

Rev. Janet Doyle  
Elmer Presbyterian Church  
**Second Sunday in Advent**  
Sunday, December 4, 2022  
Scripture: Isaiah 9: 6-7  
Luke 1:5-24

## **Sermon: Be Born in Us Today: Bringing Renewal and Peace**

This is the Second Sunday in Advent. Last week we looked at God's blessings through the generations and the Hope we have in Jesus, our Savior. Today we will look at Peace and Renewal. Peace is one of the nine fruits of the Spirit that we find listed in Galatians 5:22.

One of the things I love about Christmas is the nativity scene. It is so peaceful to look at. Usually there is a feeling of peace around a newborn baby even if the baby is crying. One of the most peaceful hymns we sing is "Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright. Round yon virgin, mother and Child, Holy Infant so tender and mild, sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace."

We all long for peace and renewal in our lives, and yet peace is sadly lacking in our world. People are fearful, tired, worried, and anxious. Many relationships are full of conflict, stress and fear. The world is full of conflict and wars. People are fearful of the future.

This question was once asked, "If you could choose what you want most in life, what would you ask for?" The most common answer was "PEACE."

People want peace in their marriage, families, workplaces, country, and world. Many people are without true inner peace. The world will offer you peace through many forms of escapism...drugs, alcohol, immorality, constant entertainment, self-satisfaction. Many believe that peace is defined as the absence of trouble. They refuse to face the problems in their lives, believing that this is finding peace. The world, however, has never held the answer to true peace. You can choose to have true peace, and true peace can only come from God.

Today, we are looking at the scripture in which Zechariah didn't have an inner peace and he was fearful. Zechariah was married to

Elizabeth, and they had desired children but never had any. Zechariah was serving as priest, and he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And an angel of the Lord appeared to him standing on the right side of the altar. Zechariah was troubled when he saw the angel and fear came over him. But the angel said to him, *“Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.”*

*“And Zechariah said to the angel, ‘How can this happen? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years’.”* That was nice Zechariah didn’t call his wife “old.” “And the angel answered him, *‘I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.’*” Don’t get an angel upset!

Zechariah was not able to speak until John was born and Zechariah named him John. This baby Elizabeth had, John the Baptist, was to prepare the way for the ministry of Jesus. Zechariah was a religious man, but he didn’t believe that God could do the impossible. Zechariah was gripped with fear! For months Zechariah didn’t have peace. More often than not, when it comes to having faith, the Bible seems to suggest that fear is a bigger stumbling block than our intellect.

Zechariah loses his ability to speak for 9 months and during those months begins to believe in the possibilities of God because Zechariah and Elizabeth’s prayers had been answered. It looks like God is punishing Zechariah, but after all this, Zechariah knows God more fully from this experience. When John was born and Zechariah named him John, and not Zechariah, which was the custom, he began praising God and he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Zechariah gave a prophecy about his son John preparing the way for Jesus who would bring us peace with God through the forgiveness of sins in Luke 1:67-79 and in verse 78-79 he said, *“Because of God’s tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace.”*

Zechariah's fear was replaced with faith and peace. His soul was renewed, and his faith was strengthened for the journey ahead with his son John. John prepared the people for the coming of the Lord. John announced the coming Messiah, he was the one who pointed to Jesus and said, "*Behold the lamb of God.*"

Gabriel was telling Zechariah, don't be afraid, be at peace, your faith will be renewed and just believe that God will work all things together for the good.

The key that unlocks the treasure of God's peace is faith in the promises of God. David writes in Psalm 56:3-4 "*When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise-in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?*"

The Angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah, Mary, Joseph and the Shepherds commanding them: "*Do not be afraid*" or "*Fear not!*" When fear threatens to overwhelm us, we can remember the promises of God and let them build our faith, just like Zechariah. When we don't know what to do and we are fearful, we need to allow God to lead and guide us. God gives us direction and offers us wisdom. Obedience always hangs in the balance when fear enters our lives. Fear isn't just an emotional issue; it is an obedience issue.

God brings good news so we don't need to fear but to have peace because God promises to be with us. Immanuel: God is with us. Jesus is not only our HOPE at Christmas, but he is also our PEACE each day. It is only in Christ that we will ever truly obtain peace on earth.

Someone once said, "There will never be agreement at the peace tables of the world or rest in the individual heart until the Prince of Peace reigns supreme in the hearts of people."

That is what needs to be born in us today: Jesus brings us renewal and peace that the world does not give us. Jesus brings us peace with God because our sins have separated us from God, and it is only through Jesus and faith in him that we are brought into a relationship of peace with our God and Creator.

Jesus was born into this world to die on the cross so that our sins could be forgiven, and we could be restored to a right relationship of peace with God.

Isaiah 53:5 says, *“He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”* Jesus came to bring us peace with God and an inner peace that the world cannot give us.

Hear these words from John 14:27 that Jesus spoke to his disciples and to us today, *“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 let them be afraid.”*

As believers in Jesus, we are called to follow in his footsteps. As Colossians 3:15 says: *“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.”*

Do you have the peace of God in your heart this morning?

Come to the Lord’s Table this morning and ask God to renew you and bring you peace for the journey ahead.

The angels proclaimed to the shepherds that first Christmas Eve: *“Peace on earth, goodwill towards all.”* (Luke 2:14) Those words of promise still ring in the air this Christmas season as we worship and adore the Lord Jesus, our Savior, the Son of God, the Prince of Peace. May “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7)

*“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.”*

*“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”* (Romans 15:13) Amen.