**Advent: An Invitation to Peace**

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And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” (Luke 2: 8 -15)

Introduction

We all long for peace but peace is lacking. There is a lot of conflicts. We cannot say peace has arrived. Angels sang peace on earth when they announced “peace on earth”. There is rise of national conflict. We often think peace as the absence of conflict.

The Hebrew word for peace is Shalom which is almost the same as the Arabic word Salam. What is Shalom? This blessing was given when Israel was about to go to war. Peace is more complete and includes wellness, wholeness and tranquillity. It touches every part of life. The understanding of peace was Shalom. Shalom refers to a sense of completeness when things are apart.

The Big Idea: Christmas, the coming of Jesus Christ is for peace on Earth.

Last weekend Pastor Daniel ended the service with the Aaronic blessing from Numbers 6:23-26.

“Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: “The Lord bless you
and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.”’ (Numbers 6:23-26)

Shalom is also used when Solomon finished building the temple. Dunluce is a castle in the Ireland that has been abandoned since the 16th century. They digitally restored the castle and it looked better and more complete. Pastor Mike’s wife likes to collect teapots. Once he broke the teapot cover and was amazed on how applying some super glue can put the teapot back together again. There are many things we wish we had a super glue to mend

# Shalom with God

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1)

We need wholeness in our relationship with God. We have peace with God suggests that there was no peace before. Romans 5:10 says.

For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! (Romans 5:10)

We used to be hostile with God but now we have peace. During the fall of Eden. Everything fell worse and worse. Only after Christ came on earth, we have a way back to the Father. There is goodwill between Man and God. Gods posture towards us is goodwill. The beginning of our restoration is a peace that encompasses all our lives.

# Shalom with self



I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.  As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. (Romans 7:15-20)

We continue to sin when we know the right thing to do. We consistently fight inward struggles. There are 800,000 dying from suicide. Teen suicide has risen 16% since 2006-2016. There are more young people who are attempting suicide. 97% of them has a mental disorder. Suicide attempts are 20 times more than completed suicide. There is a lot of conflict between the individual inwardly. If you are suffering please call the staff at Befrienders. If you know someone who is struggling more than others, please direct them to the Befrienders.

Jesus did not only come to give us Peace with God but peace with ourselves. Paul tells in Philippians

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. 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 be afraid. (John 14 26-27)

# Shalom with others

Our relationships with others are the most needed.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. (Ephesians 2:14-16, NIV)

The Messiah has made things up between us so that we’re now together on this, both non-Jewish outsiders and Jewish insiders. He tore down the wall we used to keep each other at a distance. He repealed the law code that had become so clogged with fine print and footnotes that it hindered more than it helped. Then he started over. Instead of continuing with two groups of people separated by centuries of animosity and suspicion, he created a new kind of human being, a fresh start for everybody. (Ephesians 2:14-16 ,Message)

Jesus came and tore the wall between the Jews and non-Jews. Jews did not like the Gentiles because they were considered unclean. Christ to break the barriers and bridge the gap to bring people together to bring peace and wholeness. We are called to bring peace and wholeness in our relationships.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. (Colossians 3:15)

Paul is saying that when we have experienced peace with God and ourselves. The bulk of the new testament talk about bearing, putting up and living with one another. We are called to bring Shalom. Shalom is best reflected in the community we are in; that is to our colleagues, church and cell. The burden is upon us to bring Shalom because we know Shalom.

# Shalom on earth

## The angels announced Peace on earth. What does it mean?

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

This does not refer to peace with god alone but a cosmic peace. At Eden, when Adam fell, the cosmos began fracturing. Our environment is falling apart. Climate change is real. Islands are disappearing. There are forest fires on one side and heavy rains on the other side. The cosmos is fractured till Christ return. When Christ returns, there will be a new earth and everything will be restored.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Colossians 1: 19-20)

The Bible talks about the lion laying with the lamb. We ultimately need the prince of peace. We need Jesus. We need to have peace with God through Jesus and not good deeds. We need to come to Jesus Christ. Jesus is our peace. He made peace with us.

# Conclusion

“The webbing together of God, Humans and all creation is the Shalom.” Shalom is universal flourishing and delight. Do we have peace with God today? Jesus came to die on the cross for our since so that we are right with God. We can have shalom with God. We have the resources to make Shalom with others. What does Christmas mean to us? May it be your prayer that Shalom marks your gathering during this Christmas Season.



Sermon summary by: Abbey Thangiah