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| Topic | The Lords Birth Foretold – Peace |
| Reference | Isaiah 9: 1-7 |
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| Speaker | Br Arnold Lim |

This is what is known as the most famous prophecy on Christ in the Book of Isaiah, but you can find a general theme running through the whole thing. It is this word called “**PEACE**”.

There is a book called ‘Wild’, it is on a woman Cheryl Strayed. She came from a single family, life was normal, got married, things going well and then her mom gets cancer. Several weeks later mom dies, her whole world unravels. Her marriage unravels, she goes on drugs, and life just completely goes haywire. To help her recover she goes on a hike, it was a 1000 mile hike and she writes a book on it and the book became so famous that a very highly critical acclaim movie has been made on it. This movie seems to be in feminist circles a way of dealing with stress and anxiety and trouble and I went to a website, I googled it and she talk about how going through this journey helped her come to terms with the death of her mother.

**How do we deal with anxiety or stress?**

Will you take a 1000 mile track? A lot of us when we are in trouble we tend to retreat it away. Some people do lot of things, some people go and do bad things.

Today as we go through the first in the series of an Advent we will talk about a topic which is really very central to the Bible. It is about peace and I will ask you, do you have that peace or do you have a semblance of peace.

**How this prophecy really helps us being able to understand how scripture talks about peace?**

**Theology**:

*Peace starts off with God. The moment you have peace with God scripture says you have peace with yourself and the moment you have peace with yourself you have peace with others.*

We have to look at it in context how Isaiah saw it. Isaiah stands and he sees Israel especially a few towns, towns from where warrior came from. They use to fight Midinites people at the Naphtalian and those of Zebelun are warriors and he sees ruin. Isaiah sees hopelessness because an Assyrian king has just ravaged Israel and against this he pulls out a prophecy. If we read the whole verse or the whole thing, it is all about war and peace. The way to appreciate Isaiah 9 is to take it back two chapters.

This is a time when Israel is divided; the northern kingdom is called Israel. It comprises of 10 tribes. The southern kingdom is Judah. It comprises of two tribes, Judah and Benjamin and a lot of the Levites have gone there and they are hostile to one another and we are told first in chapter 7 of what happens and the story is here

When Ahaz son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, was king of Judah, King Rezin of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel marched up to fight against Jerusalem, but could not overpower it. Now the house of David was told, “Aram has allied itself with Ephraim”, **so the hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest and shaken by the wind.** *Isaiah 7: 1-2*

This verse talks about fear. When you are under stress and anxiety, you cannot think straight even the doctors will tell you that some chemicals are extruded and your frontal context cannot think properly. You get jittery and you just want the problem to go away. I think we all have times in our live where we had it and the rest of the day we cannot think. This thing not just envelopes it, it tears you down, your throat goes dry, you cannot think of anything else, you just want it to go away.

In this context God says Isaiah to tell to the king

Say to him, (Ahaz) ‘Be careful, keep calm and don’t be afraid.” *Isaiah 7:3*

God knows that his mind is not thinking straight. He told him to stay calm so that he can think better and God then tells King Ahaz I got a plan for you. The grace of God goes so far that he says, I am going to give you a sign and this is the sign of Emmanuel.

But Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test”. *Isaiah 7:12*

Was he that righteous in not testing God? Isaiah does not tell you this but Second 2-King tells us

Ahaz sent messages to say to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, “I am your servant and vassal. Come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Aram and of the king of Israel, who are attacking me.” And Ahaz took the silver and gold found in the temple of the Lord and in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent it to the king of Assyria. *2 Kings 16:5-8*

This is really interesting and it has much more connection then we actually realize. Basically, he is saying that I have got this huge problem, I am going to be very smart about it and I am going to solve my problem and then he goes into an alliance with somebody which he really shouldn’t have and true enough Assyria makes good his promise and delivers Judah from Israel.

Here is a simple point.

You are never going to get peace without God.

5 Every warrior’s boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

This is the end to all hostilities because in war whenever someone dies you take his boots because you are going to reuse it. When you burn it, this expensive stuff is like saying, no more WMDs, no more weapons of mass destruction.

Nowadays we look to go into alliances. We live in very interesting times, where enemies become your friends, friends become your enemies. Because, alliances don’t bring lasting peace. What happens with Assyria is Assyria makes good as promise, king Ahaz thinks he is very smart, I got peace, I got very clever but Assyria will milk Judah and Judah will be so broken and by the time the Babylonians come they will be wiped out. Now there are some very important lessons for us.

What Ahaz is doing is trying to juggle two kinds of peace.

Ahaz never rejected God’s peace, but he has just got a backup plan. We can repeat this in so many other areas.

The first thing we need to pick up is peace begins with God. The text tells us you are going to get your peace. Ahaz got his peace but really at a bad price. In the long-term his children and grandchildren really suffered for it. God tells us to take the high road.

Some people think that in order to have peace, you don’t need God, you can go on a 1000 mile hike, you can do yoga, you can do mindfulness breathing, you can read 101 books out there to handle your stress, you can do it and I tell you it will work to a degree but then it will fade.

The way Cheryl Strayed ended her journey was really interesting. She ended it on a bridge. Ironically it is called bridge of the gods and the book describes how she saw this. She is not a Christian, it was her marker for the end of a healing session and after this she writes a lot about how the journey healed her. It is really a fantastic bridge.

There is bridge not to the gods but there is a bridge to God and the question you and I have to ask ourselves is are we on that bridge. Because the first thing of peace is that we are at war with God, you just don’t realize it. We are at war because of sin and none of our good deeds, none of what we can do is going to stop that. There is hostility. The only way to cross that bridge is by accepting the peace that is given to us on the cross.

**PRINCE OF PEACE** -Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have **peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**. *Romans 5:1*

In this whole story of peace he points to an incident or an event on Midian, he says

4 For in the day of Midian’s defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of the oppressor. *(Refer Judges 7:2).*

Now this is a really interesting story. This is the story of Gideon and we all like to associate Gideon with the flees. The story is this, the Israelites have crossed, they are now still one nation, crossed into the Promised Land and because of disobedience they are worshipping Baal. The Malachites and Midinites come and they attack and take away their livestock, life is terrible and they are very depressed and anxious. One day an angel comes to Gideon and says behold mighty warrior God is with you and first thing Gideon says is, why do you bring this to me. Our life is so bad and then the story goes on. Gideon does not trust God at one point, he does not believe if angel is talking to him and he tested God. Finally, after tests he said “I am going to die”. God says, you are not going to do then he tells God don’t get angry with me I really need some miracles. He needs miracles and God walks with him, talks with him. God sends him on small mission, go and cut down this Asherah Pole but he said I will do it at night, so no one can see me. God grooms this boy and finally when he is ready God says,

Your people are so arrogant if I bring peace to them, they are just going to put it on themselves. You are going to war with 300 soldiers. God is saying a very important truth. God is saying this

***Glorify me and I will bring you peace.***

That is what Gideon does and God is glorified and peace comes to Israel. Here is another war

3 Though an army besieges me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident. *Psalm 27:3*

His own son Absalom was leading war against him. This psalm was written on the eve of that war. How is he so at peace? The next verse says

4 One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple *Psalm 27:4*

That is called glorifying God. In the event with the Book of Judges is an action, here is contemplation. The best example is the Song of the angels, the most perfect day. When the baby was born, angels come. They sing Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth on where his favor rest.

Scripture is so simple in its theology yet so profound. Glorify God does not mean empty singing, we sing, like Gideon walk with God, talk with God, do small things with God, and like David. David was enjoying the presence of God.

There are few things about peace. Firstly, it is the peace that takes you through suffering. It is not a peace you try to avoid, it takes you through it. It is like David, it is like I don’t know what is happening but I am going to trust in you. How do I do that? I discipline myself by coming in your presence. A lot of us don’t have that.

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

The verse before that is

Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again; Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. *Phil 4:4-5*

If you don’t rejoice, you don’t know that Lord is near, you don’t do thanksgiving, forget about the peace. The context is important. Paul is not talking about rejoicing like Christmas is coming let’s have some turkey. He is talking to a church who is being oppressed. Later on he talks about, he loves to be content. So he is talking about glorifying God which is done via discipline. It is about Christians who make it a habit to spend time with God in quiet solitude like David and they coincide very quiet and they pray and they walk like what Gideon does and you do it God brings you through and even though you don’t have a job or this illness is hanging around you or you have a legal case or your family is just broken up, the marriage is screwed, there is peace and there is a promise.

**Guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**

The worst things that happens when you have trouble your mid gets frozen, your heart gets flustered and so Paul knows, the mind and the heart has to be guarded.

God has sent us a **Wonderful** Counselor. Hebrew rendering of the word wonderful is amazing. That is what David discovered.

**Peace of God comes with glorifying God**

David before war goes into the temple where in silence he prays. The interesting thing about David is that when he prays he is enjoying it, nothing else he wants but the presence of God. This is something very lost in the church today, because what has happened with Christianity especially in our kind of churches they are two extremes.

The first is, we have turned into a rationalistic faith. It is the faith of the mind, it has gotten here and the faith to the mind translates itself very heavily into activities, let’s do this or that. We spend more time in talking or listening to others than with God.

We need to have a deeper experience of God, we need to go deep into God.

**When you are alone you are your worst enemy.**

You will think why is my life like this, why did God allowed it to happen to my family and that eats you, you become like Ahaz, you shake. What God is trying to tell us today is very simple truth. Glory to God, peace on earth and that is really the truth of it.

When you have peace, it goes out that is when we say peace with God leads to peace with yourself. The evidence of it is, it comes out with others.

Anger brings accusations to others. We are not willing to accept the blame instead putting it on to others. But you don’t justify yourself, you remind yourself you are justified by God by grace. When you do that you remember you are forgiven.

Ephesians 4 says, I forgive as Christ forgave. By this you feel less hurt, does not mean the hurt goes away, you feel less of it, you feel more grace. Then we have peace that surpasses understanding.

Mike Pence is a very committed Christian. He is Vice President-elect of the United States. He went with his family to see a show called Hamilton, it is a play and a lot of liberals were there. He got booed throughout the entire play. The whole family was embarrassed. At the end of it he got out to leave and they lectured him.

His responded with so much grace, so much love that his worse critics have nothing to say and Franklin Graham said that his behavior was exemplary. Here is the thing I want us to take home and that is the evidence of the peace. The evidence of peace is not seen, it is seen in little things.

**Person from God brings peace on ourselves. Peace from ourselves brings out peace to others.**

When you love your loved ones, you are at peace and here is one thing you got to realize. God loves you. He loved you so much he sent his son to die for you and that is why we call him everlasting father. 2000 years ago God sent his son on a very silent night and he brought peace to us.