

MIDWEEK OF ADVENT 2
December 13, 2023
“PEACE TO EARTH, NEAR AND FAR”

AS WE GATHER

As we pause to contemplate His Word during this second week of Advent, Jesus comes to us where we are and says, “My peace I give to you” (John 14:27). This peace does not come through our attempts to remove ourselves from reality or rearrange the broken pieces of our past. No, it is only by the grace of God that we now receive His peace, His forgiveness, and His restoration through faith in His promises. Gathering us from far and near, no matter who we are or where we have been, our Advent King gives us His peace by means of His death and resurrection. When we trust in Him, we will not simply feel better with a short-term stillness; we will stand fully forgiven by Jesus and at permanent peace with our God.

HYMN No. 908 “Lord, Open Now My Heart to Hear”

**Lord, open now my heart to hear,
And through Your Word to me draw near;
Let me Your Word e'er pure retain;
Let me Your child and heir remain.**

**Your word inspires my heart within;
Your Word grants healing from my sin;
Your Word has pow'r to guide and bless;
Your Word brings peace and happiness.**

**To God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit, Three in One,
Shall glory, raise, and honor be
Now and throughout eternity.**

INVOCATION

**P: In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C: Amen.**

OPENING SENTENCES *Isaiah 9:6; Philippians 4:7*

**P: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;
C: and the government shall be upon His shoulder,**

**P: and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor,
C: Mighty God,**

P: Everlasting Father,

C: Prince of Peace.

P: The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

C: Amen.

PSALM *Psalms 85:1-4, 7-9*

P: LORD, You were favorable to Your land;

C: You restored the fortunes of Jacob.

P: You forgave the iniquity of Your people;

C: You covered all their sin.

P: You withdrew all Your wrath;

C: You turned from Your hot anger.

P: Restore us again, O God of our salvation,

C: and put away Your indignation toward us!

P: Show us Your steadfast love, O LORD,

C: and grant us Your salvation.

P: Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,

C: for He will speak peace to His people, to His saints; but let them not turn back to folly.

P: Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him,

C: that glory may dwell in our land.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray.

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by the light of Your Holy Word, we may be drawn to Jesus and healed of our brokenness, rejoicing in Him who alone is our peace. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Prince of Peace, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

FIRST READING *Ephesians 2:12–18*

P: A reading from Ephesians, the second chapter.

¹²Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ...

¹⁴For He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷And He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

P O Lord, have mercy on us.

C: Thanks be to God.

VERSE *Luke 3:4b, 6*

P: Alleluia. Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight;

C: all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia.

SECOND READING *John 14:25–31*

P: A reading from John, the fourteenth chapter.

²⁵“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. ²⁷Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. ²⁸You heard Me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. ³⁰I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on Me, ³¹but I do as the Father has commanded Me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

P: O Lord, have mercy on us. **C:** Thanks be to God.

READINGS RESPONSE

P: In many and various ways, God spoke to His people of old by the prophets.
C: But now in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son.

HYMN No. 347 **“Comfort, Comfort Ye My People”** (vss. 1,2 & 4)

**"Comfort, comfort ye My people,
Speak ye Peace!" thus saith our God.
"Comfort those who sit in darkness
Mourning 'neath their sorrows' load
Speak ye to Jerusalem
Of the peace that waits for them;
Tell her that her sins I cover
And her warfare now is over."**

**Yea, her sins our God will pardon,
Blotting out each dark misdeed.
All that well deserved His anger
He no more will see or heed.
She hath suffered many a day
Now her griefs have passed away;
God will change her pining sadness
Into ever springing gladness.**

**Make ye straight what long was crooked;
Make the rougher places plain.
Let your hearts be true and humble,
As befits His holy reign.
For the glory of the Lord
Now o'er earth is shed abroad,
And all flesh shall see the token
That His Word is never broken.**

SERMON **“Peace to Earth, Near and Far”** **Pastor Vern**

OFFERING

SIMEON'S SONG *Luke 2:25–32*

P: Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon,
and this man was righteous and devout,
C: waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

P: And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit
that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.
C: And he came in the Spirit into the temple,

P: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the
custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,
C: "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;

P: for my eyes have seen your salvation
C: that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

P a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
C: and for glory to your people Israel."

LORD'S PRAYER

P: Lord, remember us in Your kingdom and teach us to pray:

C: Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

COLLECT FOR PEACE

P: O God, from whom come all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works,
C: give to us, Your servants, that peace which the world cannot give,

P: that our hearts may be set to obey Your commandments and also that we, being
defended from the fear of our enemies,

C: may live in peace and quietness;

P: through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the
Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

BLESSING OF THE LORD *John 14:27*

P: Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives
do I give to you.

C: Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

P: Go forth then, children of God, reconciled by Him who fulfills God's Word, rejoicing
in His presence and knowing His perfect peace. The blessing of almighty God—the
Father, the ☩ Son, and the Holy Spirit—be with you and remain with you always.

C: Amen.

HYMN No. 343 "Prepare the Royal Highway" (vss. 1 & 4)

Prepare the royal highway; The King of kings is near!
Let ev'ry hill and valley A level road appear!
Then greet the king of glory Foretold in sacred story:

Refrain: Hosanna to the Lord,
For He fulfills God's word!

His is no earthly kingdom; It comes from heav'n above.
His rule is peace and freedom And justice, truth, and love.
So let your praise be sounding For kindness so abounding: (refrain)