

5 Jesus, Our Prince of Peace

Series on Isaiah 9:6

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We'll read from the Old and New Testament. First from Isaiah 9:2 through 7, and then Ephesians 2:11 through 18. Isaiah 9:2,

2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. 3 Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. 4 For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. 5 For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. 6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Then turn with me, please, to Ephesians 2, verses 11 through 18. Ephesians 2:11,

11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. 14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; 16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17 And came and preached

peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Thus far the reading of God's sacred word.

Dear church family, 2020 has certainly been a unique, unforgettable year, a year of trials and challenges but also a year of lots of complaining and grumbling and hatred and anger, but seldom mentioned, a year of amazing goodness of God. Who are we and what are our houses that God has brought us hitherto? A year which has again slipped uncomfortably fast by us, uncomfortably I say because every year's slippage is a reminder of the brevity of life. So many inevitabilities come our way every year, some of which we are tardy for, no doubt we're often tempted to ignore some of them whether it's the past due tuneup on a car or nagging bills that demand payment, burnt out light bulbs that need replacing, but one inevitability we can never ignore and yet we do is that life itself is quickly coming to an end. We have witnessed the open coffin again 10 times this year among our own dear members. We've stood beside grieving families and we can better say what we feel death is than speak it in a way that we ourselves understand.

There's an ultimate finality about death that we don't feel comfortable facing. Death is certain. We know that. We know it's decisive. We know it's irrevocable. We know it enters us into solemn judgment and leads to the awesomeness of eternity but we seldom meditate on the comparison between life and eternity. One Puritan as I've told you at some point in the past, compared it to sand and he said if you took all the sand in the world and put it on a huge pile to the heavens and it stretched out hundreds and hundreds of miles, and a bird were to come by every 1,000 years and take one grain of sand and move it to a new pile, after all the millions and billions and trillions and zillions and whatever else is out there years would go by and the entire sand pile would be moved over, eternity would just have begun. How foolish to live for this world and the short blink of an eye we call life and ignore the vastness of eternity to come. How foolish to risk our one soul for the faint and the fleeting pleasures of this world.

How has your year been spiritually for you? Have you bent the knee to King Jesus? Have you done more beseeching of him than complaining to others? You see, in a few hours 2020 is passed and you can't redo it. You can rethink it maybe but you can't redo it, and all of us, you too, boys and girls, you have to give an account of the whole year to God and we can't do like a filmmaker, we can't splice out the parts we want taken out and present God a flawless, supposedly flawless film of our lives. Heaven's courts have recorded every thought, every word, every action we've said, we thought we'd done in 2020.

So how shall we stand before God as sinners? Well, there's only one way and that's through a peacemaker, a mediator who brings God and man together, his name Isaiah tells us is the Prince of Peace and I want to preach to you about him in the last sermon of this year from Isaiah 9:6, "His name shall be called the Prince of Peace." Our theme tonight is "Jesus, Our Prince of Peace," and we have four thoughts. First, peace in a princely person; second, peace through Jesus' stupendous work; third, peace from his

blessings; and fourth, peace with Jesus forever. Well, I don't have to tell most of you that we've been moving our way through the Advent season behind us now, through four or five names of Jesus in Isaiah 9:6. We saw his name is Wonderful, which takes care of the dullness of life. Counselor, which takes care of the decisions of life. Mighty God, which takes care of the demands of life. Everlasting Father, which takes care of the dimensions of life. And now tonight Prince of Peace, which takes care of the disturbances and our needs in life.

So what is a prince and what is peace? Well, my dictionary defines prince as a ruler of a state. In Bible times, this word actually had the meaning of a leader or even of a king in that culture. It's not just the prince here waiting to be a king but this Messiah, this coming Messiah is a king. He came to be a king also in his human nature but he's now the great Prince of Peace who is at the right hand of the Father, who is King of kings and Lord of lords. It's him of whom Isaiah speaks. His name is the Prince of Peace. And my dictionary defines peace this way, a state of tranquility or quiet, freedom from disturbance and from disquieting thoughts or emotions, harmony in personal relations be it with God or with others. Peace is what Christ alone can bring. You can't give harmony with God to yourself. It depends on him, by his Spirit. So his name shall be called the Prince of Peace.

Now the first thing I want you to notice about this Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ, Immanuel, God with us, is that Isaiah presents peace in the form of a person, in the form of a person. His name, his essence shall be called the Prince of Peace. Now it's an interesting construction, isn't it, because the words prince and peace don't always sit comfortably together. Very often the princes, the rulers of this world are not associated with peace. Often we associate them with war, but Jesus Isaiah says is different. He's the Prince of Peace. Now that will be challenged, of course, by many worldly people today. They may say and you've heard this argument perhaps, young people, in college, "Well, you say he's the Prince of Peace but there has been more blood shed over the name of Jesus of Nazareth than of any other name in history." You've no doubt had it said to you as I have that when you try to speak about Christ bringing peace, the people will say, "Well, what about the Crusades? What about the Inquisition? What about Northern Ireland or the Middle East today? How can you talk about Jesus of Nazareth as the Prince of Peace?" The angels said, "Glory to God in the highest," when he was born and, "peace on earth, goodwill toward men." But here we are 2,000 years later and there's war everywhere. I read this week that someone figured out that of the 2,000 years since the time of Jesus, there's only been 300 years in world history where there were no significant wars going on, so how do you speak about Jesus as the Prince of Peace?

Well, in four ways. First, I want to talk to you about him as the Prince of Peace in the uniqueness of his person. The uniqueness of his person. Imagine with me a moment, a city that's built around a fast flowing river situated on both sides. How does the traffic flow from one side of the city to the other? Well, by a bridge, of course. The very definition of the word bridge means something that touches both parties or both sides, in this case both parts of the city. And that's how Jesus is, he touches on God because he is God, he touches on man because he is man. He's the only one who can bring God and

man together, that divided relationship he alone can restore because he's the Prince of Peace, the God-man. In the royal person of Jesus of Nazareth God and man are united. He is as much God as if he had never become a man, and at the same time he is as much a man as if he had never been God. He's fully God, fully man said our forefathers, and yet he's not a split personality. He's not a dual personality. He's one glorious, divine, royal person, a prince, a king, and in that person his humanity is united to his deity and therefore he's a Prince of Peace as no one else is. No one else has ever been. He's unique in his divine person with his attached humanity. Peace would be impossible without him. Paul says there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, 1 Timothy 2:5.

So when you think of him as Prince of Peace, you must first think of him as person. He himself, his very essence is peace. His very essence qualifies him to be mediator. But second, he is Prince of Peace in the integrity of his character. Now you and I by nature because of our fall in Adam, we're actually split. We're disintegrated, not integrated. We've got all kinds of contrary interests and we go different directions, our lives are split in so many ways which makes us by nature a people of war rather than people of peace. James 4:1 says it this way, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" James is saying, "Where does all this lack of peace come from?" Well, we must not forget that the greatest and the bloodiest and the longest war that has ever been all began with one man's divided heart, the first man Adam, and in one sense the world has been at war with God ever since for 6,000 years and it all began with one individual. But that one individual's personality divisiveness has spread to the whole human race. There is a 14th century poet who wrote this, "There are five great enemies to peace that inhabit us by nature: avarice, ambition, anger, envy and pride. If these enemies were to be banished, we would infallibly enjoy perfect peace." Well, I think he's even being too optimistic, don't you? We've got a lot more than five enemies inside, we've got dozens if we opened Pandora's box and looked at our own hearts.

You see, the bad news is that we have divided hearts but the good news is that Jesus doesn't. He's perfect and pure and full of integrity. He's the only man who ever lived that didn't have a divided heart. On a scale of 1 to 100, boys and girls, his integrity level is 100. His internal peace level is 100. But you see, we're often not at peace, not at peace with each other, not at peace with God, not even at peace with ourselves because we're so divided, we're so distressed, we're so driven by pride and envy and lust and fear and greed and a host of other things. But his heart is full of integrity, full of peace. He has one purpose in the 33 years he lived in this world, one purpose from eternity past to eternity future, "My business is to do my Father's will." That's why as a 12-year-old boy he could say to his parents, "You didn't know where to find me? Of course I'd be in the temple. I must be about my Father's business. That's who I am."

And you see, that's our hope, that that Savior could take our place and pay for our sin, and then make us more like himself so that one day as a believer, as we enter into glory with him, we too would finally have a totally undivided heart, a heart of total integrity and purity, and that should be our prayer even now like David in Psalm 86:11, unites my

heart, unites my heart to fear thy name, for the fear of God is what gives this kind of unity, this kind of integrity, this kind of inward peace of conscience like nothing else can. Fear of God worked by the Spirit of Christ to the glory of a Triune God.

How divided do you feel? The struggles inside, the disturbances? Are you realizing even this evening, the last day of the year, how many emotions you went through of contrary nature? I know I did in 2020 and we've wandered too often away from that one purpose, that single eye, thy name to glorify, in our daily lives. Someone has said that the best tranquilizer is a clear conscience and nowhere is that better exemplified than in the life of Jesus Christ. He is the Prince of Peace in his own person and deep down in his own integrity of character. He's unique that way as well, so perfect, so pure. How peaceful he was.

But thirdly, he's the Prince of Peace in the attitude of his soul. The attitude of his soul. I don't know if you've ever thought about the amazing statement he made to his disciples in John 14:27 but as he's going out into the darkness to be arrested and put on trial and be crucified, and remember he knew everything that was going to happen to him, he said this, "Peace, peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." What a statement.

You know, I don't know what peace, what the word peace means to you. For some people peace just means the status quo, "Just let me have a quiet life. I don't want to change anything." They think that's peace. "Don't disturb me. Let me carry on." For others peace might be a rocking chair in front of a fireplace and creaturely comforts, in other words. For others it might be kind of a mystical sense of well-being, some kind of good feeling in a sort of narcissistic way. Or perhaps for you it just means some kind of detachment from all troubles and all cares in this life. But you know, peace meant none of these things to Jesus. None of them. When Jesus said these words to his disciples, he wasn't sitting in a rocking chair by the fire, he was facing the cross. He was going into a different kind of fire and he knew precisely and fully all that it entailed and yet he says, "My peace, the peace I have right now, the peace who I am, I want to give that to you." He had perfect peace even as he walked to his awful death on Calvary's cross. That's amazing. Now I don't know about you but if I were under those circumstances and I had managed to find some kind of peace that was perfect, I don't think I'd want to give it away. I'd want to hold onto it, wouldn't you? But here is our Lord facing the dreadful prospect of Calvary and he's not only somehow possessing astonishing peace but he wants his disciples to have that same peace.

I read recently of a terrible plane crash and a husband and a wife managed to survive it but there were many people killed. They were interviewed after the plane crash and the husband was telling about this man he saw in the plane who seemed to stay calm under it all, got his duty free goods down from the plane's overhead, then pushed a child out of the way in order to get out of the plane and save himself, not thinking about the other people. So the interviewer said, "But what about you two as husband and wife?" He looked at the woman and he said, "What was your greatest concern when you were trying to get off the plane, was it your husband?" And she said, "Well, actually I'm afraid I was

only concerned about myself at the moment." "And what about you," the interviewer said to the husband. He goes, "Well, not really, I guess, at least not when I was on the plane. When I was out of the plane and I was safe, then I was deeply concerned about my wife but at the moment of panic and crisis, I really only thought about myself."

It sounds pretty awful, doesn't it? It sounds like human nature but here's the Lord Jesus about to go not only to death but a cruel death, to the death that you and I deserve, that he doesn't deserve, a death that is a punishment of God for our sins mixed into it at the heart of it, he's about to go and suffer the very essence of hell for the kind of sinner we are. And it's not just a hell of physical torture, that's just the surface of it, it's the hell of God forsakenness. And he's a Savior who knew nothing but peace and felt peace and is peace and he goes to the cross perfectly composed in his own attitude of soul, his own peaceful attitude, in perfect poise, being led like a lamb to the slaughter so that even when Herod and Pilate were trying to rattle him and get him to respond, he answers them not a word. And even while he's hanging on the cross surrounded by curses and screams of crucified men and tormentors on the ground, what does he say? "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." He was in perfect peace in the midst of pain, "my peace" he calls it, and they offer him a sponge with vinegar, some kind of tranquilizing drug in it to help him lose consciousness, but he refuses to take it. You see, he has peace in the midst of trouble, a deep peace in his soul that he has derived from fellowship with his Father and he says to his disciples, "I want you to have that peace. I want to give that peace to you by my spirit, and I'm going through this cross that you might know the peace of God, that you might know my peace," even on the eve of Calvary, on the cusp of Calvary.

This is the Prince of Peace. It's a peace that's independent of circumstances, you see, that he possesses, a peace that is fixed on his Father and something of that peace we can know as well through Jesus, by his Spirit, a peace that is fixed on the Prince of Peace, a peace that trusts him, for Christ's sake, trust the Triune God will make no mistakes with us. In fact, 17 chapters later Isaiah says this, "Thy will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is fixed on thee." Isaiah is saying in the midst of misery, in the midst of a COVID world with a divided heart and with so many things against us and perhaps suffering of various kinds, it is possible in the midst of all our miseries to be kept in perfect peace by the Prince of Peace. Even though we have all kinds of reasons for anxiety, Isaiah says you can have perfect peace. That peace is a profound inward composure, a deep-seated serenity and tranquility of heart that is based on my relationship with Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. It's a quiet submission to God in every situation, embracing the truth, the profound truth that he always knows best and that he's never made one mistake in my life.

Look back with me for a moment over 2020. A number of us had COVID. A number of us had other infirmities and trials this year. How short did we come from this inner peace we're talking about here? I know I came short a number of times. But did it drive us again to Christ for forgiveness and a new resolution again by his strength that by his grace, "Lord, give me an eye, help me to keep my eye on thy Son in the midst of God sent storms." You see, it's over and over we've got the same problem as Peter, we look away from Jesus, we look at the waves and we go down but he snatches us up again, doesn't he,

and he says, "Look at me. I am the Prince of Peace. I will keep you in the storm. I will keep you in the waves. My peace, my peace I give unto you."

And not as the world gives. The world can't give you that kind of peace. The world gives with one hand and takes back with the other. When the world gives you anything, make sure you read the fine print because there is almost always a string attached, even a snare attached. The world gives in order to get. The world is like those callers that try to ensnare you in something. I had one of them yesterday. A guy called me yesterday and said, "Didn't you get my email?" I said, "I don't know, sir. What is your name?" He said, he told me his name. I said, "I don't recall." "You don't recall my email," he said. I said, "No. I'm sorry. I get a lot of emails." Well," he said, "it was a very important email," and he began to start to advertise something to me. That's the way the world functions, it tries to make you feel guilty for not responding and then it tries to take from you and pull one over on you. But that's not Jesus. Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you, not as the world giveth give I to you."

Now isn't that the kind of peace you want? Don't you want to be like Jesus with that kind of peace, that kind of calm, that kind of tranquility? "It's my Father's will." If Jesus could give you anything tonight, wouldn't you say I want that divine, spiritual, profound, life-embracing, eternity-embracing peace, his peace? Well, he says, "I want to give it to you. I want to give it to you. In fact, I do give it to you. My peace I give you, dear believer."

What is it about Jesus that makes him so attractive? Is it just and it does make him very attractive that he forgives our sin? Yes, but it's something else as well, isn't it? It's this wonderful integrity of his character and the attitude of his soul that allures us and we want to be like him. You see, the world not only cannot give it to us but the world can't even pretend that it possesses it because the world functions, the whole advertising world functions on the assumption that you want things that you don't yet have. It operates on the coveting principle, but Jesus operates on the contentment, the submissive principle, the principle of profound inward composure, tranquility of soul, and he says, "I am the Prince of Peace. I can give it to you in measureless quantity."

Now it's possible, of course, you found some peace in some other areas of life, some degree of peace, outward peace. Maybe you've got a hobby you like a lot. Some people love to be in the garden, it's relaxing, they're close to nature and they say, "I find peace. I feel closer to God and spend lots of time in the garden and it helps me meet my needs." And that's all good and true, no doubt they're not making it up which is wonderful, but one day you won't have your garden. Other people say, "Yeah, but I get tranquility, I get peace when I'm around my spouse or I just love my family or I've got some really close friends, or I love being home and I get a sense of peace in my home." Yes, but you see, someday you won't have your home and you won't have your spouse and you won't have your children. You get where I'm going. If you center your peace on anything but Jesus, you're going to lose it sooner or later. But if you center your peace on Jesus, you have a peace that will never die, you'll have a comfort for life and death as the Catechism says. I don't belong to myself but I belong to the faithful Savior Jesus Christ. A peace that nothing can take from you. The everlasting Father. The eternal Son of God. The Prince of

all princes. The King of all kings. The one who ever lives to save us to the uttermost. His name, his essence is Prince of Peace.

Go to him for peace. He can give you peace with regard to all the sins you've committed this last year by washing them away in his blood. He can give you peace for all his providences that seem to go against you. He can give you tranquility in his sovereign will. But then Jesus also gives peace through his stupendous work, not just his person, his work. Now the work of Jesus is very broad-sweeping, in fact, in systematic theology when you do what's called Christology, the whole doctrine of Christ in Reformed thought, you divide it into two main sections: his person and his work, and you divide everything about Jesus under those two categories. So let me just break it down to you more briefly now.

The work of Jesus. 1. He's the peace-decreer from all eternity. He entered into covenant with his Father, didn't he? We call it the counsel of, that's right, peace. The counsel of peace. Zechariah 6:13. And there he accepted all the demands of his Father to assume complete responsibility for all the requirements of the salvation of all those the Father had given to him. So all his work in time flowed out of his eternal decree with his Father to be the Prince of Peace in bringing together an offended God and a hell-worthy sinner and to be the Prince of Peace in pouring his peace into those whom the Father gave to him so that they could know everlasting salvation and peace in him.

And secondly, in his work he's our peace-meriter. He came on the cross, didn't he, to merit peace so that he could say, "I've earned it. Father, deliver these sinners from going down into the pit because I am the ransom price." Like Isaiah 53 says, "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we've turned everyone to his own way. The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." The chastisement of our peace, the price of our peace was upon him, and that means he had to pay the price that we deserved. He had to bear the hell that we deserved so that justice and truth could come together, so that mercy and truth may meet each other in righteousness and peace may kiss each other, Psalm 85 says. And that happened, of course, on Calvary's tree.

As our text goes on to say, "Of the increase of his government," Isaiah 9:7, "and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." You see, God just doesn't wink at sin. God doesn't say, "Well, I'll give you peace and let's sweep your sin under the carpet and forget about it." No, God's not a man like us and we say to God, "Well, I'm a sinner too so I forgive you." God is holy and just and the only way God can wipe away sin is if someone else takes that sin and bears it and pays the penalty for it, and that someone else can only be the Prince of Peace.

So Jesus merits peace and then gives that peace to us. He merits it on Calvary and then he's not only the peace-decreer, you see, and the peace-meriter, but thirdly, he's also the peace-applier and by his Holy Spirit he takes that peace that he's merited and he applies it

to us. That peace of double obedience I talk to you so often about, that passive obedience where he pays for our sin, and the active obedience where he obeys the law perfectly so that we can be justified and have forgiveness of sins and a right to eternal life.

And then he's our peace-keeper. He keeps that peace alive by his same Spirit. He keeps the feet of his saints. He holds them fast so that they may hold him fast, and he does this as our teaching prophet from week to week, also in worship. He does it as our sacrificial and especially our interceding priest praying for us, keeping us at the right hand of the Father. He does it as our ruling and guiding King superintending our entire lives. He is the Prince, the King of Peace as prophet and priest and king. He will lose none the Father has given him because he's the Prince of Peace.

So we learn to love Jesus as Prince of Peace not only in his person but also in his work, and then the third main thought, we get peace from his blessings, blessings that flow to us out of this work. He knows how to turn war into peace. He's the restorer. He's the restorer. Isaiah 57:19 says, "Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him." Jesus is the peace-bringer by being a restorer of broken relationships not only with God but with others, with a spouse or with children or with a fellow believer. 1 Corinthians 14:33 says he's not the author of confusion but of peace as in all churches of the saints. Jesus is a peace-maker and he makes a peaceable people who are called peace-makers by him. It's one of the marks of grace, in Matthew 5:9, one of the Beatitudes. And how beautiful it is to see when Jesus brings back believers together who were estranged from each other as the peace-maker. That's a blessing that accrues to us from out of his work.

And then too Jesus, secondly, restores us to ourselves. He's a Prince of Peace who brings us to ourselves like the prodigal. He came to himself and he arose and went to his Father and said, "I'm no more worthy to be called thy son." As Prince of Peace, you see, he moves us to surrender all our burdens, our anxieties, our doubts, our fears, our restlessness to the Prince of Peace that we may be restored inwardly and know a peace that passes all understanding, Paul says. Do you know that peace? Times in your life when you've been in the midst of the storm and yet you can say, "I've got a peace that I can't put into words, a peace that Jesus has given me"? That's a blessing that accrues from his work and his merits.

Then thirdly, Jesus is the Prince of Peace as the one who restores us in all kinds of areas of life. I don't know if you had this experience but I certainly did when God took the burden of my sin off my back, I remember just going outside and praising him and weeping for joy and I thought the grass was greener and I thought nature was more beautiful, and everything was so at peace that even the realm of nature seemed to be in total peace. There was a serene beauty in nature that exalted God's glory that seemed vibrant to me. You see, you'll feel closer to God when you have inward peace. We feel closer to him even in nature. When you look to the stars and you look to the mountains and the trees and the beautiful cardinals and the ladybugs and the green grass, he just seems more glorious than ever before and you're at peace with God and with nature.

Then too when the Prince of Peace rules in our hearts, he provides us the peace of a well-ordered and balanced life, enabling us to live with a more contented and grateful heart and Paul tells us that's what we should do in Colossians 3:15. He says, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts to the which also you're called in one body," that is, the living members of the church, "and be ye thankful." You know, when you have real peace, you are so thankful you can't put it into words. You're just overwhelmed with gratitude to God. And when this peace rules within us, the Prince of Peace provides a kind of balance in our lives that meets not only our spiritual needs but our emotional needs and our physical needs and we're given grace to balance our home life and our church life and our work life and our life of rest and our life of friendship, and we're enabled to bring it all together and we have this sense of, yes, even though we're busy but we have this sense of inward peace. And through it all, you see, we want to then devote every area of our lives to the interests of his kingdom rather than our own pleasures, and that produces by his Spirit a kind of truth, a kind of peace, a kind of joy in us as the kingdom of God becomes our focused priority. As Paul says in Romans 14, that this kingdom works in us truth and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

So it's a whole life-encompassing peace that the Prince of Peace wants to bring despite our sin, so that we go to him daily for forgiveness but also seek to live in every area of our lives with him at the center, his kingdom at the center. It's a beautiful way to live despite our coming short so many times. There's a joy, a peaceful joy in living a balanced, committed, Christian life that the world doesn't know anything of. Do you know that joy?

And then my last thought, my last major thought: peace with the princely King Jesus forever. With Christ as the Prince of Peace, what are the prospects for the future? If we know him, peace that will never end. Look at what we're told here in verse 7, "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." Well, that sounds like utopia to me, and it is. Heaven is utopia. You know, from time immemorial man has been looking for one utopia or another. There's always been that hope in the heart of the natural man that someday or other he will belong to a perfect society and banish war and division and misunderstanding, but that utopia has never materialized because of one problem: sin. Sin. And more sin. But you see, Isaiah is speaking about a utopia where sin is obliterated, sin is shut out, a government that shall never end. That's glory where Christ has conquered sin, given his people victory over it, taken them home to share his utopia with him, and the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this, Isaiah says.

You know, the enthusiasm of man, the zeal of man will never perform this. Man can predict in the 20th century there will be no more world wars and there's two of the biggest ones ever. But God is enthusiastic about this utopia. The zeal, the enthusiasm of the Lord will perform this. And how? And to us a son is given, to us a child is born and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

You know, the Bible provides many words to describe this utopia. It calls heaven a better country, a heavenly country. It calls it being with Jesus. It calls it the new Jerusalem, the holy city, the new heavens and the new earth and so forth. The eternal peace of glory, dear church family, is coming and nothing will stop it and we must be ready for it. The principle of peace must be worked in our soul to share with the sons and daughters of peace in glory, focused on the Prince of Peace forever. To become a Christian means to taste something of that peace. It means that the future kingdom is on its way. It means that peace has broken into your life. You have a small taste of the peace of the ages to come. One day you will die but even your dying will be your pathway to enter that everlasting eternal peace through the Prince of Peace.

Even the act of dying brings us into communion with Christ's suffering, and gives us a unique experience of his all-sufficient grace. It transforms us more into his image. It prepares us for glory. It brings us into his presence where one day soon with soul and body, with the whole man redeemed and in full peace with Christ in his presence, everything you could ever desire, everything you could ever hope for and more, what has never even entered into your heart and mind will be yours in the Prince of Peace.

This is the apex. This is heaven's heaven, to be with Christ, to be his bride, to be in perfect communion with him, to enjoy knowing him and seeing him and loving him and praising him, communing with him uninterrupted, forever basking in his smile, forever bathing in his glory, forever feasting in his presence with the whole redeemed man, with soul and body that will never grow weary. What a life. What a future awaits the people of God, utopian marriage to the Son of God because he's the Prince of Peace. Then all the perfect activities of heaven that glorify Christ, the perfect knowledge, the perfect worship, the perfect exercising of authority, whatever that means, you see, it's all part of the Prince of Peace's fruitful ministry. Yes, Jesus is almost synonymous with heaven. Samuel Rutherford said, "Were there a thousand heavens piled on top of each other, my Lord Jesus Christ would be the center of them all."

So as I close tonight, may I ask you this question: what are you doing with the Prince of Peace? Are you going to him? Are you living out of him? Or are you living by trivial pursuit of this world, taking your mind off of God's real peace and the Prince of Peace? You're on a journey. We're reminded of that tonight as we slip into a new year. A few more hours, this year is gone. A few more blinks of the eye, your life will be gone, and whether you have eternal peace or eternal war in hell apart from Jesus is determinative upon how you spend this life, this little drop of a life, and you've got one soul. Can you say tonight, "It is well, it is well with my soul because I'm in the Prince of Peace"? I'm afraid that some of you don't know this Prince of Peace. I don't want to meet you on the judgment day on the wrong side of Jesus. Don't, don't, don't throw away your soul. Don't cast away the gospel offers of the Prince of Peace to come to him just as you are. Don't cling to the toys and trinkets of this world. They'll break on you. They'll fade on you. They won't abide. If Jesus is not your center, you're not ready to die, in fact, you're not really alive and you could die at any moment. Said Rutherford. "Build your nest in no tree here for God has condemned the whole forest to destruction."

Repent. Believe the gospel. Ask God even tonight that you won't have to carry unforgiven sins across the threshold into a new year. If you don't know Jesus, go to your home tonight, forget about whatever celebrations you have lined up and get on your knees and say, "Lord, I need this Savior. I'm a sinner. I'm not ready to die." And cry out to him. If you say, "I can't believe," tell that to him, say, "Give me faith." But just don't let the Lord alone. Trust him. The Prince of Peace will never let you down. And don't rest until you can say with Paul, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

I close with this illustration of Hugh McKail. Hugh McKail was a Scottish martyr who knew the Prince of Peace very well and he was to be hanged in Edinburgh for his commitment to Jesus. A large crowd was gathered. After singing Psalm 31, he began to climb the scaffold and this is what he said to the crowd, "I care no more to go up this ladder and over it than if I were going home to my Father's house." At each step of the ladder he cried out, "Every step is one dear degree nearer to heaven and to glory." He got to the top, he read God's word, he addressed the crowd. As the noose was placed around his neck and then he said this in perfect peace, "Now I leave off to speak anymore to creatures and I turn my speech to thee, O Lord. Now I begin communion with God which shall never be broken off again. Farewell, father and mother. Farewell, friends and relations. Farewell, world and all its delights. Farewell, meat and drink. Farewell, sun and moon and stars. Welcome, God my Father. Welcome, sweet Lord Jesus, mediator of the new covenant. Welcome, blessed Spirit of grace, God of all consolation and God of all peace. Welcome, glory. Welcome, eternal life. Welcome, death." And with those words the noose took hold and he went into glory.

That's the way to live. That's the way to die in the Prince of Peace. He's there for you. Go to him. Amen.

Gracious God, oh, help us not to shun the Prince of Peace but to come just as we are, poor, needy, hell-worthy sinners, fallen sons of Adam, deserving to perish. Lord, save the lost among us, the children, the teenagers, but also adults that do not yet know thee, and be with all those children and teenagers and adults who do know thee. Oh, may we know an inner peace that passes all understanding and may we live out of it and trust thee much much more than we did in 2020, in the coming 2021 year. Help us to live more by faith and less by sight. Help us to walk more in the peace of Christ, the peace that passes all understanding. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

"For all flesh is as grass and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away but the word of the Lord endureth forever and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. Let us therefore fear lest the promise be left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it," 1 Peter 1 and Hebrews 4.

On March 19, Mary K. passed away at the age of 93.

On April 11, Dan V. passed away at the age of 65.

On April 29, Kathy D. passed away at the age of 64.

On June 20, Trudy Q. passed away at the age of 91.

On September 11, Priscilla J. passed away at the age of 96.
On September 6, Imogene D. passed away at the age of 71.
On November 8, Liz S. passed away at the age of 79.
On November 18, Jake V. passed away at the age of 86.
On November 19, Shar V. passed away at the age of 83.
On November 30, Edith M. passed away at the age of 95.
On December 5, Joyce M. passed away at the age of 94.

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him and to our God for he will abundantly pardon," Isaiah 55:6-7.