

## Message of Peace – 2 Peter 3:8-15

Advent is the season of preparation for the coming of Jesus. It has two points of reference – the first is to prepare to celebrate his first coming as a baby in Bethlehem, and the second is to look forward to the second coming of Jesus when he will return to take his people home. So our perspective is to look backwards to Jesus' first coming and forward to his second coming. In other words, we are in the in between time...

The early Christians to whom Peter wrote this letter were also in the in-between time. They, of course, were much closer to Jesus' first coming, with no idea that it would be at least two millennium before Jesus came back. They believed Jesus would return before the disciples died. With each passing year these early Christians became more and more confused and discouraged.

So Peter writes to them to help them know how to live in the in-between time. His bottom line is, live in peace.

Listen to what Peter writes to these early Christians.

### **Text: 2 Peter 3:8-15**

In the first part of this chapter Peter notes that some people say Jesus is not coming back because it had been such a long time. Imagine if those people lived today? And we also have many people who live as if Jesus will not return, doing their own thing, "following their own evil desires," as Peter says in verse 3.

So the first thing Peter points out to them is that time is not the same for God. "A day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day" to God. He is not constricted into the tight confines of time and space we live in. He is outside both time and space, so what seems like a long, long time to us is like a moment to God.

Second, God has a purpose in his delayed return; there is a good reason why Jesus has not returned yet. You see, God does not want anyone to perish but all to come to repentance. (v. 9)

How many times have I heard people say they think God is cruel because he is willing to throw the evil people into the lake of fire or hell? This passage stands against that kind of thinking and says God is trying desperately to turn as many people away from hell as possible. He does not want anyone to perish. This is why he has delayed the coming of Jesus, so more people will be ready. Sadly, people still choose to resist God and fail to bow before him, and in so doing they choose their own path that leads to destruction.

If Jesus had come in 1910, just before the last pandemic that hit the globe, the Spanish Flu, there would have been an estimated 600 million Christians he would have taken home. If Jesus had come in 2010, there would have been 2.14 Billion Christians. Each year the Christian church grows by 38 million. We may not have seen that growth in Nanaimo yet, but it is happening.

And God is not willing that any should perish but everyone come to repentance.

Jesus will come, and he will come when we least expect him. Verse 10 says the day of the Lord will come as a thief, unannounced and catching people by surprise. This emphasizes the way people will be caught off guard and not that God is trying to be sneaky. In fact, Jesus gave all kinds of signs, warnings we could see and pay attention to that would herald the approach of his coming.

In Matthew 24 Jesus says to his disciples when they asked about when he would return:

5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Any of those things sound familiar? Do you think we should be ready for the return of our Lord?

Jesus also speaks of the fire that will sweep through the heavens and the earth. Though we usually see this as the destruction of the earth, it may be a reference to something else – the refinement of the earth. Fire is used again and again in scripture as an agent of purification, and the promise is that the evil and wickedness found on our planet right now will one day be wiped away. All the greed – gone. All the violence – gone. All the abuse – gone. All the dishonesty – gone. All the selfishness – gone. You name it, and God will wipe it away some day and establish a perfect world once again.

So Peter asks, “Knowing that Jesus could come at any time and when he does all wickedness will be wiped out as with fire, how should Christians live in the in-between time?” Peter says Christians are to live holy and godly lives as they wait for the return of Jesus. We have so much to look forward to – a new heaven and a new earth – but that has not yet come. So as God’s people we are to live in holiness and godliness.

In verse 14 we are told to make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with God, or as the KJV says, “be found by him in peace, spotless and blameless.”

And here we see the theme of the second week of Advent – peace. God’s people are to live in peace as they wait for the return of Jesus.

So let’s take a few minutes and explore that theme of peace.

Isaiah 9:6 identifies Jesus as the Prince of Peace. Where Jesus is, there is peace.

One of the greatest illustrations of that is the day Jesus took the disciples across the Sea of Galilee in a little boat. As they were crossing the sea, Jesus is fast asleep, worn out from the ministry. Suddenly a great storm descends on the sea, and the boat is in danger of being swamped. Many commentators see this as yet another attempt by Satan to destroy the Son of God and try to thwart the plans of God. Though many of the disciples were experienced fishermen, they had never seen anything like this storm, so the disciples wake Jesus up and ask him, “Don’t you care that we are about to drown?”

Jesus gets up and cries out into the howling wind, “Peace. Be still.” The winds stopped and the sea was calm once again.

There will be storms that beat against the boats of our lives as well. The storm may look like cancer, or heart problems or shingles. It may look like unemployment or unexpected bills. It may look like the rebellious child, or the faithless spouse. Storms will hit us and Satan means to swamp your boat, to cause you to lose your faith and fall away from God.

But when the Prince of peace calls out “Peace! Be still!” the storms no longer have power over you. Jesus brings a calm to your life, one that starts within you and then is seen in the way you live. But when Jesus is not invited into the boat there is no peace...

I read a sad historical note. In 1644, British Parliament banned the celebration of Christmas. Why? Because the meaning of Christmas had become lost in a maelstrom of reveling, drunkenness, rioting, and depravity. Decent people found it necessary to stay indoors for safety. What happened? England left Christ out of Christmas.<sup>1</sup> There was no peace on earth.

Jesus promises peace to his disciples and to us. In John 14:27 Jesus says:

**<sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. (ESV)**

The Prince of Peace not only brings peace to the storms of our lives, but he teaches us how to live at peace with those around us. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, **“Blessed are the peace makers, for they will be called the children of God.” (Matthew 5:9)**

When the church started to embrace people outside the Jewish nation, when Gentiles started to fill the churches of the ancient world, tensions started to rise. How could the God of the Jews allow Gentiles into his fold? The Prince of Peace declared to men like Paul the Apostle, “

**For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, (Ephesians 2:14) NIV**

Jesus is not stirring up division and hostility, but instead he breaks down the barriers. Politics and social issues will not divide the Church of Jesus Christ. Neither will economic position – the

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<sup>1</sup> Tan, P. L. (1996). [\*Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times\*](#) (p. 661). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

rich and poor – for all are equal in the church of Christ. Churches will not be split by ethnic divides. Christ is our peace and He has made us one family.

Christ brings peace. It is a significant fact that no great battles were fought on Christmas Day. They have occurred on the 24th and 26th of December, but the anniversary of the advent of Peace on Earth has ever been observed by a cessation of hostilities.<sup>2</sup>

Years ago there was a great strike at the London docks that affected shipping throughout the world and caused a great deal of tension and bitterness. A certain laborer by the name of Ben Tilett was speaking to a group of the dockmen. He knew that his fellow workers were in no mood for a sermon, yet he felt they were honest and human and open to ideals.

In his effort to influence them, he decided to describe the worker of Nazareth. With powerful words and sincere tenderness, he sketched the daily doings of the Divine Worker, emphasizing the human and understanding way in which Christ met and solved problems. He went on to tell them what he thought Christ would do if He owned the London docks, and what Christ would do if He were one of the workers there.

Restless at first, the group gave him undivided attention. When Tilett finished speaking, a muscular giant of a fellow jumped up and shouted: “Ben Tilett, I don’t know who this Worker of Nazareth is that you have been talking about, but I move that we give Him three cheers.”<sup>3</sup>

## Conclusion

We live in the in-between time that separates the first coming of Jesus and his second coming. In that time, we are called by Jesus to live in peace. Note that he says, “Make every effort to be found in him in peace, spotless and blameless.”

If there ever was a time when our world needed peacemakers, it is today. We, as God’s people, are called to be the carriers of peace. Of course you cannot give away something you do not have yourself, so we must receive from Jesus the peace he offers us. It is received through surrender – we surrender ourselves to Him and he fills us with peace.

“My peace I give to you,” Jesus said. Have you received that peace in your heart?

Then bring peace to your home, to your place of work, to your community. Wherever you interact with others, bring the Peace of Christ. You will need the wisdom, and love and compassion only the Holy Spirit can give you, but He is more than willing to help you.

Find peace in the presence of Jesus this Christmas season. Be still, and know that he is God. “Let not your heart be troubled and neither let it be afraid.” Jesus still speaks, “Peace, be still!”

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<sup>2</sup> Tan, P. L. (1996). [\*Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times\*](#) (p. 655). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

<sup>3</sup> Tan, P. L. (1996). [\*Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times\*](#) (p. 662). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.