

Peace Prayer

By John Foley

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*Old Orchard Church
Third Sunday of Advent*

December 16, 2012

10:15 to 11:50 a.m.

*Comfort, comfort ye my people,
speak ye peace thus saith our God;*

*Comfort those who sit in darkness,
mourning 'neath their sorrow's load.*

*Speak ye to Jerusalem of the
peace that waits for them;
Tell her that her sins I cover,
and her warfare now is over.*

(Johannes Olearius, 1671)



Celebrating the Fruit of the Spirit in Messiah Jesus: The Promise of Peace

And the admission of McKenna Reed and Rocco Zavaglia to the Lord's Supper

Jesus said, In the world you have trouble. And we do:
the trouble of warring factions—
alienated friends, spouses,
religions, races, parties and nations.

Leaders of rogue nations, of peoples, of causes
do not just argue for truth but stir up
distrust and prejudice and hatred.

From the beginning, there has been war
—in families, communities and nations—
And dark rumors of war.

O Prince of Peace—
who loves peace,
whose sacrificial death brings peace,
who is Peace for every warring faction:

Come and save the world from itself;
Come and quiet the tumult of the fear,
of the greed and arrogance that plague our hearts;
Hasten that Day, promised of old,
When swords and bombs shall be beaten into plows,
and war will be learned no more;
When love will trump every hostility, in every place,
and Peace will rule the earth, in love and justice.
O come, Lord Jesus—come quickly! Amen.

Today's Scripture Readings

Gospel readings

The Annunciation: Luke 1: 26-38; The Benedictus: Luke 1:67-79

Sermon

“The Strange Peace Coming Upon the World”
Luke 1:67-79

Ron Lutjens, senior pastor, preaching

Never-Ending Shalom

Shalom is the Hebrew word for peace. It means not only the absence of conflict but also the fullness of security, well-being, and happiness. Through the prophets of old, God promised the world that his Messiah would establish a shalom, a peace, that would last forever. In that great “Christmas text,” Isaiah 9:1-7, we read this wonderful promise, referring to Messiah:

of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end. (v.7)

Ever-lasting peace! Everyone getting along, in an order of things marked by pure love and perfect justice. And no “honeymoon” periods—it’s never over. Peace and goodness everywhere, and what surely would follow, laughter, ease and relaxation. Everywhere; all the time. It’s too hard to imagine. But it certainly is what God promised.

In the here and now we have bits and pieces of peace, and it lasts only for a time. American citizens were brought together recently in great sympathy for the victims right after Superstorm Sandy struck the east coast. But it wasn’t long before accusations started flying and patience wore thin at lots of levels. The world is a place of conflict; peace is hard to come by, and it’s hard to maintain.

On this third Sunday of Advent ponder what redemption really means, the one Christ came to secure—peace, full and forever. Here’s how one Christian writer imagines what’s coming:

*I announce to you redemption. Behold I make all things new.
Behold I do what cannot be done. I restore the years that the locusts
and worms have eaten. I restore the years which you have drooped
away upon your crutches and in your wheelchair. I restore the sym-
phonies and operas which your deaf ears have never really heard,
and the snowy peaks your blind eyes have never seen, and the free-
dom lost to you through plunder, and the identity lost to you be-
cause of false accusations and the failure of justice; and I restore
the good which your own foolish mistakes have cheated you of. And
I bring you to the Love of which all other loves speak, the Love
which is joy and beauty, and which you have sought in a thousand
streets and for which you have wept and clawed your pillow.*

That’s what’s coming—forever. Sometimes “forever” can feel uninviting or even threatening, because we cannot imagine **not** getting tired, **not** getting bored in a “world without end,” **not** having to watch good relationships go sour. But the promise is precisely that we are not left to accomplish this ourselves, but that Messiah will do it for us. So Zechariah, John the Baptist’s father, assures us, inspired by the Holy Spirit who gives us peace:

...the Sunrise shall visit us from on high...

to guide our feet into the way of peace. (Luke 1:78-79)

And so we pray, “Come quickly, Lord Jesus!” Come tomorrow morning, into this or that trouble, but also, Come forever.

—Ron Lutjens