

Wesley United Methodist Church

December 24, 2016

“All I want for Christmas Is Peace.”

Luke 2:1-20

A story about a young woman who lived on a large ranch in West Texas. She had fallen in love with a local cowboy named Tex...and she wanted to get married. But Tex was inexperienced in the world of romance...and to make matters worse, he was extremely shy. She realized that she needed to help him to move this courtship along...so she took matters into her own hands.

“Oh, Tex, do you think my eyes are like glittering stars?” “Yes.”

“And do you think my teeth are like a beautiful string of pearls?” “Yep.”

“And do you think my complexion is like gorgeous rose petals?” “Yep.”

“And do you think my hair shines like gold in the moonlight?” “Yep.”

“Oh, Tex, you do say the most wonderful things!”

Well, let me tell you something...Christmas has some wonderful things to say to us. Christmas has some wonderful things to do for us.

Christmas has some wonderful things to give to us.

But we have to have ears to hear them, the eyes of faith to see them, the heart of faith to feel them, and the grace to accept them.

One of the best Christmas gifts is the gift of peace.

This is one of the key themes, isn't it? “Peace on earth, good will toward all.”

Christ is the Prince of Peace. He brings the peace that passes understanding.

He comes to visit and redeem his people...and to guide our feet into the way of peace...that's the way the Bible puts it.

That's what happened to Georg Friedrich Handel...Christ brought peace to his anguished spirit.

He was frustrated with himself, cut off from other people, at odds with God.

He was sick; his eyes were beginning to fail him.

He was out of money. He felt empty, dejected, lonely, hopeless, and miserable, his creativity had disappeared—

but then Christ was born anew in his heart and Christ stilled those storms in his life that were tearing him apart...and he became a new person...

And where there had been strife, now was peace.

Where there had been fear, now there was courage...and where there had been emptiness, now there was incredible creativity.

He grabbed his pen and paper and composed one of the most beloved pieces of music ever written...the Messiah.

That's the way it works.

Christmas is the dramatic reminder that Christ came into this world to redeem us and bring peace to our troubled souls. If in faith we will accept it, Christmas has a great gift for us—the gift of peace. Christmas offers us peace within, peace with others, and peace with God...but we have to accept the gift.

Have you ever watched “Home Alone” where a little boy named Kevin was accidentally left behind when his family leaves for a European vacation?

On Christmas Eve, Kevin begins to feel sad and lonely...so he goes to a church. There he meets an older man who is also unhappy because of family problems.

As they engage in conversation, young Kevin admits that he feels guilty because he knows that he didn't always treat his family right, but now he misses them terribly. “Well,” says the older man, “You're in church now...and this is the place to come when you're feeling bad about yourself.”

He was right, wasn't he?

The church, which exists because of Christmas, is indeed the place to come when we need comfort, when we need forgiveness, when we need to make a new start, when we need peace for our troubled souls.

The Christ of Christmas is our personal Savior because there is a hole in our souls that only he can fill.

Centuries ago, Augustine put it this way, “Our souls are restless, O Lord, till they find rest in Thee.”

One day very close to Christmas, a young boy was coming down the hallway at church.

He had in his hand a little ceramic tray that he made in Sunday School.

It was to be his Christmas gift to his mother.

He had been working on it for several weeks and was so proud of it.

He ran down the hall, he tripped and fell.

The tray crashed to the floor and broke into several pieces.

The little boy was devastated. He began to cry loudly and uncontrollably.

He was heartbroken. People tried to comfort him with all kind of counsel.

It was just a tray, not worth much. No big loss. Besides you can make another one. It's nothing, forget it. You can give your Mother something else. Don't worry about it... But nothing helped. The child was inconsolable.

Finally, his mom arrived on the scene. Quickly she realized what had happened. Kneeling down beside her son with his broken gift, she hugged him tightly and said, "I think it's fixable. Let's pick up the pieces and take it all home. We'll put it back together and see what we can make of it."

The little boy hugged his mom back and smiled.

Isn't that exactly what the Christmas message is about?

The world is broken into many fragments, as are our lives.

And God stoops down beside us. He hugs us and says, "Well, now, this is fixable. Let me help you pick up the pieces.

We'll put it back together and see what we can make of it."

Isn't sad when you stop to think about how out of sorts people can get with one another, how estranged people can become, how hostile they can feel even toward one another? Will we ever learn? We spend weary days and sleepless nights brooding over our resentments, calculating ways to get even. We demand our pound of flesh, seethe over our grievances, and wallow in our self-pity, bound by silly pride, unbending, unmerciful, unable, and unwilling to forgive and reconcile.

A cruel word is finally an echo. Revenge, actually is never sweet; it ultimately becomes a sour stomach and a bitter memory. Violence only breeds more violence. Hate poisons the soul. Resentment, jealousy, bigotry, prejudice, these are spiritual viruses that will absolutely make us sick! Jesus knew this and he came into this world to show us how to be peace makers, bridge builders, reconcilers, how to seek forgiveness and to offer it. That's why we call him the Prince of Peace. He came because he loves everybody.

Everybody is somebody for whom Christ died, even the ones we don't like, and the ones we despise. If we could remember that and treat everybody we meet with that kind of love and respect, what a difference that would make in our relationships. What a difference that would make in our world. What a difference that would make in our society. If you're estranged from somebody, at odds with anybody, don't let that hostility go on. Go fix it today. Go set it right. With the help of God, go make peace today.

It was two days before Christmas. There was a long line at the post office as people were trying frantically to use overnight mail to get Christmas packages to people in time. A woman with three little girls in tow finally reached the counter. "Can you get this package to Phoenix, Arizona by tomorrow?" she asked. "I can, lady, but it will cost you." "How much?" "\$ 47.50" "Gracious," she said, "That's a lot, but I've got to do it. This present is for my father. It has to be there before Christmas because, you see, Christmas is also his birthday." "Man! What a bum deal that is!" said the postal clerk. "I sure am glad I don't know anyone born on Christmas!" Someone in the line spoke up. "I sure am glad I do"

Let me ask you something...do you know the one born on Christmas Day? Do you? Do you know him as your Lord and Savior? Do you know this one who came to visit and redeem and save? Have you accepted him into your life? Has he been born in your heart?