

Prince of Peace | Isaiah 11: 1-10; Roman 15:4-13 | LUMC | 12-4-2022

Dear Church family and friends: last week we began Advent season with Isaiah speaking to us on hope in the midst of our adversities. Being in Christ, we achieve and live the glorious life. In Christ we are more blessed when we genuinely ask Him to erase our errors. Christ forgives and restores us. As restored people, we can live in peace with ourselves and with others. May we continue to enjoy God's peace that passes all human understanding.

Politically, peace is the absence of war. In a family setting, peace is the absence of hostility, angry outbursts, misunderstandings, and power struggles. Biblically (Theologically) peace is more than the absence of war, family disputes, and tribal misunderstandings. The Bible says peace is more than inner peace of mind. It is an individual's willingness to remain wholly and completely integrated psychologically, mentally, and spiritually. We cannot achieve a complete congruence of these elements and stay in that state of congruency on our own. Only God can offer us the ability to sustain that tranquility. Peace, therefore, is a fruit of the Spirit; it always moves us to action and to restore any unhealthy situation. When God through Christ offers us Peace, the Holy Spirit continue to enable us to sustain that peaceful existence.

The ancient world did not have real peace, people were torn with strife, and world was less structured than modern nations localities. Tribes banded together and competed with other tribes for farming, grazing, and hunting lands. They competed for lands along rivers, lakes, and sea fishing zones. Politicians of the day used "divide and rule" to keep power and promote hatred. The less powerful tribe was discriminated against—the weak tribe would be relegated into slavery. This power struggle happened even within a single tribe like the Jews.

The ancient religions were also divisible with priests at the top followed by tribal men, the women, and the gentile¹ men who converted into that religion taking lower positions, these last two groups were relegated to the bottom of the religious structure. A quick look at sitting arrangements in the temple reveals the "holier than thou attitudes of one the ancient religions."²

Therefore, God asked Isaiah to prophesy that "lion and sheep will stay in one paddock and shall dine together", meaning when Christ will be born, He will bring people together and the world will experience a peace it had not known before. Through Isaiah we learn the mind of God. God was willing to reveal God's knowledge to the entire world from sea to sea, shining delightfully.

God took the first step of announcing incoming world peace by bringing John the Baptist, born to prepare for the coming of Jesus. John's emphasis was on repentance.

¹ People who were not Jews like Europeans, Asians, Native Indians, Africans etc. Some gentiles also called proselytizes converted into Judaism. Ref Revelation 11:2

² This link below shows temple seating arrangement; also see chart on page 4

<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/ab/2b/1a/ab2b1adc1d69f14a78343d969bcce6ee.png>

He redefined baptism as an individual, one-time ritual done after repentance. John opposed the old, annual communal baptism ritual at the river Jordan, which entailed the releasing of a scapegoat into the wilderness, representing tribal sins and purportedly offering a means of repentance.

Jesus was born to reconcile humanity with God, to bring peace between people and God and between people themselves. Jesus also brought peace among the Jews themselves and between Jesus and gentiles. Among the Jews, it was not easy to reconcile them because there were three parties holding power. The community was divided like we are divided into two main political parties with differing manifestos. The Pharisees did not want anything to do with Jesus' message of salvation. They wanted him dead. The Sadducees' also felt Jesus was intruding into tribal teaching regarding resurrection of the body. The scribes held the legal docket. Overall, these groups ceased to exist in due time for assorted reasons, but I would posit that God caused these parties' extinction to give way to the new teachings of peace building.

I have no doubt we live in a more (slightly) peaceful world than the ancient people because of Christ's teachings and the Holy Spirit's presence in the life of believers who allow peaceful co-existence. We certainly affirm that Christ has brought peace.

In death Christ brought equality in the religious practices, although this is a continuing process even into the 21st century. We read that the Holy of Holies veil tore in two,³ and Jesus announced on the cross the work of forgiving us was a done deal. "It is finished." This God-action was to bring the priests and the worshipers into one space. That tear phased out the sacrifice of animals, and promoted individual repentance and individual accountability, just as Ezekiel had prophesied. "The heart that sins shall surely die", abolishing the concept of communal sins. We continue with individual accountability and promote personal reflections, not communal, as each soul shall stand individually before God on that judgment day!

Some churches of Jesus Christ continue to craft ways of praying and practicing scripture to minimize discrimination, unlike the ancient religions. Today we seek God intervening for equality. To thrive, we need Christ to help us overcome our traditions that allow us to overshadow our true faith that promotes peace. Jesus came to erase these human divisions among us. We all have access to God through direct repentance and promoting peaceful existence.

Jesus continues to teach us to triumph in existing together despite our color, status, party affiliations and gender orientation. We can give attention to the sheep and the lion symbolism for example. These two animals have varying intellects, body mass, abilities, and strength, yet God says they will renounce their self-glorification. They will surrender their pride for the sake of their "life together"; for the sake of peaceful co-existence.

We can also reflect on how two married people repress individual preferences, practice forgiveness, and flourish in a give-and-take relationship, though some

³ Hebrew 6:19-22;9: 24-26; 10:19-22

marriages may be strained or even “die” for other reasons. But for the sake of peaceful coexistence, the couple agrees to live and let live! In the same way we must practice the gift of peace that Christ offers, and the Holy Spirit promotes.

St Paul reminds us that what binds us together is scripture, worshipping together and focusing on our faith journey. Scripture teaches us steadfastness in the midst of a sinful world around us. The learning brings comfort as we deal with life’s conflicts. With Christ we do not wallow in hopelessness. Instead, we take courage that God will see us through, and we learn how diverse people can live in unity. Through scripture God helps us remove negative feelings and overcome fear.

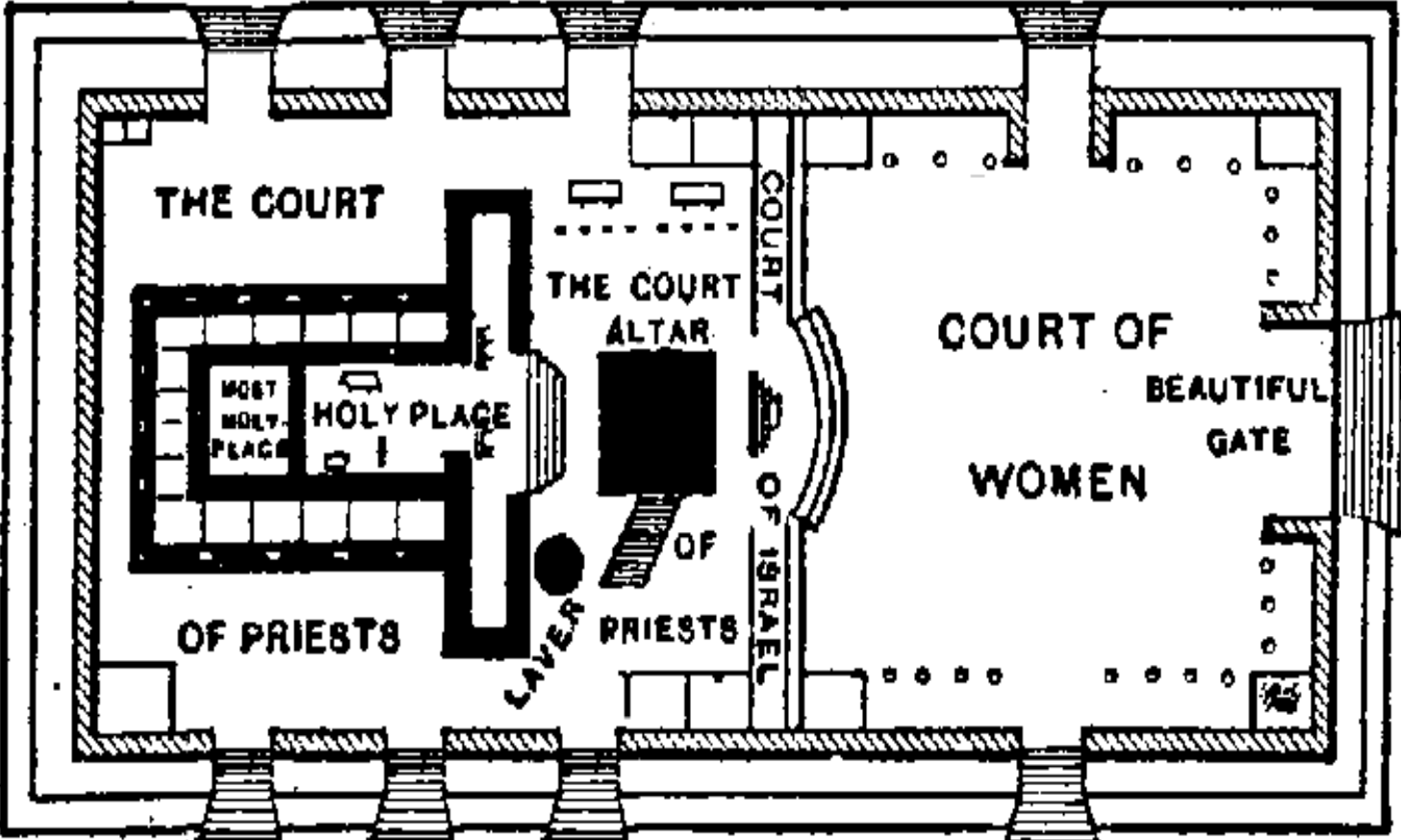
We are one team that worships, prays, sings, and confesses to God as we ponder the work Christ did for us. We are grateful because our mouths that were once the stronghold of the evil one, are now restrained. Instead of cursing, we are full of purposeful expression and Christ-oriented conversations that respect others, wish others well and promote peace. We praise God and sing praise songs. We meet in one building, accepting each other and paying attention to others’ voices in praise. We take communion at these pews and enjoy coffee together. We attend meetings and enjoy the fellowship of one another. All this is enabled by the peace Christ gives.

Our presence in this building is Christ’s work of peace. We appreciate being in the company of believers. Without Christ, we may not be able to exercise self-control, and perhaps unable to exist without arguing and scorning each other. Whenever we are together let us be on guard and not allow evil one to spoil our life together.

I am proud to be among you, a talented team of believers practicing faith in words and deeds. We have vowed to obey God through Christ and have allowed God’s Spirit to indwell. We know our challenges and understand how to keep believing and how to let God through Christ be our shield and defender. We join the company of believers in the world to make it a peaceful place. Let us pray for all Christians to work for peace in the world. If all the nearly 2.2 billion Christians globally seriously work for world peace, we would be an amazing influence in the world!

God wants us to be his eyes and ears in a world crying for peace. When we all pray, God will move mountains. I am glad and grateful that Christ found us before the world destroyed us with strife. God is calling us to be peacemakers, starting with ourselves, families, friends, and neighbors. Together we can create peace in ourselves and in others. I pray we all remain in the presence of God, and channel our desires and energy toward peace-making this season. Christ, the prince of peace and the light of the world, will continue to shine. May we let that light so shine.

Amen



The proselytes (gentiles converted into Judaism) sat at outer court. The gentiles and foreigners court is outside the temple and not indicated in this diagram. Refer Rev 11:2