

CoreGroup Guide | Peace - Part 1

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Welcome

“Peace on earth!” say Christmas cards and the decorative pillows this time of year, but what is the real connection between the Christmas story and peace? In a world that feels far from peaceful, this Advent we are focusing on how a baby born in Bethlehem can speak to the chaos, conflict, and uncertainty of life. This week we start by talking about how Jesus can bring peace to our divided communities, country, and world.

Opening Prayer

God with us, we come to you at the start of Advent desiring to encounter you in the Christmas story. We ask that you make this familiar story come alive in our hearts. We need the peace that is promised to come with Jesus. Help us find ways to calm the chaos and focus on you. Amen.

Ice Breaker

When it comes to Christmas trees, are you Team Real or Team Artificial? And perhaps more importantly, when is the proper time to put up the Christmas tree?

The Head

Long before the birth of Jesus, during a historical period when division, oppression, and fear were rampant, a Jewish prophet named Isaiah described a rescuer, a deliverer, a Messiah. Hundreds of years later, the promise of this prophecy would be fulfilled in the birth of Jesus.

Isaiah 9:6-7

*6 For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders,
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

*7 Great will be his authority,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.*

- Aside from the beautiful alliteration, what does it mean that Jesus is the Prince of Peace?
- What would “endless peace” look like in our world today?

When Jesus was born, the angels announced the good news to a group of shepherds, a social class that was historically poor and marginalized. Ultimately this proclamation of great joy and this promise of peace were a message to the whole world.

Luke 2:8-14

8 Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

*14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"*

- Why were the shepherds so terrified as the glory of the Lord shone around them?
- The angels proclaim "on earth peace" as they praise God. What is the connection between peace and worship?

The Heart

The word "peace" in Hebrew is Shalom. This does not just mean the absence of conflict; it means a sense of wholeness, healing, and completeness. We can't change the hearts and minds of everybody around us, but we can disarm the hostility of the world by modeling Christ-like peace in the way we live.

- Whether a slight annoyance or a true hatred, we all have certain people who sometimes feel like the enemy. In what ways have you bought into the divisive narrative of our world instead of the biblical narrative of Shalom?
- What aspect of the world feels the most unsettled and stressful to you right now? What prevents you from moving towards wholeness and healing in that area?
- There are two kinds of power in this world – power through force and power through humility. What needs to shift in your heart to take a posture of humility this season?
- In what ways are "justice" and "equity" actually spiritual words, not political tropes? What can we do as a church to reclaim those values in an effort to reclaim authentic peace?

The Hands

This Advent season we want to take the Christmas story – and the peace that it promises – seriously. To do this, we need to ask ourselves how we can join Jesus in this work.

- Look around at your family, your community, your city, and/or your country. What is one division that is preventing peace from being fully realized in your corner of the world?
- How can you actively work to remove that division this week?
- What lines need to be crossed in order for you to choose the path of peace and humility?
- What is one step you can take this week to address the injustices around you?

Closing Prayer

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me so love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.
O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi (Prayer for Peace)

Going Deeper

The theme of peace is woven throughout the Bible. Take some time this Advent season to read through the scriptures below. If there is one in particular that really speaks to your heart, spend some time meditating on those words, possibly even committing the scripture to memory. Use this as a spiritual practice to anchor yourself in peace this holiday season.

Scriptures that reference peace:

- Isaiah 9:6
- Psalm 23:1-6
- Psalm 27:1
- Psalm 46:1-3
- Matthew 11:28-30
- Luke 2:14
- John 14:27
- Philippians 4:6-7
- Colossians 3:12-15

From Pastor Charity

Making Advent Meaningful

As we officially start the Advent season, here are ten simple, spiritually rich ways to experience Advent in your CoreGroup and/or at home with your family. These practices are designed to help you slow down, center in Christ, and invite peace and hope into your daily rhythms.

[10 Ways to Make Advent Special](#)

Choose one practice to try over the next few weeks. Then send me a quick note to tell me how it went. Share your stories as a witness that God is continually transforming and growing us all.

And if you haven't already, be sure to [subscribe to receive the Advent devotional](#). It's a gentle weekly guide to help you stay grounded as we move toward Christmas.

Please share the Advent Resource and the Link to the Devo with your entire CoreGroup!