

## Advent Week 1: Peace

11-26-22

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All of us want peace: you have a sense of what this is when you hear this word. Most understand that it isn't not just an absence of war but an inner peace, a feeling of calmness safety inside. We don't want to be worried or anxious. We want peace. All of us. Yet it seems so difficult to get peace. If we are honest, though, we are not calm and anxious and we are worried about the future. We are distractible and obsessed about things in our minds. We don't have peace. Then we watch the news and we know the world also doesn't have peace.

Yet 2000 years ago there were shepherds who heard angels at night on a hill. They hear about a baby who is born...and then more angels show up.

**Luke 2: 13** Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, **14** "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

Jesus is all about peace in the Gospels. He is all about bringing stability and order and grace into life, a calmness on your anxieties. Yet it is difficult to find this peace. We feel outside of peace. In fact, we probably resonate with the writer of the beginning of the Psalms of Ascent 120-134. These are some of my favorites that I read over and over. They are about a journey up to Jerusalem that the Israelites would take 3x/year to worship God. Yet Psalm 120 identifies *where* everyone is when it says at the end:

**5** Woe to me that I dwell in Meshek,  
that I live among the tents of Kedar!

**6** Too long have I lived  
among those who hate peace.

**7** I am for peace;  
but when I speak, they are for war.

Often I think as Jesus followers, we identify with this: we want peace but everyone around us wants war, even our community! There is disunity. But today, let's focus on two words:

**MESHEK** and **TENTS of KEDAR**.

**MESHEK** (for this poem) represents people who begin traveling far from Israel and far from the palace of worship; they are amongst war-loving people. The **Tents of Kedar** are nomadic, unstable people.

Where are you on this journey? Where is your **Meshek**? Your whole life may be far from God and his people. Maybe parts of your life are nomadic and not stable and parts are far from God. In parts of your life, you are saying NO, not that place. This is my place, I'm not submitting it, I'm not taking it on this journey. As we begin this Christmas season, think, Where my **Meshek**? Where is my life far from God? I invite you to think deeply about this.

Advent (which means arrival, coming and is an ancient celebration) happens during the four weeks before Christmas. The church calendar actually reorients you and invites you to be disciples. This is a time to reorient yourself to Jesus.

### **1 Birth of Jesus (Luke 1:30-33)**

**Luke 1:30** But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. **31** You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, **33** and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

Advent is looking back to a moment when God became a man and established a reign: everything changed and peace can rest on those in God's favor. Advent is a journey from **Meshek** to the Manger. We are imagining a journey to the key who gives peace to our anxiety. But it isn't just about this! It's also about the return of the King.

### **2. The Return: (Rev. 21:1-5)**

**21** Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth,"[a] for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. **2** I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. **3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. **4** 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death'[b] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

**5** He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

We will get to be in our fullness one day with Jesus. We will have peace. Advent is a journey where Jesus invites us to be reoriented. Here is the invitation to this feast and gifts: we are celebrating the king's coming and arrival. We've been on a journey to praise him! But first there is fasting. This is a normal part of Christmas life.

I invite you every week to do a Friday fast, fasting from food or one meal or from social media. Or Netflix. Or??? Just take one small thing that will make you uncomfortable and in this, you are invited to look inside and examine where your **Meshek** is, where you are far from God and his people.

Contents of your backpack:

1. **Community**
2. **Imagination**
3. **Obedience**
4. **Prayer**

Let's walk through Psalm 122:

- 1 I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord."
- 2 Our feet are standing in your gates, Jerusalem.
- 3 Jerusalem is built like a city that is closely compacted together.
- 4 That is where the tribes go up— the tribes of the Lord—  
to praise the name of the Lord according to the statute given to Israel.
- 5 There stand the thrones for judgment, the thrones of the house of David.
- 6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May those who love you be secure.
- 7 May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels."
- 8 For the sake of my family and friends, I will say, "Peace be within you."
- 9 For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your prosperity.

**COMMUNITY:** v. 1: I rejoiced when people asked me: Glue yourself to God's people. Advent is an invitation to connect with God's people. Find the people who invite you into God's presence and be with them. Move away from the people who are about war. This is where your heart will be glad.

**IMAGINATION:** v. 3: Jerusalem is crowded; people are close together. People are imagining the end of the journey: on a hike, it keeps you going, it motivates you to imagine the destination. The only way to come out of Meshek is to imagine not being there. Apply this to your addictions. You have to go back and stand next to Mary who encounters a huge angel. You have to be there when Mary and Joseph were frantic to find a place to give birth. You have to imagine a different world: a world where God rules fully and sin is fully put to death where you and I love each other with an untainted love of Jesus. Know that we have hope and all things will be made new.

**OBEDIENCE:** v. 5: This is the place where all the tribes come together to praise the Lord. Unity is important. We are 12 tribes who must come together and worship. As believers, we have 1000s of denominations. But there are really only three: Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox.

The invitation is to be unified under Jesus, under his birth and kingdom, not our differences but our commonalities. We must fight for unity: this is part of obedience. We don't want to submit.

**PRAYER:** vs. 6-9. David invites the 12 tribes and also us 2000 later to be a people of peace: this begins in prayer as we pray for peace and then we act in peace. First we pray. Part of the journey is to be dedicated to the prayer of peace.

Two things to do this week:

1. Where are my areas of **Meshek** and my **Tents of Kedar**. Don't carry heavy loads!
2. Pray for peace of the Village and Tucson and the world: May those who love you at the Village and Tucson be secure. May there be security in the places of unrest. For the sake of my family and friends, peace be within you. Advent invites us to care for one another through prayer and the seeking of the benefit of one another. But it's much easier when we are all walking together towards the birth together.

What is the Holy Spirit stirring in you?