

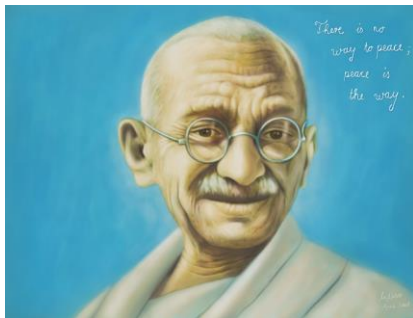
*“This is the name he’s been given:  
Wonder-Counselor, Mighty-God,  
Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace.”*

Isaiah 9:6

The Prince of Peace, the One Who Promises Peace,  
which leads to today’s title, *“The Promise of Peace”*

I’ve been going to church, week-by-week now,  
for 70 years, give or take, and I still ask myself,  
*“Peace? What is that? What is Peace?”*

***“The Promise of Peace”***  
December 4, 2016



***“There is no way to peace.  
PEACE is the way.”***  
Mahatma Gandhi

***“Keep your peace!”*** Sounds like an adult who  
is telling a child - in a nice way - to ***“Shut up!”***  
There is no room for negotiation intended here.  
This is, very simply put, a one-way conversation.

***“I’m in charge!  
and  
You are not!”***

is what it says.



Whatever peace ‘actually’ means,  
I’m quite certain that this is not it.  
Peace is not a 1 - Way imposition,  
the only option being: ‘Acquiesce!’

And yet, if it is 1943 and you are a Jewish child,  
hiding in a neighbour’s closet with your parents,  
and the SS is in the house... it is non-negotiable.

I wonder... I wonder... I wonder... Don’t you?



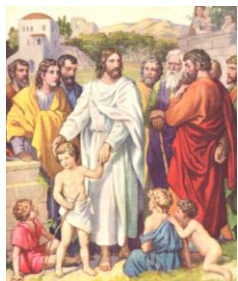
And still... we'd like to think peace involves negotiation, a chance to say our "piece," and/or air our "differences," then arrive... at a mutually agreed upon, peaceful solution.

But is that route to peace always possible? I wonder... I wonder... I wonder... Don't you?

When Isaiah sees the vision of a promised child who will dispel the darkness surrounding Israel, he also sees the name this child has been given. and the child's 1<sup>st</sup> name is: *"Wonder Counselor."*

In some versions of Scripture, you'll find this name translated as *"Wonder-full Counselor,"* instead of *"Wonder Counselor"* ...incorrectly praising the "Counselor" instead of the "Wonder."

This child will counsel people "to wonder" helping them to reflect on their wondering. To wonder... to speculate... to be amazed, a child will counsel them about wondering.



What if this is what Jesus was speaking about when he put a child before the listening crowd?

*"Unless you come as a child, you CAN NOT participate in the kingdom of God."*

This child... who lives totally in the wonderment of the present, in this moment, in the here & now, not reflecting on past mistakes or achievements, nor worrying on future problems or possibilities, this is the one who will lead them out of darkness.

*"Lest you come as a child... you will not be able to participate in the economy of God."*

Wonder Counsellor... 1<sup>st</sup> name of the promised one, the "being with us" of Yahweh, envisioned by Isaiah.

PAUSE

The 2<sup>nd</sup> name Isaiah saw in his vision is *"Mighty God,"* and you might be tempted to think of that in the sense of one who's *"almighty,"* very powerful or very strong, (some translations actually have the word, *"almighty."*)

There's another meaning of *"mighty"* that's nearer to the intent of the Hebrew in the text, one of an impressive size, or scope or depth, such as prairie sunsets... or mountain-views, the structure of ATOMS... or DNA molecules.



One could even see it as expanding on the child's 1<sup>st</sup> name, a commentary on it.

Holy! Wow! This is mighty fine! I had better pay attention to this!

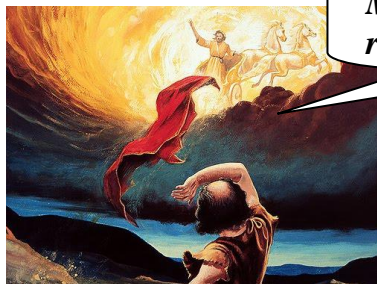
PAUSE

And that brings us to the 3<sup>rd</sup> name, *“Eternal Father.”*

Often, when read through the lens of 21<sup>st</sup> cy feminists, this is written off as patriarchal or exclusive language, but substituting *“Eternal FatherMother”* or *“Parent”* would lose the meaning of Isaiah’s 6<sup>th</sup> cy BCE *“Father.”*

Isaiah’s *“Fathering”* ought not to be confused with 21<sup>st</sup> cy mothering, fathering, or parenting.

In Semite communities there were leaders & mentors, each of whom had groups of followers or apprentices who would address their leader or mentor as *“Father.”*



*My father! My father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen.*

It is how Elijah was addressed by his apprentice Elisha; and likewise, the Syrian General Naaman by his servant.

And it was how Jesus addressed God also, praying that all humanity would follow suit.

Isaiah’s prophesied child will dispel the darkness for us... if we place our trust in his/her leadership;

and this child will be able to do so completely, unfettered by time or space, is what the Greek translated into English as *“Eternal”* really says.

We read, *“eternal,”* and think, *“forever,”* through the, *“pearly gates,”* and beyond.

But what was intended is a sense of a total, of an unlimited, trusting, completely present in this moment.

Not fretting about yesterday’s stuff or worrying about what may yet be, but totally alive in the here and now.

...and that won’t be easy.

**PAUSE**

More on that later. We have one more name, the 4<sup>th</sup> name of the darkness dispelling child, a name that inspired the Title of our Message,

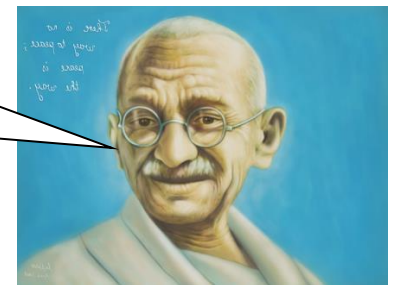
*“Prince of Peace.”*

today’s Theme on this 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent.

The Hebrew, *“Shalom,”* translated here as, *“Peace,”* means not merely the cessation of hostilities or war, but a rich, harmonious, positive sense of well-being.

Indian philosopher-politician Mahatma once said,

*“There is no way to peace. PEACE is the way.”*



It is what’s possible if we’re open to the wonder, the majesty, in total commitment to the moment.

When we genuinely say, “*Good day,*” to someone in greeting them or, “*Goodbye,*” when they depart,

“*God be with you,*” is what we’re saying,  
“*Goodbye,*” the old English, “*God by ye.*”

And this is who Isaiah’s child is as well;  
the dispeller of darkness is God with us:  
God’s Justice and God’s Righteousness.

This is what can be born in us... if we will open up to it.

*“This Child’s authority shall grow continually,  
and there shall be unbounded peace  
for the throne of David and his kingdom.  
This Child will establish and uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time onward and forevermore.”*

This is more a prayer... than it is a prophecy or a promise,

*“We pray... that the charge this child has over us  
will grow continually, bringing unfettered peace  
for our personal (and not so personal) kingdoms.  
May that new Economy of God be established  
and upheld with justice and righteousness for all,  
from this time & place to every time & place, Amen.*

This connection with God will demand an investment... it is a bit like James Taylor’s parable of the Pay Phone.

*How much more did you say you wanted to continue the call?*



Almost every time we find the word *Peace* in the Bible, it’s associated with the words justice or righteousness: almost 90% of the time... and mostly in the same verse.

It’s like you can’t have one without the other.

Establishing that economy of Justice and Righteousness won’t be easy; such an economy will demand much of us: total engagement, courage, willingness to risk everything.

The Traditional Christian interpretation of this morning’s text from Isaiah is that Jesus’ sacrifice makes everything right, that he is this child, the Prince of Peace.

He was the scapegoat, so to speak.  
And we need merely to accept that;  
and everything will be hunky-dorey.

There is nothing I can do! Only Jesus - the unblemished lamb - can do it for me.

But I think Isaiah’s vision was much bigger than that: we’re all called to move fully into the “Wonder” of life, to commit to engaging the “Mighty Mysteries” of God.

I think Jesus understood that, and lived it.  
God came fully alive in Jesus of Nazareth!  
a life that was taken, cruelly, upon a cross.

But now, 2000 years later, he still lives, because, 2000 years ago, he truly lived.

That same life is available to us, Amen.