**Sermon Text**: Isaiah 11:1-11

**Occasion**: Second Sunday of Advent, 4 Dec 2022

**Peace of Heaven**

Grace, mercy and peace be to you in the name of God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

***6****The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
    and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
    and a little child shall lead them.****7****The cow and the bear shall graze;
    their young shall lie down together;
    and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.****8****The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,
    and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.****9****They shall not hurt or destroy
    in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
    as the waters cover the sea.*

***10****In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.* (Isaiah 11)

This passage from Isaiah straddles vastly different times and concepts. On the one hand, Isaiah is preaching to the people of his time. He is proclaiming that there will be an end to the war between the Assyrians and Judah. Peace will reign once more as God restores His people under a faithful king in the 8th century BC. But one the other hand, Isaiah is also preaching to those who look forward to the Last Day. Not only will one war be brought to an end but all wars will cease. A new king comes and brings peace to all the earth. This peace will possess the righteousness of our king who rules in all fairness over the peoples. Our king will be faithful by supporting his people in all things. And this peace will bring prosperity where all people, poor or wealthy, will receive what the Lord justly decrees.

And this peace will not just be for the peoples of the world. The peace our godly king brings will extend to the ends of the earth. Not only will the conflicts, disease, and dying of people be ended, but no longer will any animal need to fight or die. We will not even need to fear any animals—the wolves, the viper, or even the more dreaded creatures like cockroaches and spiders. Instead of seeking hurt or harm for entertainment, food, or personal gain, all of God’s creation will be in blessed communion with each other. What else can we call this eternal peace on earth but heaven? Only in heaven—the presence of our God, will goodness spring up from the ground and righteousness look down from above (cf. Ps 85:11).

This peace of the Lord which surpasses all understanding comes from the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ. He is the king we await to descend from heaven to bring heavenly peace into his creation. Lord of Lords and Wonderful Counselor—Mighty God and Prince of Pease (Isa 9:6). He comes into this world that the righteousness, faithfulness, and prosperity of the Lord may be made manifest. And this began to come about when Christ reconciles humanity back to our God through the forgiveness of sins and making peace by way of his cross. Not only does this result in peace on earth between people but peace between all things.

You may recall a couple Sundays ago I was preaching on Colossians 1:20 which says, “…through [Christ, God reconciles] to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.” Everything which God has created through Jesus has been reconciled back to God by Jesus’ crucifixion. Not only will we see the restoration of our flesh on the Last Day in the resurrection, we will see the restoration of all of creation. All things will be made new that we might live with our Lord forever in peace. We may enjoy all things he ushered forth into creation in the manner in which he had ordained to make them. We finally get to enjoy the animals which would otherwise try to kill us now and we need not fear tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes or any other kind of natural disaster. These forms of tribulation belong to a world suffering the effects of sin, not to the paradise to come.

Jesus entering into the world on Christmas Day was meant to reverse all that sin had torn asunder, including the very fabric of how the earth is meant to fit together. Even at the Christ child’s birth, we find angels proclaiming this grand event to the shepherds. Already heaven is coming down into the world that it may praise God. And not only would the shepherds hear the glad news but their flocks as well. The sheep would have even less of an understanding of the greatness of God making Himself flesh than human beings, but they nonetheless would have the promise of peace given to them as well. As the teacher in the book of Ecclesiastes says, “All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return. Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth?” (Ecc 3:20-21) If there is any hope for restoration for the animals, they have it too when Christ makes all things new in the world to come. It is in the new heavens and the new earth where he will make peace between wolf and lamb, lion and calf, human and serpent.

The greatest peace of all is knowing that there no longer exists a chasm of sin between God and His creation. The barrier of sin has been broken down in humanity through the sacrifice of Christ at the cross. Once we were divided from God, alienated from Him (Col 1:21). We were hostile to His grace despite thirsting for mercy and life. And by the blood of Christ we were reconciled back to our heavenly Father. The Prince of Peace has calmed the sinfulness of our hearts that they may no longer war against God but find forgiveness. The reign of our Prince begins at the cross and continues when he comes to us to bring the peace of heaven.

Christ comes to us in the here and now that heaven may be in our presence, both in our hearts and in our worship. We know him to be present here because he promises to come through his Word and Sacraments. Peace and forgiveness is found here in the service. As the saving grace of Christ is preached to your troubled hearts, your hearts may be comforted that the guilt of sin has left them. Whatever desires that may cause them to stray will not consume them for we know that Christ takes away the guilt of sins. If we fall into temptation, the Lord will pick us up again and cleanse us from unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). He allows us to be brought once more into his holy presence where we may dwell with him. It is peace to know that nothing in heaven or on earth can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:39).

This is communicated to us quite solidly when we find that the promise of heaven touches our lips and tongues in the meal of holy communion. Here Jesus makes his body and blood present for all those who turn away from sin and desire to find forgiveness in our Lord. Heaven is where our Lord dwells, and if he dwells here upon the altar in this sacred meal, we partake of heaven now. We truly await for when the heavens come down to us on the Last Day, but until that Day, we have a foretaste of the feast we will find there. Our bodies may not be completed removed from temptation now, nor has our flesh been clothed with immortality, but we do find eternal life blessing those who receive the forgiveness found in Christ’s blood.

Faced with the frailty of our flesh, a weakness both physical and moral, we eagerly await the coming of Jesus Christ our Lord on the Last Day. It is in his presence that we find heaven itself. He is the Prince of Peace who instills calm to a troubled heart and his presence in our heart stills our discord and anxieties which war against peace. Our flesh will be clothed with immortality and no longer crave what is lustful and wrong. There will not be a war of our spirits against our flesh nor ourselves against God’s Law. The Law of the Lord will reside in our hearts and we will do it gladly, not because we have convinced ourselves that it is the best route to go. We will gladly do all the Lord asks of us because we will only have love for His commandments. God our king loves us, we love Him, and we will do what is lovely in His sight. That will be all there is to it. There will be no conflict between us and God, nor us and other people, nor even between beast and bird. All things will be at peace in Christ.

The promise of this is found at the cross of Jesus. It is there he made peace between God and man, and reconciled all things back to God that they may not be forsaken. The Lord will not forbid people from wandering from His promise of peace, but to those who receive His peace in faith, we have this promise guarded in heaven. May we take heart in the ways we receive this peace now in this world—through the forgiveness of our sins in Christ—and may we look to the world to come where these things are secured. And if we have doubts that the peace of heaven is bound to come to us; may we look to when it entered into the world: may we look to when God came from heaven to earth in the form of a child on Christmas Day. He was born to die at the cross that by the blood of his cross, peace may reign forever and ever. Amen.

The peace that surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.