

**December 24, 2012**  
**“Anticipate The Coming”**  
**Micah 5:2-5a NLT**

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village in Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you, one whose origins are from the distant past. 3 The people of Israel will be abandoned to their enemies until the time when the woman in labor gives birth to her son. Then at last his fellow countrymen will return from exile to their own land. 4 And he will stand to lead his flock with the LORD's strength, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. Then his people will live there undisturbed, for he will be highly honored all around the world. 5 And he will be the source of our peace.

Micah lived in an evil day of strife and warfare, yet was able to speak of a time of peace. A Messiah who is from the distant past, in other words, from eternity – and that can only be God - would be born of a woman. He would be the source of our peace.

On the night of Jesus' birth the angels had the same message that they announced to the shepherds:

**Luke 2:14 THE MESSAGE**

Glory to God in the heavenly heights,  
Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.

God's peace on all who please Him... how do we please Him?

Micah's prophecy had a literal as well as a spiritual fulfillment in the birth of Jesus. It helped to keep hope alive in the hearts of those who had faith in God through the long centuries while they waited for the Messiah.

Then a decline in morals and values/ a sick society / violence so common - raising the threshold of what qualifies as horrific / much corruption /decadence /sin; High unemployment and a growing poverty in the midst of increasing wealth of others; Inflation (increased prices) and higher taxes; Political corruption; the traditional family falling apart; and religion becoming a merger of the best features of several religions - assimilating many religious ideas.

You may be thinking, “Yeah, that describes us fairly well.” Except I wasn't describing the United States in 2012; I was describing the Roman Empire 2000 years ago, the world into which Christ was born.

Today, we too live in a time of evil, strife, and warfare, just look at the events of the last week. Yet, we also speak of a time of peace. Christ is coming again. Celebrating the first coming of Christ and anticipating His second coming, that is what Advent is. When

He comes again He will bring an end to evil, strife, and warfare, He will bring peace to the earth. Jesus was, is, and always will be our source of peace. Evil is not defeated by changing laws, but by changing hearts, transformed by love. Jesus came to transform hearts. Only God is going to get to the core issue. Instead of a heart that is continually inclined toward evil, God has made a way for our hearts to be fixed on His law/His way. We can celebrate that God has done this in Jesus. We don't need to merely make outward changes this Advent. In Christ, we can experience a transformation of the heart.

While we don't have a peaceful earth yet, His first coming, born in Bethlehem, brought us the possibility of a different kind of peace; peace of mind and heart which all generations can experience who make Christ their trust. Jesus Himself declared:

John 14:27-28a NLT

"I am leaving you with a gift--peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give isn't like the peace the world gives. So don't be troubled or afraid. Remember what I told you: I am going away, but I will come back to you again.

This peace of mind and heart is referred to often in the NT. For example:

Acts 10:36 NLT

I'm sure you have heard about the Good News for the people of Israel--that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

Have you heard about the Good News? You can have peace of mind and heart if you have peace with God, and you can have peace with God through Jesus Christ, when you make Him Lord of all in your life.

Romans 5:1 NLT

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.

In your celebration of Christmas don't forget a profound mystery: The Easter Story begins at Christmas. Jesus came to give His life for our sin. Sin is why we don't have peace, especially peace with God. Yet, when we put our faith in Jesus Christ and what He has done for us on the Cross, and we accept Him as Savior and Lord, we have that peace.

One last example:

Philippians 4:6-7 NLT

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which

is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Notice peace will guard your hearts and minds under this condition, that you live in Christ Jesus.

There is no true peace without Christ. Like the bumper sticker that reads: "No Christ, no peace, KNOW Christ, know peace."

Hebrews 10:5a, 8-10 NLT

That is why Christ, when he came into the world, said ... "You did not want animal sacrifices or grain offerings or animals burned on the altar or other offerings for sin, nor were you pleased with them" (though they are required by the law of Moses). Then he added, "Look, I have come to do your will." He cancels the first covenant in order to establish the second. And what God wants is for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all time.

What God wants is for us to be holy. We are made holy by the sacrifice of Jesus and by our faith in Him. The only way for us to be made holy is through a personal relationship to God who alone is holy. The claim of the author of Hebrews is that—according to divine will—only through faith in the sacrifice of Christ is such a transformational impartation of God's holiness in the human heart possible.

But what does holy mean? Holiness means being totally devoted or dedicated to God, set aside for His special use, and set apart from sin and its influence. Holiness comes from a sincere desire to obey God and from wholehearted devotion to Him.

Does this describe your relationship with God? Totally devoted, dedicated, set aside for God's use only, set apart from sin and its influence, a sincere desire to obey God, wholehearted devotion to Him? That is God's will for you, that's what He wants. And you will not have peace of mind and heart if you don't want that too.

This Advent series, "Anticipate" came with a daily devotional. This week there was a story about Elijah and the devotional said this:

"We catch up with Elijah after he has just told Ahab, king of Israel, that there will be drought because of the idol worship he has allowed... Idols are all around us. We give our money to the idol of material goods. We sacrifice our Sundays to the gods of football and /or basketball. We pay tribute to the idol of technology with the hours we spend online or gaming...Elijah's story encourages us to confront the idol worship in our day. ... And the same is true of Jesus' story. Christ confronts all the idols of our world in His death, and God resurrects Him to reveal that faithfulness to God will always overcome the idolatry in our world.

As we prepare for the return of the resurrected Lord, Jesus, may we be faithful to Him while we await His Advent. Our faith in His coming again will give us peace of mind and heart and will keep our hope alive in our hearts, but we must be holy while we wait for the Messiah.