

INTRO

- What does peace look like to you?
- Do you think the world has become more or less peaceful? Why?

Advent is the season leading up to Christmas. It's an ancient liturgy designed to help us reflect on Jesus' 1st coming and anticipate his 2nd coming (advent = coming). This Advent we are focusing on the hope, peace, joy, and love found in the extraordinary story of Jesus.

READ

Is 9:6-7a; Luke 2:8-14

REFLECT

The angel brings a message of "good news of great joy for all people" to unlikely people, shepherds.

Qu: what message did they bring (v11)?

Qu: Why is it surprising the angel would deliver such an important message to shepherds? What might this show us about God?

In the Old Testament, the people looked expectantly for the advent of God's forever king, one who brings peace (Is 9:6-7). Jesus' birth is announced as the arrival of this king on earth.

The Hebrew word for peace is *shalom* and means complete, whole, well-being. The Garden of Eden was a place of *shalom*, for example. It's not so much the *absence* of something (war, conflict or strife), but rather the *presence* of something greater that makes us complete, whole, prosperous.

Qu: Think about Canada which experiences the absence of war and conflict yet has an epidemic of rising anxiety, depression and suicide. What might that tell us about our need for peace?

Christmas is a reminder that Jesus is the Prince of Shalom: with God, with ourselves, and with others.

PEACE WITH GOD

God is the God of peace (Rm. 15:33, Phil. 4:9). In other words, God's purpose is to give you peace by giving you Himself. We receive God's peace *through faith in Jesus*.

Qu: why does our search for peace need to start with God?

Peace with God is our greatest need that then leads to experiencing peace with ourselves and others.

PEACE WITH OURSELVES

Even though we may have peace with God (restored to right relationship with him), it is clear we can still be robbed of peace in our hearts and minds.

Qu: what does Jn 14:27 and Phil 4:6-7 tell us to about experiencing ongoing, internal peace?

Peace with God leads to peace within ourselves. And now God calls us to be peacemakers.

PEACE WITH OTHERS

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God (Mt. 5:9). In other words, we reflect the character and nature of Jesus when we're actively bring peace into our relationships and everyday situations. But peacemaking is hard work!

Qu: Read Rm. 12:18. What does "as far as it depends on you" look like in your life?

Qu: are there areas and relationships right now that God is calling you to be a peacemaker in? What action can you take?

Lastly, Christmas is the promise of a kind of peace that brings wholeness in our relationship with God, ourselves and others.

RESPOND & PRAY

- What challenged/encouraged you the most from today's discussion?