14 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."

Messianic Expectations

- Messianic expectations to bring about peace were incredibly high by the time Jesus was born. The Jewish people had suffered a lot since becoming a nation and had just experienced 400 years of silence from God. That's the gap between the Old Testament and when Jesus was born, 400 years. The Jews were waiting for the Messiah to show up and bring about peace on earth. Meanwhile, they were under the thumb of the brutal Roman Empire. They were used to hearing promises made from rulers of earth.
- Listen in to this Gospel Proclamation regarding Caesar Augustus from a providence of Asia Minor (reigned from 27 BC – 14 AD)

Jesus and Empire by Richard A. Horsley

"Whereas the Providence which has guided our whole existence and which has shown such care and liberality, has brought our life to the peak of perfection in giving to us Augustus Caesar, whom Providence filled with virtue for the welfare of mankind, and who, being sent to us and to our descendants as a savior, has put an end to war and has set all things in order; and whereas, having become visible... and whereas, finally that the birthday of the god, Caesar Augustus, *has been for the whole world the beginning of the gospel concerning him*, therefore, let all reckon a new era beginning from the date of his birth."

Isaiah 9:1

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—

Isaiah 9:2-3

² The people walking in darkness
 have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
 a light has dawned.

³ You have enlarged the nation
 and increased their joy;
they rejoice before you
 as people rejoice at the harvest,
as warriors rejoice
 when dividing the plunder.

Isaiah 9:4-5

⁴ For as in the day of Midian's defeat,
 you have shattered
the yoke that burdens them,
 the bar across their shoulders,
 the rod of their oppressor.

⁵ Every warrior's boot used in battle
 and every garment rolled in blood
will be destined for burning,
 will be fuel for the fire.

Isaiah 9:6

⁶ 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.

Isaiah 9:7

⁷ Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.

The Pale Blue Dot by Carl Sagan (1994) cont.

The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena. Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors so that, in glory and triumph, they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of a dot. Think of the endless cruelties visited by the inhabitants of one corner of this pixel on the scarcely distinguishable inhabitants of some other corner, how frequent their misunderstandings, how eager they are to kill one another, how fervent their hatreds.

Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.

The Earth is the only world known so far to harbor life. There is nowhere else, at least in the near future, to which our species could migrate. Visit, yes. Settle, not yet. Like it or not, for the moment the Earth is where we make our stand.

It has been said that astronomy is a humbling and character-building experience. There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. To me, it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known.

It doesn't seem like there's more peace on earth now than there was back then, does it?!

Jeremiah 6:13-14

¹³ "From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit.

¹⁴ They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace."

- Isn't this how we experience Christmas in our culture?

“Peace, peace,” when there is no peace.

- Housing
 - \$315k average home price
 - Driving the streets in certain neighborhoods where it just looks so peaceful. Meanwhile...
 - Development going up in Aggieville and Downtown MHK that’s pushing small business to the fringes.
- Food
 - The shelves are stocked.
 - The food options are amazing.
 - And yet...people go hungry while 40% of our food is wasted.
- Relationships
 - Not just quiet houses where everyone is on a screen in a separate room but relational connectivity.
- They were looking to Jesus to bring about peace...and He didn’t. Instead, on that first Christmas, when those angels were shouting, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” This is what we got.

Isaiah 53:2b-3

^{2b} He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

³ He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.

Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

Isaiah 53:4-5

⁴ Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

- Isaiah 53, the Jews, and the Dead Sea Scrolls—When I visited Israel in 2016 our tour guide mentioned that many Jews and scholars were convinced that the Christians had changed Isaiah 53 to make Jesus fit into it...until 1946 when the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. They discovered a scroll of the entire Book of Isaiah that predated the oldest known Hebrew manuscripts by 1000 years!

Isaiah 52:13-15

¹³ See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. ¹⁴ Just as there were many who were appalled at him—his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness—¹⁵ so he will sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him.

Ephesians 2:14-17 ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

The Cross Comes Before The Crown

- The Suffering Servant Arrives Before The Exalted King
- One Messiah, Two Advents—COMPLETELY UNEXPECTED—Surprise!
- Make timeline
- They expected a Messiah. And when He was announced, with the promise of peace, mind you, they expected Him to overthrow Rome and restore Israel to prominence. They never anticipated a Suffering Messiah who would die and then rise again and ascend into heaven to return as Exalted King at an undisclosed time.
- This whole period of history that we are currently in was not anticipated by the Jews and was not clearly communicated by the Scriptures but now, looking back, it makes complete and perfect sense.
- We are in the period of history where the Church represents Jesus, the Anointed One, the Messiah, both the Suffering Servant AND the Exalted King until His return.
- Let me repeat the sounding joy, we are in a period of history where WE the Church, the Body of Christ, represent Him and do His good works....which include suffering, maybe not to the extent that He did, but suffering nonetheless. And this suffering is not meaningless but is how we bring about PEACE ON EARTH AND GOOD WILL TOWARD MANKIND!

2 ADVENTS: FORETOLD & FULFILLED & FORTHCOMING
PEACE ON EARTH

RESPONSE & ACTION

1. **Trust the Scriptures** are true.

- a. God's method of authenticating the Scriptures is fulfilled prophecy. Fulfilled prophecy is unique in all religious literature. It's what sets the Bible apart as the verified Word of God. You can trust it.
- b. Copious copies...

2. **Follow the Messiah** to Whom the Scriptures point.

- **Luke 24:25-27** ²⁵ He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.
- **Luke 24:44-49** ⁴⁴ He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."
- We're often disappointed with the Messiah because He's not delivering us from all our problems immediately.

3. **Bring about peace** through suffering / sacrificial living until Christ comes again.

- We suffer to bring about greater peace. That's what sacrifice does.
- **Hebrews 12:1-2** Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
- When you give financially to a healthy church or the work of a good nonprofit or to a neighbor in need that's an example of suffering to bring about peace. You are helping make the fabric of society a little more beautiful, strong, and integrated.
- When you bring your presence to someone in need that costs you something but helps bring about peace in their life.
- When you don't respond to insult with insult there's suffering involved...

Invite the Worship Team up

NEXT STEP

Experience both joy AND sorrow this Christmas as we wait for the Advent of the Messiah to our pale blue dot.

INSPIRATION & PRAYER

Joy mingled with tears...

Last Wednesday evening our Small Group sat right back there and lit the first Advent candle and turned off all the lights and listened to Enya's version of *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* and tears flowed around the table. There was much joy in the room but also hard things going on. Things where peace did not yet reign. That's how we are to experience Advent and Christmas, tears mixed with joy. Things are not yet made right. Peace does not yet reign on our earth, in our homes, or in our hearts. There's much work to do. And we wait for the Advent of Jesus, our Exalted King.

O Praise The Name

O praise the Name of the Lord our God

O praise His Name forevermore

For endless days we will sing Your praise

Oh Lord, oh Lord our God

He shall return in robes of white

The blazing sun shall pierce the night

And I will rise among the saints

My gaze transfixed on Jesus' face