

Peace for the Future

1. Need for Peace

- Sadly we live in a world where even our most powerful leaders are unable guarantee us peace
 - Concerning
 - Frightening

- ***Middle East & Syria***
- Over the past 5 decades a succession of US presidents from Nixon > Bush > Clinton > Obama have all tried to negotiate peace in the Middle East between Palestine and Israel
 - Some have had success for a while
 - But it's always short lived and lasting peace is yet to be achieved

- Now the focus of attention in the Middle East is Syria ... and if you think Israel and Palestine was complicate ... Syria makes that look like kindergarten

- Problems for Syria started in 2011 when peaceful protests against President Assad and his regime ended in many protestors being shot and killed
- That sparked a rebel movement who began to fight against Assad
 - Assad backed by Russia (Putin) and Iran (Ayatollah)
 - Rebels backed by Gulf states, Turkey and Jordan
- In addition the Kurds saw this as their opportunity to seek independence from Syria, joined in fighting against Assad

- US, wants Assad out but doesn't want to directly oppose Russia, so sends in CIA to train the rebels to help bring down Assad

- Unfortunately, not all the rebels see eye-to-eye on what they are fighting for and some rebels break away to form ISIS
 - ISIS break away because they want to create a Caliphate > state ruled by Islamic leader
 - They don't fight Assad ... they fight the other rebels and the Kurds

- With IS traipsing through Iraq and Syria with ruthless destruction, the US sends in military personnel to train the rebels not to fight Assad but IS

- Russia in the meantime sends in planes, saying they will bomb ISIS but instead bomb the rebels who are fighting Assad
- Turkey have been bombing the Kurds, even though they are both fighting against Assad
- Turkey and Russia are at each other's necks over the plan that was shot down last week even though they are both opposed to IS
- The western allies have no real clarity as to whether Assad or IS are the real enemy
- The place is a mess ... and despite some of the most powerful men in the world being involved ... it seems that no one is able deliver peace to that crisis
- **California**
- What about closer to home in West
- This week 14 people shot dead and 17 injured when a husband and wife went on a shooting rampage in San Bernardino in CA
- In the aftermath ... a number of politicians made comments that "our thoughts and prayers were with the victims and their families"
 - Which lead to this NY Daily News headline and article the other day
 - Point isn't so much the headline – 'God isn't fixing this'
 - More the Twitter quotes from various politicians all offering their prayers and thoughts
- The point the journalist from Daily News is making is in the subheading below
 - "As the latest batch of innocent Americans are left lying in pools of blood, cowards who could truly end gun scourge continue to hide behind meaningless platitudes"
- In other words ... Daily News is fed up with the political leaders inability to deliver peace and security
 - They talk about reform and prayers for the dead ... but they are either unwilling or unable to do anything about it
- Even in the west ... our most powerful leaders are unable guarantee us peace
- What about closer to home
 - Many of us ... lack of peace in our own lives
 - Marital struggles

- Mental illness
- Financial stress
- Parenting dilemmas
- Work pressures
- Who amongst us couldn't do with more peace in our life?
- Peace is something we crave yet is so allusive

- In the four weeks leading up to Christmas our advent series is 'Hope is on the way'
 - Advent means literally means 'coming'
 - It's a time to focus us on the 'coming' of Jesus into the world on that very first Christmas over 2,000 years ago
- And with Jesus coming into the world ... came hope
 - Hope for a broken world
 - Hope for a world marred by sin
 - Hope for a world that is in pain
 - Hope for a world that lacks peace
 - Hope for people who live in such a world

- To do that we're looking at four wonderful passages from the OT prophet Isaiah
 - Isaiah lived and was writing about 700 years before Jesus and he was desperately looking forward to the hope that God had promised through his Messiah King

- One of the things that God promised that his Messiah would bring ... was peace
 - God was going to send a leader who could bring peace where others can't

PRAY

2. Promise of Peace

- Context
 - Chapt 10
 - People turned their backs on God
 - Oppress the poor, make unjust laws, deprive the poor of their rights, prey on widows and orphans
 - For all this God pronounces judgment on his people
 - "Woe" is coming and thoroughly deserved

- But God promises that despite the judgment ... a remnant will return
- That he will save some and they will have peace

- How will he do this?
 - Answer in Ch 11
 - He is going to raise up a ruler / a leader who will rule with righteousness and bring peace to the earth

Origin of his rule (v1)

- First we learn about this ruler is the origin of his rule ... where this ruler comes from
 - *'A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.'*
- In the OT ... God was clearly at work through a particular family ... and that was the family of this man called Jesse
- Who's Jesse?
 - █ Not Uncle Jesse from Dukes of Hazard?
- █ – Jesse was the father of King David
 - Ruth + Boaz > Obed > Jesse > David

- David was the great OT king of Israel who loved God and brought peace to God's people and during David's time
 - God promised that a descendent of David would rule over God's kingdom forever

- But as the kings who followed in David's line proved to be more and more of a disappointment ... they led God's people further and further away from God

- And so the consequence for the idolatry and immorality of God's people that Isaiah has been speaking of would soon come to bear
 - Within the century ... the Babylonians would become the new superpower ... overpowering the Egyptians and Assyrians ... and in 587BC conquer Jerusalem and cart the people into exile in Babylon
- So King David's dynasty ... the royal line from which this great descendent of David would come ... had been devastated > cut down like a tree
 - Reduced to a stump

- But God's promise is that a shoot would come up from the stump
 - God's promise for this descendent of David has not been forgotten

- God's plans had not been thwarted by the Babylonians
- The line of David was not completely wiped out ...
 - For God was going to bring forth a new leader for God's people
- The image of this shoot coming up from the stump of Jesse suggests this is not just the continuation of David's family line
 - But this is the start of a new beginning
- It's no surprise then that at the start of their gospel accounts of Jesus life ... Matthew and Luke provide detailed family trees of Jesus
 - They want us to see that this Messiah who will save and bring peace ... is none other than Jesus Christ ... descended of David ... the root of Jesse¹

Fitness to rule (v2)

- Not only was Jesus the promised Messiah in David's line ... he is the Spirit filled Messiah
- In OT times those who were appointed to lead God's people were anointed with oil
 - Prophet Samuel anointed Israel's first king > Saul
 - Samuel likewise anointed David
 - All kings were anointed in this way
 - Still happens today
- But we see in v2 that the Messiah ... will not be anointed with oil
 - He will be given the Holy Spirit without measure
 - *The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD--*
- So when Jesus was baptised in the Jordan river by John the Baptist ... the HS came down on Jesus in the form of a dove to show that he is the Spirit filled Messiah
 - The one who will lead with true wisdom, understanding, counsel and knowledge

Nature of rule (v3-5)

- What will HS help him to do?

¹ Matthew 1:5-6

- Help him to rule with justice and righteousness (v3-5)
- One of the fundamental duties of a ruler is promote justice, especially by protecting the poor and defenseless from the powerful and rich
 - The kings of Isaiah's day had failed to do this (C.f. Is 5)
- The reign of the Messiah however would be marked by justice and righteousness
 - v3-5 *He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; ⁴ but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. ⁵ Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.*
- Because he possess perfect knowledge he will execute perfect justice
- The Messiah will not be limited like earthly kings / rulers by what they can hear or observe
 - The knowledge he possesses is perfect ... meaning his judgment is perfect
 - And he will lead with righteousness
 - He will lead his people well
 - He won't make superficial or snap judgments
 - He won't be swayed by bribes
 - He won't neglect the poor
 - He won't abuse his power
- Instead ... the coming of the Messiah will see righteousness and justice triumph over evil

Effect of rule (v6-9)

- So here he have a ruler like no other worldly ruler
 - One whom God has chosen
 - One whom is endowed with the HS
 - One who will rule with justice and righteousness
- It's no wonder that he will be able to do what no other worldly ruler can ever properly achieve ... and that is bring us the peace we all so desperately crave

- See this with the animal images that show natural enemies at peace with one another
 - v6-8 ⁶ *The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling; and a little child will lead them. ⁷ The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.*
- Highlights a world that is normally characterised with pain, suffering, enmity and chaos will be eliminated
- And the multiple images shows how widespread and total this peace will be
 - It's a powerful image of paradise restored > a return to Eden before sin shattered the peace
- Not just talking about peace within the created order
 - This is a peace between fellow man
 - Notice v9b - *They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain*
 - Those who come to this Messiah ... and sit under his rule
 - Those who return from exile ... enter into his kingdom will experience this peace
 - No more pain, no more suffering, no more sin, no more heartache
 - No more arguing, no more tension, or selfishness, or abuse
 - No more passive aggressiveness, no more arguing, no more fighting
- There will be peace
- It won't just be the Israelites who come to Jesus to experience this peace
 - People from all nations will come to the Messiah and experience the glorious peace and rest he will bring
 - v10 - *In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious*
- Like a beacon on a hill ... people from everywhere will be drawn to the light of Jesus to share in the blessing that comes from him

3. Hope of Peace

- So it's that hope and promise that Isaiah set before God's people 700BC that makes the advent of Jesus so exciting
 - That when Jesus came into the world on that very first Christmas ... we're told in Luke 2 that the angels proclaimed to the shepherds

- v14 – *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth **peace** to men on whom his favour rests."*
- So the NT makes it clear that Jesus is that promised shoot of Jesse who will bring peace
 - But how does he do it?
 - How does he bring peace?
- Not by invading countries and brandishing a machine gun or PRG
- Not by capturing people forcing them to submit
- How does he do it?
- Clue is back in Is 11:9
 - *They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.*
- Peace comes when all people have a full of the knowledge of God
- Reality is ... we cannot achieve peace on our own accord
 - As hard as we try ... we just cannot achieve it
 - We can go some way to achieving peace, but we can never remove the human selfishness that leads to conflict and hostility ... whether between nations or people
- The only way human selfishness can be restrained enough for peace to flow is through the knowledge of God that comes through the gospel
- **Illustration – Son of Hamas**
- Mosab Hussan Yousef
 - Son of Muslim cleric > founding leader of Hamas > terror organisation in Palestine fighting against Israel
 - Son - Mosab was being groomed to be a future leader of Hamas
 - Given key operations and missions to fulfil
 - Was captured by Israeli forces and imprisoned several times
- But one day he had a chance encounter with a British tourist who was a Christian led him to start reading the Bible
 - Reading Matthew 5:44-45 ⁴⁴ *But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,* ⁴⁵ *that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.*
 - He was thunder struck!

- Never heard anything like this before
- But knew it was the message he had been searching for all his life
- In time became a Christian
- Came to realise there would never be peace in the Middle East between Palestine and Israel while they hated each other
 - Answer came from knowing Jesus who calls on us to love your enemy and pray for them
- The only way you and I are going to be moved to put aside self interests to ensure we're at peace with others ...
 - Is to know that Jesus put aside his own self interest to bring peace with God
 - Colossians 1:19-22 ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to **reconcile** to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making **peace** [HOW?] through his blood, shed on the cross. ²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were **enemies** in your minds because of your evil behaviour. ²² But now he has **reconciled** you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—
- You see Christ brought us peace
 - And when you know the peace that that comes from being forgiven of sin and reconciled to the one who made you and sustains you and holds your life by a thread ...
 - Then our hearts are transformed to
 - Love God and love our neighbour
- Unless this world / until you and I know the peace that comes through Christ's death on the cross in our place ...
 - There's no reason to change
 - No reason to put aside self interest
 - No reason to love your enemies
- But when you realise that you were an enemy of God ... and that he lay his life down for you at the cross ... well it changes your perspective and heart for those who are enemies of you
 - And it frees you to be at peace with them
- Peace in Syria ... will only come when dictators and rebels and extremist groups will hear the gospel ... put aside their self interest and become selfless like Jesus

- Peace in our marriages will come
 - As we allow the selflessness of Jesus on the cross to shape our own hearts
 - So that we can put aside self interest that means we don't get grumpy with our spouse who doesn't give us everything we want
 - We can genuinely forgive our spouse when they wrong us because we know in Christ we have been forgiven so much more
 - We are secure in our relationship with Jesus, so we don't need to play passive aggressive games of one-up-manship or always seeking to have the last word
 - We can bear with our partners foibles and idiosyncrasies because we know that God bears with us and all our failings and much more

- You see friends ... the peace that you and I experience that comes from the gospel means peace can flow to our relationships with others
 - The gospel is the only real answer to lasting peace in this world

- And while we want to see the gospel go out to all people and all nations ... we live in a time where that is yet to happen fully
 - And so sadly we will always experience chaos, hostility, heartache and pain

- But that doesn't mean the promise of Isaiah 11 will never happen
 - That doesn't mean Isaiah 11 is an empty promise ... never to be fulfilled
 - It's just that is yet to be fully realised

- But the Bible assures us it will
- And that is the point Revelation 7 that we read earlier
 - Revelation 7 reminds us that the promise of Isaiah 11 is coming
 - **Revelation 7:9-12** ⁹ After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." ¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying: "Amen! Praise and

glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen!"

- Revelation 7 is a picture of a time to come when Jesus stands like a banner in the new creation ... and people from all the nations will gather around him
- And they will experience the promised peace in all its fullness
 - Peace with God
 - Peace with one another
 - For the new creation will be a place of no more death, mourning, crying or pain
 - For the earth will be full of the knowledge of God ...
 - A knowledge of God made possible through the Messiah Jesus, the root of Jesse
 - Who through making peace with God on the cross ... allows those who rally to him ... share in the true peace he brings
- True and lasting peace is found in Christ
- If you're not yet at a point where you know that peace ... where you don't yet know Jesus ...
 - Encourage you to find out more > Life of Jesus > chat over coffee
 - Tick box on Comms Card
- If you want peace in your life and peace for this world ... then you need to know the one who is the Prince of Peace
- Here this morning and you know Jesus ... then
 - Be comforted in the hope that peace in this world will come
 - God has promised it and he has guaranteed it through the coming of Jesus
 - Hope is on the way
- More significantly for you now ...
 - Delight in the knowledge that the coming of Jesus has brought you peace with God already
 - His death has secured peace with your creator
- And as we wait for that day when true and lasting peace will come ...
 - Let the peace you have with God ... flow through to the relationships and people around you
 - Until Jesus returns our world will always be craving peace
 - But those who are in Christ can be a beacon of peace to those around them

- For as the Apostle Paul says in Romans 12:17-18
 - ¹⁷ *Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.* ¹⁸ *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

- May the gospel that brought you peace with God move you and transform you to bring peace to those around you
 - Peace in your marriage
 - Peace in your work place
 - Peace with your families

- For in Christ, we have the Prince of Peace
 - Who not only guarantees a future with true and lasting peace
 - But who gives us peace with God now and through that the strength for that peace to flow through to others

PRAY

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the + blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen