



## Advent Week 4 - Peace

### Begin with prayer (5 minutes)

### Read and Discuss the Text (15-20 minutes)

Spend a few minutes catching up on life.

Read [Luke 2:25-33](#):

**25** *There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, looking forward to Israel's consolation, and the Holy Spirit was on him. 26* *It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord's Messiah. 27* *Guided by the Spirit, he entered the temple. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform for him what was customary under the law, 28* *Simeon took him up in his arms, praised God, and said,*

**29** *Now, Master,  
you can dismiss your servant in peace,  
as you promised.*

**30** *For my eyes have seen your salvation.*

**31** *You have prepared it  
in the presence of all peoples—*

**32** *a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and glory to your people Israel.*

**33** *His father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him."*

### Talk through the following debrief questions:

- Can you remember a time where you really, fully experienced peace? When was it? What was it like?
- Do you feel like experiencing peace is an area of strength or weakness you experience in following Jesus?
- What makes peace difficult to experience on a daily basis in your life?

### Ask a few questions about the Text:

- Simeon was waiting for something - what was it? (25-26)
- What was it about seeing Jesus that brought peace to Simeon? What is the importance of the connection between peace and salvation seen in this text? (29-30)
- Who had Jesus come to bring peace to? (31-32)

## Read this overview (8 minutes)

What is Simeon waiting for?

Look closely at verse 25 - the Consolation of Israel.

Simeon, in this moment, finally saw the consolation of Israel.

But what is that?

Okay, context clues give it away pretty quickly - aka, the next verse - it's the "Lord's Christ." But if you were to ask Simeon, what do you think he would say he was waiting on?

Let's take a moment and unpack what these three words mean, because it's important for understanding Simeon and the rest of our text. I think he would say something like this:

Better worded, the Consolation of Israel is the one who would bring peace between the people and their God. God alone is the source of peace, for He is "Yahweh Shalom" - God who is peace. God established and made everything in Genesis 1-2 and he made it good and it was in a state of peace. Sin entered the world through mankind, and shattered shalom - peace had spiraled into chaos.

But God was not done with humanity. God made a promise that he would make for Himself a people through Abraham, who would be blessed and from which all the nations of the world would be blessed. These people would be called "Israelites" and would be known as the Jews. Throughout their history, the people of Israel had suffered greatly, both for their own sin and because of the oppression of others. Their land was frequently overrun by foreign powers who knew the strategic significance of Palestine, which connected Africa, Europe, and Asia. They suffered under slavery in Egypt and endured the troubles of exile - twice. In short, they were a people in desperate need of consolation—the kind of permanent comfort that could come only when the Son of David would arrive to guard them and to provide for the forgiveness of their sin.

While the sacrificial system could provide this in part, the people were given perfect peace only so long as they maintained a right relationship with the Lord. Isaiah 26:3 "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you."

But they were unable to maintain this trust. From the moment sin shattered the shalom of God in creation, the sacrifices made to restore the fullness of peace between God and man was never enough to fully stitch the wound.

So God would have to send a **Savior**.

This Savior would not only save all of mankind, but would be God's plan for the restoration of all things. He would fully heal his people and restore peace and wholeness to the sin-shattered shalom.

So, the consolation of Israel, the coming of this Savior, leads to the end of warfare, and the pardoning of iniquity, or sin, and the revelation of the glory of the Lord who has come to be with us!

And, as Micah 5:4-5 claims of this Savior, *“And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. **And he shall be their peace**”*

THAT is what is meant when he says he was hoping for the consolation of Israel. He was waiting for the one that would fully bring them PEACE.

And then he sees **Jesus**.

Not a warrior. Not a politician. Not yet a fully grown man. He doesn't see the miracles. He doesn't see the crucifixion. He doesn't see the resurrection.

All he sees is the 40 day old baby.

And he experiences in that moment something we can experience today - ***He experiences the presence of Jesus that brings peace.***

But now we have a different dilemma - We need to ask what this word “peace” actually means?

Inigo Montoya from the Princess Bride would perhaps look at the way we use peace and say “You keep using that word - I do not think it means what you think it means.”

We have to do some cultural work here to understand the depth of what is being said by Simeon. We mean one thing in our culture when we say “peace” but when Simeon is saying “peace”, I think we might find he meant something different - something greater.

Peace, as commonly used in English, comes from the Latin “pax.” Pax to the Romans meant a cessation of hostilities between the conqueror and the vanquished. This peace was always temporary because it depended on who was in the position of strength. So, now, in English, the word “peace” conjures up a passive picture, one showing an absence of civil disturbance or hostilities, or a personality free from internal and external strife.

On the other hand, the ancient Hebrew concept of peace is larger than that - rooted in the word “shalom,” meant presence, wholeness, completeness, soundness, health, safety and prosperity, carrying with it the implication of permanence.

***Where our Western idea of peace means the absence of something, the idea seen in this text for “peace” meant the presence of something.***

And this is why it's not simply the absence of conflict but the presence of Jesus that brings peace. Simeon isn't saying peace just removes what's creating conflict, but restores what's been broken by healing it. This peace didn't just mean something was going - it meant something was coming! Jesus is the means of restoring shalom with God, peace with God.

Simeon can claim that he can depart in peace, because He has laid eyes on the prince of peace, the consolation of Israel, the Savior of His people.

To embody this practice seen in the life of Simeon today, our desire is simple - we practice the presence of Jesus which brings peace. We don't just look at a baby as Simeon did - we look to a life lived perfectly for us by Jesus, a death died to justify us by Jesus, and a tomb vacated by Jesus through his resurrection which he invites us to experience and live in daily. We have this Gospel in full - and peace doesn't come simply when conflict leaves, but when the Savior comes.

When we see Him in the middle of our chaos, He is our peace there.

When the seas rage, and we look out on the water to Jesus, He is our peace there.

When life is turned over on its head, we can look up to Jesus and find that He really, truly is with us always even unto the end of the age, and that as Jesus is present, peace can be found there.

### **Apply the Text as a Community: (10-30 minutes):**

1. How can you practice the presence of Jesus which brings peace this week?
2. What distracts you from the presence of the prince of peace? How can you eliminate that distraction this week?
3. What reminds you that he is present with you? How can you double down on stirring your affections in this way this week?
4. How could what you do this week make it into next month? Next year? How could 2020 be a year in which the aim of your life is to practice being aware of the presence of Jesus and as such knowing all the more fully His peace?
5. The text says Simeon was "Guided by the Spirit" - How can you posture yourself to be guided by the Spirit toward peace this week? What do you need to stop? Start? Continue?

### **Spend some time in prayer, responding to this text and peace, with this guide (You could do this each day as a practice of seeing where the peace of God is absent or present in your life):**

Find a comfortable place and prepare for a time of responsive prayer.

- **Replay** - What happened yesterday?
- **Rejoice** - Where did I sense/see peace yesterday? Where was Jesus particularly present?
- **Repent** - Where did I feel an absence of peace yesterday? Where did I sin? Where did I fail to remember His presence?
- **Resolve** - What do I need to do to live in peace and practice the presence of Jesus today?

### **Close in prayer and call it a day! (5 minutes)**