

# Prince of Peace

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     Good afternoon, everyone. I repeat the welcome that Fraser gave you earlier on. Delighted to have you with us as we celebrate Christmas together. Over the last few weeks for our Christmas series this year, we've been looking at a prophecy made by Isaiah about 700 years before the birth of Jesus about a child that was going to be born. We're looking at the titles that Isaiah gives to Jesus. And the one we're looking at today, as it says on the screen, is that Jesus is our Prince of Peace. So let's just read a few verses from the prophecy together, and then we'll think about what it means for us. So it's Isaiah chapter 9, and I'm starting to read at verse 5. And it says, Every warrior's boot used in battle, and every garment rolled in blood, will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. For unto 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. Of the greatness of his government and peace, there will be no end. He will reign over David's throne and David's throne, and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness, from that time on and forever.
- [ 1 : 2 2 ]     The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. God will bless his word as we think about it together. So Jesus is the Prince of Peace. I wonder what does peace look like? That might say a strange question. Peace isn't a thing that you can look at and can touch. But it's a question that's asked every year to lots of children around the world. There's a competition every year for children to design a poster that describes peace. I put up one of the pictures from that here, one of the posters from a girl who was originally from Mexico, called Karen Mendoza, now lives in the United States. And here are the things that she thought speak about peace. I'm going to ask for some help from the young people this morning. Can you see anything up there that you think represents peace, that reminds you about peace? Any of the pictures there about peace? The music. Yeah, music can be very peaceful and calming for us. That's right. The dove.
- [ 2 : 2 5 ]     Yes, dove's a very good one. Dove is a great symbol of peace. And when we see a white, pure dove, then we think of peace. Quite often when there are big sporting events, they release doves up into the air to say peace. Yes. The stars. Yes, looking up at the stars. The stars can be very peaceful as well in a night, can't it? Nature. So there's a tree there, for example, reminding us of the peace of nature and the stability, I suppose, that a tree has. One more, Sam. The world. The world, yes. So there's a picture of the world down in the bottom right-hand corner. And there's also a kind of map of the world with some olive leaves around it up at the top.

Does anyone know what that symbol at the top is? It's a big organization. It's actually, I think, the United Nations, but UNICEF is part of the United Nations, so good answer.

United Nations, which works to have peace around the world. There's some other things that are there. There's, in several places, there's something that looks like an arrow pointing up with a line going up through it.

[ 3 : 29 ] That's the international symbol for peace, sometimes used by people who don't want nuclear weapons, but it's wider than that. It's about peace in the world. The flags of the countries and the balloons are supposed to talk about countries working together and not all being different and divided.

And down in the bottom left-hand corner, there's a picture of a man. Sorry, there. It's Gandhi. Well, that took me ages to work that out because he usually has a moustache. But you're absolutely right. It's Gandhi.

Gandhi, and the clue in that is that it's like the colors of the flag of India that are around him. Gandhi, of course, was a man who wanted India to be independent from Britain, and he tried to do that peacefully.

He's not saying to people, we've got to go and fight or be terrorists. We've got to have a peaceful protest. And then India became independent from Britain. So lots of different things that talk to us about peace.

Sometimes people, sometimes things, sometimes symbols. And a lot of them talk about the kind of peace we should have with one another, that we should be kind to other people, we shouldn't fight. Some of them talk about the peace that we should have inside, being peaceful and at peace with things.

[ 4 : 39 ] There was another competition. There's a story about another competition a long, long time ago where a king asked people to do something similar to what these children were asked to do to produce a painting that described peace.

They got lots of different entries to it. People drew lovely scenes from nature, of meadows and of lovely lakes and things. But the one he chose as the winner looked a bit like the one that's about to come up on the screen now.

Now, it wasn't that picture. That's a modern picture. But it's a picture that has the same idea to it. And you might look at that picture and say, what's peaceful about that? It's a thunderstorm.

There's a waterfall. If you've ever been near a waterfall, it can be really noisy. It doesn't look a peaceful picture at all. But if you look down near the bottom of the picture, and I'll just blow it up a little bit, in the middle of the waterfall, there's a bird's nest.

And the bird, in all the trouble and the noise and the frightening thing that the lightning could be, it's just sitting there in this nest and it's really peaceful.

[ 5 : 41 ] And that picture was trying to say, even if you've got a really difficult situation, even if everything around seems not peaceful at all, you can be peaceful if you're in the right place, in the right situation.

And we're going to think a bit about that as we go through this morning. I think it was very much what was in the video that we watched just before I started speaking. But even when things are difficult, and we might be, I think, a bit frazzled and a bit worried about things, then we can be at peace.

It was also in the prayer that Paul brought us earlier, thinking about the peace we can have in difficult circumstances. We'll come back to that in a few minutes. But when I was thinking of peace, there were three things, and Jesus is the Prince of Peace, there were three things, I thought, in particular, that Jesus can bring to us in peace.

And the first one is peace on earth. Now, peace on earth, of course, is what the angels sang, isn't it? As they appeared to the shepherds, they sang, Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, or on earth peace, to those on whom God's favour rests.

And Jesus, therefore, was the one who came to bring peace on earth. The passage we read in Isaiah, the verses we read, they were really about that, weren't they? Because they talked about all wars stopping, they talked about the warriors' boots being burned, and things like that, and Jesus reigning in peace and righteousness.

[ 7 : 10 ] And so part of the message of Christmas is that Jesus will be the Prince of Peace, who will reign in righteousness. Now, we look around the world just now, and we say, well, that's not really very obvious, is it?

There are wars in lots of different places, civil wars, wars between countries, and within nations, there's a lot of division and tension, and even within our families at times, it can be very difficult.

So we don't have, in that sense at the moment, peace on earth. And Jesus didn't promise that, because when he was here, he actually said, I'm not come to bring peace on earth, and I will bring division, because some people will trust in me, and some won't, and there will be division between them.

But as we look forward, Jesus, as the Prince of Peace, will come back to reign, and to bring peace everywhere. He is the Prince of Peace, who will bring peace on earth, who will stop all the wars, and the other things that happen at the moment, that would destroy peace.

But we don't need to wait for that, to have peace around us. Because Jesus calls all those who are his followers, to be peacemakers.

[ 8 : 23 ] He said, blessed are the peacemakers. And the book of Hebrews, it says we should make every effort, to live in peace with everyone.

If we are following Jesus, and following his example, we can help to bring a bit of peace in the area where we are. To bring peace on earth among those we work with, among those we live with, among those we associate with, just by the kinds of attitudes that we have, by trying to be like Jesus, and to show real love and concern for others.

And as we do that, we'll bring a bit of peace into other people's lives. They will experience something of peace on earth. So that's the first kind of peace that we want to think about.

We could talk about it as being peace out the way. As we seek to be at peace with others those around about us, and as we look for and work for peace in our world.

The second kind of peace, I would call maybe peace up the way. As we think about peace with God. So it's not peace now we think of in a relationship with one another, though that is really important.

[ 9 : 36 ] It's thinking about the peace that we need to have with God. Remember we sang, Hark the Herald Angel Sing, Glory to the newborn King, Peace on earth and mercy mild.

Then what does it say? God and sinners reconciled. It is about bringing peace between us and God. And the Bible tells us, Paul tells us in Colossians, that at one time we were God's enemies.

All of us were God's enemies because of all the wrong things that we've done, of all the ways that we've grieved God, but by disobeying what his commands would be. But says Paul, Christ Jesus died, and through his death, through his physical death on the cross, through the blood that he shed there, he is able to reconcile us, to bring peace between us and God.

So naturally, as we start out in life, we're far away from God because of all the wrong, because of all the sin in our lives. But because Jesus has died on the cross for us, if we trust in him, and if we believe that through him, we can be forgiven, we can have peace with God, we can get a relationship with God, and we can know that we've been forgiven for all the wrong things we've done, and that one day we'll go to be with the Lord Jesus, and to be with him forever, because he gives us eternal life, he gives us peace with God.

So important this Christmas, that all of us know that peace with God. That we recognize all the failure in our lives, that we recognize that Jesus is able to forgive us for that, because he's taking the punishment for all our failures, and if we just trust in him, we can have peace with God, we can have a relationship with God as our Father, and we can know that our future is secure.

[ 11 : 33 ] Jesus came as the Prince of Peace, not just to give peace in the world, but to give us peace with God as well.

And then finally we've looked outwards, we've looked upwards, and then we need to look inwards, and the Bible talks about the peace of God, the peace that we can have in the most difficult of circumstances.

Now we've thought a little bit already that this Christmas, many of us will have a time of real joy, but for some people, Christmas is a really difficult time to find peace. There may be an empty place at the table where a loved one would have been in previous years.

There's maybe illness, either us individually or family members or others that we're concerned about. There may be problems in our family or among our friends that are an issue for us.

We may be worried about the future, perhaps about finance or about our job or things like that. And a lot of people find that Christmas is not necessarily a time of rejoicing and of peace.

[ 12 : 40 ] It's a time of worry and of sadness. And Jesus doesn't promise that if we're Christians, we won't have any of that. Indeed, he promises that there will be problems for all of us in this world, but he promises that in the problems, if we know him and if we trust him, we can have a real peace.

He said to his disciples, and the night before he died, as he was teaching them in the upper room, 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.

If this Christmas is a difficult time for you for whatever reason, then take comfort in this, that Jesus understands the difficulties you're going through, and he is able to give you a real peace in whatever circumstances you're in.

like that bird that we saw at the beginning, in the midst of chaos, in the midst of danger, yet is sitting safely in the rock, inside the waterfall, and able to be at peace.

And as the prince of peace, Jesus can give us inward peace, and he can give us what Paul describes as the peace of God, which transcends, which is greater than anything that we could understand.

[ 14 : 03 ] Wouldn't it be wonderful if we all have that peace this Christmas? There's a great verse in the Christmas story which I think is particularly precious. It's right at the end of the story in Luke's Gospel, and it just says this, Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. What an amazing few months it must have been for Mary when the angel came when she was pregnant, when they got to Bethlehem and not having anywhere to stay, but then there was the joy of the birth.

There were the shepherds coming and worshipping and having seen the angel, and Mary treasured up these things and pondered them in her heart. I wonder if 33 or so years later, as Jesus was sitting at the foot of the cross of the Lord Jesus, these things she pondered in her heart came back and gave her real peace because she knew that the one who had come was God's Son.

She knew he had come to be a Savior, and perhaps even in her sorrow and in the heartache of Jesus' death, she knew something of the peace of God as she reflected in all that had happened to her at the birth of Jesus.

So this Christmas, let's make sure that we take hold of the peace that can come to us through the Lord Jesus, peace of God.

[ 15 : 36 ] So a child is born to us, a son is given, he is the Prince of Peace. He is the one who gives peace on earth and who one day will give, in a very physical sense, peace on earth that can, through our lives, bring that peace to others now.

He is the one who can bring us peace with God as we trust in him and realize that only through him can we be forgiven and have a relationship with God the Father.

And he can give us the peace of God in our heart, whatever our circumstances, that we can know his presence and his assurance with us at this Christmas time.

And so as it says there on the screen, over the next year or so, indeed throughout the week, come let us adore him. Let's pray together. Our Father, we thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for the peace that he came to bring, that he is the Prince of Peace. He is the one who can bring ultimate peace in our world. We do look forward to the day when there will be no more wars, no more fighting, no more strife, because Jesus will come and will reign in righteousness and in peace.

[ 16 : 51 ] And meanwhile, we pray that we will be ambassadors for him, that where we are, we will bring something of his peace. We pray too that all of us will have the peace that he can bring with yourself, that we may know our sins forgiven because he died on the cross so that we could have peace with God.

And at this Christmas, as we remember the birth of Jesus, as we think about all that he has done for us, that we may have the peace of God in our hearts and that we may truly know his presence with us as the Prince of Peace.

We give you our thanks and pray for your blessing on us in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.