

**Intro:** Garrison. Elder Candidate. Isaiah 9. Week 3 of Advent.

Each week we've looked at the prophecies of the coming savior in Isaiah 9. That the hope of Christmas is ultimately found in a person, the Messiah. So far we've seen Isaiah call the coming Messiah the Wonderful Counselor and Mighty God. Tonight we'll see the 3rd name for the coming Christ.

**That He will be the Prince of Peace. Pray.**

**Let's imagine a perfect day.** It's Tuesday morning. You wake up before your alarm goes off, 5, 6am, cause you're a highly productive adult. You're so well rested you can't help but smile and thank Jesus. You're grateful to have another day living the life that He has given you and can't wait to spend time with Him. You then roll over and pick up your phone and scroll through your Insta feed.

You're overwhelmed with a sense of joy as you're looking at pictures and stories of your friends, feeling a total lack of pressure to compare yourself to anyone you see. You continue to scroll and a couple headlines that catch your attention. "Democrats and Republicans come to respectful, unified agreements on all current political issues." "World Leaders ban all forms of slavery, oppression and war". "Billionaires and world leaders enact plans to eliminate hunger and poverty"

You put down your phone and think, "Wow this day really is going to be awesome!" You wake your kids and they are overjoyed to see you this morning. In fact as they're rubbing the sleep out of their eyes they say "Thank you mom/dad, its such a blessing to have you as my parent. Thank you for keeping me alive. You are the best." You have a family group hug and then you pray together as a family until it's time to go to work.

Now normally your work is marked by tons of anxiety. It's gone. You, your coworkers, your boss; all on the same page. Obviously stuff pops up thats hard to deal with but you know, for some reason you just know that you're going to be okay. That God sits on the throne and you just have to do your part.

The drive home from work is a little slow, Charlotte traffic. But its okay, because that just means more time for you to pray. You even strike up a conversation with the driver in the car next to you. They're coming to CG tonight!

Fast forward to CG. Normally, you think these people are overall fine. I know we're supposed to be fam and all, but come on, family? Sometimes IDK know if I like these people. Not tonight. You walk in the door and you feel right at home. No conflict. No weirdness between you and the one person that, ugh, always says the thing that we're all wondering why you said the thing. No tension between you and the person that you kind of reconciled with about that thing but not really.

Tonight you just feel at peace.

As you drift off to sleep later that night you feel a sense that all is right in the world and in your life.

Can you imagine a day like that?

- Where relational fallout and tension is done away with?
- Where the headlines are encouraging?
- Where there's no more fighting or war?
- Where your life is the way it should be?

**It's a day full of peace.**

This, at the core, is what everyone, Christian or not, truly wants, right? Everyone wants peace. The problem is that there are a million different and often competing ideas of how to get there. Just think about all the books, articles, blogs, headlines on all the major news sources that tell you what to do about oppression, injustice, violence, and brokenness.

- Well if the 1% would give up their wealth everything would be fine. Stop going up into space and actually feed the poor.
- Big government
- Little government.
- Get rid of capitalism! Tax the rich!
- No taxes! Don't you know the US rebelled bc of 3 cents of tax per pound of tea. Get rid of the income tax!
- Get rid of the guns.
- No we need MORE guns.

And it's not just the macro issues. It can be as simple as: "If I only lived in a better city." Or "If I had better friends or relationships." "A new job." "A better spouse or kids."

**So what's it going to take to have peace? Culture's answer: The right circumstances, the right government, the right amount of freedom and the right type of people in your life.**

It's a peace cocktail. Throw all the right ingredients together and remove anyone and anything that's holding us back and we'll have the perfect peace beverage. An Old Fashioned Peace if you will.

But we don't include God in that mix. In other words:

**We want the kingdom of Peace without the Prince of Peace.**

How's it working? I'd say overall not great. Not because these solutions are bad in and of themselves. But because they're shallow and will always fall short.

My goal tonight is to show us that what we ultimately need for the peace on earth we long for and talk about, is Christ, the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9 actually gives us a picture of the peace that the Christ will bring. What we'll notice is that it's very different from the type of peace that our world hopes for. So hop in. Isaiah 9 v 1

*V 1 But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.*

At the time Isaiah prophesied these verses the Israelites had been torn apart by a war with Assyria. They'd lost, and many of the people of Israel had been captured and sent to Assyria. The nation was in anguish, a time of destruction, grief. The Israelites were under immense oppression and were devastated as a nation. They're a people in need of freedom and hope.

### **Prophecy has unique implications in the Bible.**

What's being prophesied holds weight in the present, the near future and the distant future. So the Israelites know that what Isaiah is prophesying holds weight for them presently. That God sees His people in anguish in the present.. That He has ordained a time and place to restore His people from their current oppression.

The promise actually came true for the Israelites. Years later Persia would overthrow the Assyrian Empire and Cyrus would send the exiles back home. That's one layer of prophetic fulfillment.

But there's more. Because the Israelites didn't just need freedom from the Assyrians, they needed freedom from their sin. So Isaiah's words were partly fulfilled when the Israelites gained their freedom from the Assyrians, but he's pointing a little bit further, to the near future.

To the time when the Messiah will come. So Isaiah's words will be fulfilled when the Christ comes to the world. On this side of the prophecy we know who the Christ. It's Jesus.

And there's a third piece. The far distant future. That the Christ will bring finality to all brokenness in the world. We know this to be the second coming.

Isaiah sees the future promise of the Christ who is to come.. Look back we'll see what that looks like:

*3 You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil*

Isaiah says the Christ will multiply the nation and its joy. That His kingdom coming will make people rejoice the same way they would when a massive harvest came in. This is a season of plenty. Economic prosperity. When no one's wondering how they're going to make ends meet, because there's more than enough for all.

**4 For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder,  
the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian**

Ok pause. Isaiah says the Christ is going to end oppression. He's gonna break the oppressor's rod. No more oppressive regimes. No more people groups getting abused, enslaved, treated as subhuman. No more racism. No more genocide.

The Messiah will bring endless provision and an end to oppression. What else? Look at v. 5 -

**5 For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult  
and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.**

I'm a big Star Wars fan. If we've met we've probably talked about it. If you know anything about Star Wars, it's 6 really great movies and some bad spin offs that's all about 1 thing. Good vs evil. Jedi vs Sith. The rebels vs the empire. I love watching it. One of my favorite scenes comes at the end of the 6th movie, Return of the Jedi. We've spent 6 movies watching the evil empire win, take over the whole galaxy. And finally, good has won.

The Empire has been defeated. And a multi-planet party erupts. We zoom in on Endor, which is the moon with all the little teddy bear aliens, and they're dancing around these huge bonfires, burning the guns and armor of all the imperial soldiers. They make drums out of the helmets. Our main characters dancing and hugging. They did it!

That scene is a little bit like what's going on here. The image is that the warriors boots and the garments that have been rolled in the blood of war (whether soldiers or those who have been slaughtered) will be used for bonfires that we all sit around and rejoice in what the Messiah has done.

**No more darkness. No more oppression. No more war. Joy. Restoration.**

**This is biblical peace.** The Hebrew word for peace is shalom - the greek word is eirene - and it's way more than the absence of conflict. Not just the absence of bad. It's the presence of everything good that is supposed to exist in all our relationships and in the world. With God, ourselves and others.

Theologian Cornelius Plantinga Jr. - "Shalom is universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight. Shalom is the way things are supposed to be."

It's the idea of wholeness or completeness. So it can refer to a fabric that is perfectly woven together with no threads missing. Or a building stone with no cracks or missing pieces.

The core idea of shalom is like a brick wall of human's intricacies, life is complex: full of moving parts and relationships and situations... **and when any of those breaks down or is out of alignment, your shalom breaks down.**

At both micro and macro levels we all know what the Bible says is true, that this world is full of broken shalom. And the Prince of Peace is coming to restore Shalom.

### **This is the peace that everyone wants.**

- Grief and anguish replaced with joy and hope.
- Plenty for all. That there'd be no one in need. No greed. But that our lives and relationships with everyone around would look like a massive feast where all are welcome.
- No more mistreatment and oppression. That there'd be equity and equality. No more evil rulers, racism or hate.
- No more war. No more murder.
- No more relational fallout.

**So how's this all gonna happen? V. 6 -**

**6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

The hope of Christmas. "Prince of Peace" The Prince of Shalom. - "The government shall be upon his shoulder."

**Pause for a second.** It's 2021. We're sitting in church in America. We just talked about all the different ways culture gets peace wrong. And what the Bible just said is that the way to peace is....

**Government!** UH OH. Now hold on a second Garrison. I didn't sign up to be a part of that kind of church. I know we're in the south and all but come on... It sounds crazy right?

And that's because all we've ever seen is governments made of sinful people with broken shalom trying to install shalom for the rest of us. It never goes particularly well. This is why no single form of government has ever worked as promised.

From dictatorships, to democracy to communism -- they all fail on the backs of the sinners who are in power running them. And don't get me wrong, out of all the options I vote for democracy;

but can we all agree it hasn't pulled off peace on earth? And even if a human government was perfect... it wouldn't have the power to change the hearts of the people.

**But the solution for peace on earth is actually government.** It just has to be a totally different kind of government.

The hope people put in new governmental regimes... The hope of Americans every 4 years for a new leader, a new president, a new government that will fix the mistakes of the last leader.. the hope is actually correct, just misguided.

It just has to be a completely different kind of government. A sinless one. One that can change sinful hearts. One that can restore shalom completely in all our relationships, with God, ourselves and others.

This is why the promises in Isaiah 9 are actually powerful and not just lame, festive Christmas nostalgia.

**Jesus is going to bring exactly that kind of government.** And it won't be democracy or socialism or whatever. It will be a kingdom! And not one that's kingless but one with a perfect King. A King that will not only rule but will change the hearts of His people that they can actually be a people of peace.

And Isaiah says it won't just be for the Israelites, but for all. Look back at v 7

*7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

**“Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end... The zeal of the Lord will do this.”**

**God has promised that there will be no end to the spread of Jesus' kingdom and peaceful reign.** It's going to spread, and spread, and spread, and spread. And wherever it spreads, it's taking shalom with it.

“But wait a second. That's not what we see on earth. There is still murder and theft and rape and depression and anxiety and hunger and genocide. There are still corrupt governments and refugee crises and horrific reports of men in power sexually abusing women every week. And Jesus already came? So what happened? Did He mess up?”

Well no. This is a key part of prophecy. Like I said, it's like an omelette. Layers. It matters for the present, the near future and the distant future. We live in what theologians call “the already, but not yet.”

**The time between Jesus' first coming and His second The time where his kingdom is instituted and spreading, but not yet fully here.** We look to the future with hope for the Kingdom of Peace to be established fully.

**We don't have to wonder if that will happen, just when it will happen.**

If you're anything like me, you hear sermons like this one, talking about peace and you're like, "that's great. I'm kinda tired of it just being words from a sermon though. When will it actually be a reality? Not only just in my life, but in my friends lives, our world."

**That's the tension of advent. The tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet' is what advent is all about.** Longing. We long for shalom. We long for the Prince of Peace to come back and undo all of what is broken. We feel and see what's off in the world and we long.

**We see the glimpses of the Kingdom breaking in.** Jesus has come. He has begun bringing shalom. And we celebrate when we see it.

- When 2 Christians confess their sin and reconcile. That's the Prince of Peace breaking in.
- When nonprofits and neighbors move towards brokenness in their city - the downtrodden, needy, oppressed - and seek to bring help and life. That's the Prince of Peace breaking in.
- When marriages are restored, broken homes are put back together. Justice is enacted both for the innocent and the guilty. Militant leaders put down their weapons and nations sign arms treaties. And the list goes on and on. That's the Prince of Peace breaking in.

It's beautiful. We celebrate. And we see it's just a glimpse of what is to come and we long for it. We long for the day when this will be brought in fullness. **But we don't long as those do without hope.**

**We hope because we know God's promises are true. When we doubt Him, we look to the Cross.** In case you have any doubt how committed God is; how zealous He is about restoring shalom in all of creation... the cross is the proof. See in the cross the Prince of Peace took all of the world's brokenness and sin onto Himself. Crushed by a sinful oppressive government teamed up with a sinful religious system. Rejected by a broken power structure. Poor and penniless.

And then He didn't stay dead. God's Spirit rose God's Son and Jesus has conquered death and the grave.

**The Gospel is our hope. It's our assurance that Jesus will do what He says He will do, and laid down His life to guarantee it.**

- It means that when we see another act of violence of injustice done in our country and the feelings of exhaustion, hopelessness and fear overwhelm us, we know it's only for now. That the Prince of Shalom is coming to right all wrongs.
- It means that the fear we feel when we see new strands of horrible virus are spreading around the world. That's temporary. The prince of peace will do away with all disease.
- It means that there's more to our present and future reality than what you see and feel.
- It means when you're reminded of a relationship that has fallen apart; Friend. Family. Community, there will be more to the story. There will be a day of healing and all tears will be wiped away.

### **And now we wait.**

I want to end our time the same way we started. We're going to imagine a perfect day. But this time it's going to be what the Bible would describe as the perfect day. You can close your eyes, whatever you're comfortable with, but imagine with me. This is the day we await as followers of Jesus. Isaiah 65:

*17 "For behold, <sup>k</sup>I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, <sup>l</sup>I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the Lord, and their descendants with them. Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain," says the Lord.*

The Prince of Shalom has come and He will come again.

**Pray.**

Communion