

Sermon for the Second Sunday in Advent, Year A
11.xii.2007, 3:00 p.m., Holy Eucharist – ELW
Micah 4:1-5; Psalm 85; Ephesians 2:13-18; John 15:9-12
Wittel Farm / Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania

Jesu Juva!

Grace to you and peace from Him Who is and Who was
and Who is to come! ✠ Amen.

“For He is our peace.”

--Ephesians 2:13-18

The coming peace of the reign of God that is about to be born into our world is in the Church’s mouth in these weeks of Advent, but is it in our hearts? As we heard the words of the Prophet Micah just now, perhaps thinking back to the First Sunday of Advent and the reading from Isaiah 2, most of which Micah quotes here verbatim, as we have been lead to reflect on a great country and its people against whom our own government threatens to lead us into war, as we think with shame of the war we have begun but

cannot finish, and of the names of the soldiers we recite in the intercessions each Sunday, how can we believe in this coming peace, in that peace we profess to believe is already here among us? Why, we may ask in prayer or in exasperation, can God, the LORD of history and of the nations, not intervene and *make* peace happen? Why have we been left here, alone, to accomplish that?

The Psalmist sings his song in a time like ours, a time of strife and catastrophe, but Psalm 85 is offered in memory of a different time, of a time in which God's presence was felt among the Covenant people not only in terms of prosperity but also as peace, peace as an act of love, faith and righteousness:

**“Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
righteousness and peace will kiss each other.
Faithfulness will spring up, from the ground,
and righteousness will look down from the sky.”**

--vv. 10, 11

The Psalmist prays as we ought, that the LORD would be present among the people in this way again.

Today's Gospel remembers the peace of God living and breathing among the Apostles. The love of the Father for the Son has been brought directly into the circle of those gathered around Jesus on the night of His handing over to the violence of the powers of this world, to that hatred which only the fanatically religious can summon and to the domination of a powerful empire. The Apostolic witness of the Church remembered this declaration of peace on the eve of that greatest and most decisive of all battles in human history:

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”
--John 15:12

Looking back on the blood and torn flesh of that sacrifice, the Apostolic author of Ephesians declares that God has

made an unimaginable kind of peace through the person and work of the Christ, that One Who was and is the Anointed One of the Living God, known to the world only as 'Jesus of Nazareth.' This peace is not between two armed enemies, who may sign a truce only to fight again, perhaps making different alliances in the interregnum. No, this peace is a reconciliation between, of all things, the Covenant people Israel and the Nations, between Jew and Gentile, between the godly and the ungodly! How can that possibly happen?! The religious mind especially asks this, but it is an alarming claim also for those who dismiss God from reality as they prefer it.

In His one Person, fully divine Son of the Father, and fully human, Son of Mary, Son of David, Son of Israel, but also Son of Eve, of all humanity without division, in His *one* life peace has been made within the warring self of

humanity. He *is* our peace—not you, not I, but He alone. And He is *our* peace. The peace of God, as Isaiah and Micah foresaw, as the Psalmist prayed, as John witnessed and as the Apostolic Church preached and taught, takes form not in some but not others, but rather in the *community* of all those called, inspired, moved by the Holy Spirit to live God’s peace in the world.

Where that community lives and the form of Christ becomes visible always involves the Church, persistently breaking down barriers and dividing walls we Christians erect to wall, ourselves off from one another. But the Spirit-born peace of Christ overcomes *all* partitions of the human family, so much so that we of the Apostolic community may find ourselves confused as those we thought of as others *also*, and with as much passion as we,

open their hearts in community to make peace, Jews and Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists, as well as those who can name no faith but who sense something powerful and honorable and good in putting an end to war, or in stopping one before it starts. ✠ Amen.

Now to Him Who loves us and has freed us from ours sins by His blood and has made of us a Kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion with the Father and the Holy Spirit, both now and for ever. ✠ Amen.



Soli Deo Gloria!