

December 8, 2018

Perfect Resolution Sermon Series

Hope Lutheran Church

“Hearts at Peace” – Vicar Kevin Scott

During this time of year in my home, I lose my rights to the TV. I've come to accept it. Usually I get some say in what my wife and I watch, but starting towards the end of November, one thing takes over our television. Hallmark Christmas Movies. You know the ones. The girl with no money and a dream moves to a small town and inherits a dying business from a long lost relative. Somewhere a perfect, handsome stranger comes into the mix. There's some mild crisis but by Christmas Eve it's all resolved as the business (usually a bakery) flourishes, boy and girl fall in love, cue Christmas tree, hot coffee, and a warm fire. It's all so...peaceful. If only life were really like that.

I think one reason why those kinds of movies resonate with so many people is that at some level, everyone could use a little more peace. Just as a show of hands, who could use a little more peace in their life? I know I could. Peace of mind. Peace and quiet. Peace in our homes. Peace in our world. As a confession, as I was writing this message, I was begging for some peace. This made my head hurt. Peace is something we could all use. Peace is even a part of our worship here at Hope. Before we take communion together, we share God's peace with one another. But what sort of peace does God offer us? And as we continue our sermon series on Isaiah's prophecy and the perfect resolution of Jesus that Isaiah points us to, how do we understand God's promise of peace?

I think we should start by understanding that God's people, Israel, were people like us in some ways. We all spend time crying out for peace, and so did Israel. After all, God's

people 2700 years ago lived surrounded by violence. There was constant warfare surrounding Israel. The threat of oppression was always there. Israel was always under the threat of destruction. Whether it was from the Philistines, or the Assyrians, or the Babylonians, or even the Romans at the time of Christ, the people of Israel were always being oppressed by someone. War was everywhere, nations fighting for different reasons. The best land. The best resources. One nation wanted the other nation's stuff. And it was into that context that Isaiah delivered a promise of peace.

This evening, I'd like for us to read that promise of peace together.

⁴For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵For every boot of the tramping warrior in
battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.

Yokes. Rods. Warrior's boots and garments rolled in blood. Those are all different symbols for oppression and war, aren't they? And what does Isaiah say will happen to them? They'll be burned. Broken. Done away with. No more war, violence, bloodshed, or oppression. This is God's promise of peace.

And when God makes a promise, we should trust it. After all, God has never lied. God has never broken a promise. God's word is a sure thing, and if God promises an end to war and violence, we'd better believe that it will happen. This is the promise of an everlasting peace, where war and violence will be no more.

And this is a promise that, like the nation of Israel, we look forward to. Advent is a time where we reflect on the birth of Christ, but

we also look forward to His return. Come Lord Jesus is our prayer. And when I see violence and turmoil, I pray for his return. Like the nation of Israel, we live surrounded by violence and war. Sometimes it's overwhelming. When I turn on the news or listen to the radio and hear word of yet another mass shooting or terrorist attack, it becomes so hard for me to believe that one day, God will put an end to all of it. But that's the promise. God makes the same promise to Israel that He makes to us. This is the promise of heaven, God's perfect kingdom. We will all see heaven someday, God's perfect kingdom. And violence, war, and oppression have no place in God's perfect kingdom.

The picture of heaven is one in which humanity is at perfect peace with God. And someday, we'll all see it. But what about right now? Sure, heaven sounds wonderful, but we want peace right now, don't we? How are our hearts right now? Are they at peace with God?

The truth is, no measure of earthly peace, no matter how wonderful it might seem, is of any value if our hearts remain at war with our creator. That's where all the violence, oppression, and bloodshed in our world begins, isn't it? The sin that poisons the human heart is at the root of every mass shooting, every terrorist attack, every bombing or massacre. It all comes from sin. And even though none of us here may be guilty of oppression or bloodshed, our words spoken out of spite or anger do their own kind of damage. Our own private battles. Our own petty wars. It's the same sin. Sin keeps us separated from our loving Father and His eternal peace.

But the promise of eternal peace with God is the peace that Jesus came to bring. As long as the debt of sin hangs over our heads,

there can be no peace with God. But Jesus took our debt upon Himself upon Calvary's cross, delivering to all humanity the peace with God that Isaiah promised 2700 years ago. The debt is paid. Peace with God is now ours, free of charge. Jesus, our perfect resolution, gives us not only the peace that we all desire, but the peace that we desperately need. Peace right here. In our hearts.

The heart of a Christian, your heart, is a heart at peace with its creator. So should we continue to wage our own personal wars with gossip and insults as our weapons? By no means. A heart at peace with God begins to live at peace with others. This is the peace of Christ that we share with one another in worship. It's this same peace that we're called upon as Christians to share with the world. Now, I could give you countless examples of Christians sharing peace with others, but there's one in particular that I'd like to share with you this evening.

Desmond Doss was a Christian and a conscientious objector who served his country faithfully in World War II. Mel Gibson told his story several years ago in the film "Hacksaw Ridge." Desmond believed strongly in two things that seemed to be irreconcilable. The first was serving his country. When Japanese bombers attacked American soil at Pearl Harbor, Desmond Doss took it personally. He felt a deep calling to serve his country, and so he enlisted in the army. But the second thing that Desmond believed in was peace. And for Desmond, peace wasn't some abstract concept floating out in space. As a Christian, Doss believed that God had called him not to kill, but to bring peace into whatever situation he could. And so, Doss enlisted as a medic. But the really remarkable thing in all of this is that Doss refused to carry a gun. He didn't villainize those who did, but he considered

peace his personal calling. And time and time again, he would charge out onto the bloody field of battle to give medical care to wounded soldiers on both sides of the conflict. Each time he would charge out onto the field of battle, he would pray the same prayer. "God, let me get one more." At the bloody battle of Okinawa, it's estimated that Doss saved over 75 men from the bloody field of battle. This was the place into which Doss was called to bring peace.

This day, where is God calling you to bring His peace? As we share Christ's peace with one another in a few moments, let's take seriously his calling to live as his children of peace. May we always be willing to share this peace, true peace, with the world around us as we live with God's true peace in our hearts. In the name of Jesus. Amen.