



"PEACE AMID STORMS" – ISAIAH 9:6G

The Second Sunday in Advent

By: Reverend Dr. Carlos W. Perkins

As African Methodists, our faith foundation is secure in affirming our humanity in the face of adversity. Our ancestors stood, and we stand, in defense of the oppressed and marginalized. We have preached salvation and deliverance, liberation from police brutality, white supremacy, racist and xenophobic practices. As a people, we fought and prayed in the Civil War of the 1860s and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Amid our pain, we stand on the word of God, which is sufficient to meet every need of the human soul. David writes, in Psalm 19:7-14, about the sufficiency of the word of God. It is an inspired statement about God's word as a qualified guide for every situation. The word of God is comprehensive. It contains everything necessary for one's spiritual life. Scripture is surer than a human experience that one may look to in proving God's power and presence. The word of God contains divine principles that are the best guide for character and conduct.

We are reminded during this season of Isaiah's declaration that Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Throughout this pandemic, the world has been crying out in despair. We have watched loved ones suffer through a trifecta of dilemmas - systemic racism, healthcare disparities, and economic crisis - which were magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is no peace. The prophet Isaiah captured the sense of our current realities when he said, "But the wicked [are] like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. [There is] no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 57:20 - 21). The world is desperate for peace but seeks it in the wrong place and from the wrong people. Saints, our peace will come when the prince of peace sits as the rightful ruler on the throne of David. Isaiah declared in chapter 32: 17 -18, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and sure dwellings, and quiet resting places."

The word “peace” has two distinct definitions. One definition suggests freedom from war, civil strife, and public disturbance, while the other alludes to an undisturbed state of mind, free from worry and fear. The first definition captures the world's perspective, while the second definition gives insight into God's perspective. The truth is, as long as human beings are in charge of systems and governments, we will never experience freedom from war and strife. There's never going to be peace in this human experience - wars will never cease; battles will never end; disasters will continue; oppression will still exist, and racism will continue to be a cornerstone of an oppressive system. Our human realities are marked with troubles and trials.

On this second Sunday in Advent, we are reminded that the Prince of Peace gives us His peace in times of trials and tribulation. This is the peace in the storm that so many of us have experienced in our lives. Jesus said, " Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). There's nothing quite like safety in a storm. At nine years old, I remember as my family prepared for one of the most destructive hurricanes to hit the island of Jamaica, Hurricane Gilbert. I can remember seeking shelter and safety close to my grandmother as the eye of the storm passes over. I can still recall the fear that gripped me as I sat and listened to the wind and rain pounding on the aluminum roof. As I sat close to my grandmother, I had an overwhelming sense of safety and well-being. But none of this can compare to the feeling of spiritual security and peace I find when I seek shelter and protection from the storms of life in Jesus, my Rock of Ages. While the winds of adversity blow, the lightning of judgment flash and the thunder of tribulations roll, and I sit snug and safe in the cleft of that Rock. I hide in THEE! He is my peace!

In these uncertain times, let us rejoice in the salvation and justification given to us by the PRINCE OF PEACE, our peacemaker. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Ro. 5:1-2). "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition [between us];" (Eph. 2:13-14)

Someone may be asking, “How can we know this sense of spiritual security and peace when the winds and storms of life buffet us?” When the devil has pushed until your backs are to the wall and

you can see no way of escape? What do you do when seas of insurmountable problems surround you? What do you do when you slip to the end of your rope of life, and your spiritual arms become exhausted, or when you, like Moses and the children of Israel, find yourself facing an impassable sea of doubt, fear, and loss; when you hear the voices of those who would destroy you coming in chariots behind you – you can hold on to the Prince of Peace.

We will only find shelter in the Rock of Ages and know the peace that passeth all understanding in the storms of life when we, by faith, heed the voice of God as He cries out to us, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord!" Real shelter in the storms of life will only come to those who let go and by faith accept the peace that only the PRINCE OF PEACE can bring! The songwriter wrote, "Silent night, holy night, all is dark, save the light; yonder where they sweet vigils keep; over the babe who in silent sleep; rests in heavenly peace." Psalm 29: 11 assures us that "the Lord will give strength to his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace." Amid the storms of life, rest on the prince of peace who Isaiah tells us will keep us in perfect peace if our mind stays on Him.

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