Listen to our Old Testament reading this morning from Isaiah 9:6:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

On this 2nd Sunday in Advent when we focus on the theme of Peace, it is appropriate that we read Dr. Luke’s account of the birth of Jesus, the one whom Isaiah predicted and named “The Prince of Peace.” For it is only in Luke’s account of the birth that we have the angelic announcement to shepherds, accompanied by the heavenly choir that proclaimed,

*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.*

**Peace.** Amazon says that the most highlighted Bible passage on its Kindle e-reader is Philippians 4:6-7: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Amazon’s data reflects a world that desperately longs for, searches for, and prays for this peace promised in God’s word. Is it any wonder that the world desires for, longs for, searches for, and prays for this Peace that passes all understanding?

On the **international Level:** Our recent debacle in Afghanistan has resulted in the Taliban regaining control of the country and torturing and murdering any and all who do not belong to their brand of Islam. Over a hundred Pakistani school children were recently killed by the Taliban. Civil war rages in Syria. Libya remains in chaos. Hamas recently fired rockets into Israel, and Israel responded by bombing most of Palestine to the ground. In Ukraine, Russia currently has amassed tens of thousands of troops on its border. China builds man-made islands in the South China Sea and dares America to sail its ships too close. And time would fail me to speak of North Korea and Venezuela, and Haiti, and now, even before we can defeat the Delta variant of COVID, our world faces the new Omicron variant.

**Peace on earth goodwill toward men?**

How easy it would be to let the cynic in us sing along with Wordsworth’s 3rd verse of that immortal Christmas carol that we sang a few moments ago. “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day:

Henry Wordsworth Longfellow, reeling from the news that his son had been killed in the Civil War, sat at his kitchen table on Christmas Day, listening to the church bells of his town ring. Wordsworth picked up his pen and paper and recorded these words:

“I heard the bells on Christmas Day, their old familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet the words repeat, Of peace on earth, good will to men.

I thought of how, as the day had come, The belfries of all Christendom  
Had rolled along the unbroken song, Of peace on earth, good will to men.

Listen again now, to this 3rd verse in the light of our word today:

“And in despair I bowed my head: ‘There is no peace on earth,’ I said.”  
“For hate is strong, and mocks the song of peace on earth, good-will to men.”

On the **National Level:**
The ugliest presidential campaign in history results in a bitterly divided America. We are divided politically, economically, racially, ethnically, and religiously.
Peace on earth goodwill toward men?
“For hate is strong, and mocks the song of peace on earth, good-will to men.”

On the **State Level:**
I open my AL.com app on my iPhone, and read of murders and child abuse and gang violence and sex-trafficking and corrupt politicians at every level; and the heart-breaking stories of innocent children killed by the gunfire of gangs. Our county jails and state prisons are bulging with twice the number of inmates they were built to house; and Tutwiler prison for women seems immune to any hope of reform.

Peace on earth goodwill toward men?
“For hate is strong, and mocks the song of peace on earth, good-will to men.”

On the **Local Level:**
Mobile is bathed in the blood of senseless gun attacks. Vandals destroy school property, public property and church property. Nothing is sacred, and bullying in every school is the norm. And violence and death so daily common in Alabama Village that it doesn’t even make the news any more.

**Peace on earth goodwill toward men?**

Hate is strong and mocks the song of Peace on Earth, goodwill to men...

And on a personal level, is there anyone in this congregation or our Face Book Live congregation this morning who cannot relate to James 4:1: “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from the evil desires that battle within you?” Not one of us is exempt from that “war in our members.”

**Peace on earth goodwill toward men?**

“For hate is strong, and mocks the song of peace on earth, good-will to men.”

Oh, I think that everyone of us this morning can understand a world that desires for, longs for, searches for, and prays for this **Peace on earth, goodwill toward men!**

**But take note!** There have literally been times in the history of our world when **Peace** actually occurred! Bro. Mike told you of two of those times in his message last week; one from our own Civil War, and one from World War I.

And this morning, I tell you of one of the most famous times of **Peace** recorded in history. That Peace ran from approximately 27 BC until 180 AD. Historians know that time period as the **Pax Romana.** Pax...Latin for **Peace**, and Romana, Latin for Rome, thus **“The Roman Peace.”**

The Romans were poly-theistic, believing in many gods. One such god was Janus, the god of gates, doors, doorways, beginnings and endings. The month of January (beginning of the new year) is named for Janus. The Romans had built a large temple to Janus. This temple had massive doors. When Rome was at war, these doors remained open, supposedly so that patrons could enter to make prayers and sacrifices and prophecies could be declared concerning the outcome of Roman military operations.

The doors to Janus’ temple were closed only in peacetime, which was a rare event in the history of Rome. Beginning in approximately 27 BC, Rome had conquered all opposition within its declared borders, and so declared **Peace**, and the doors of Janus’ temple swung closed.

**Don’t miss the importance of this Pax Romana. The doors of Janus’ temple closed shut, indicating peace throughout the Roman Empire, and the doors of heaven opened, and the Prince of Peace was born!** (Repeat)!
This Pax Romana, this Roman Peace meant that during the years of Jesus’ life, during the lives of his disciples, during the life of the Apostle Paul and subsequent disciples; people were able to move about from one area to another, throughout the empire, on good roads, safe for the most part. There was order, even if it was occupied order. So, Christianity flourished initially because of the Pax Romana, the Roman Peace.

So, Peace broke out in the world, and the Prince of Peace was born. Now you understand why I choose to read Galatians 4:4 as our Call to Worship scripture this morning! "When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son..."

There are two words in the Koine Greek New Testament for “time.” Chronos, means clock time, calendar time, “chronological” time. The other word is Kairos, which means the right time, the critical time, the opportune time. But in the New Testament, Kairos means God’s time.

God first brought peace to the world through the Pax Romana, the Roman Peace. And then, at just the right time, God sent Jesus, the Prince of Peace. “And suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will to men...

But in Paul Harvey language, we all know “the rest of that story.” His own countrymen, fearful and jealous of him, manipulated the Romans into crucifying him on a Roman cross. And don’t you know, as Jesus was placed in that tomb, his disciples surely felt that despair, and that pain, and that desolation 2,000 years before Longfellow recorded those words:

“For hate is strong, and mocks the song of peace on earth, good-will to men.”

But again, now, in Paul Harvey language, we know the “rest of the story.” Jesus did not stay in that borrowed tomb! Three days later, that stone was rolled back, and that tomb was empty! And another writer by the name of Robert Lowry, who lived during the same time period as Longfellow, penned those immortal words:

Up from the grave he arose, with a mighty triumphant ore his foes,  
He arose the victor from the dark domain, And he lives forever with his saints to reign.  He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

And surely, Longfellow had come to that same conclusion or he could not have penned that 4th verse:  “Then pealed the bells more loud and deep, God is not dead nor doth he sleep;  
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, with Peace on earth, goodwill to men.”

And then some 70 years or so after the resurrection, John, the beloved disciple, recalled and recorded those beautiful words that we read earlier:  
Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives...Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

The Prince of Peace. This morning, on this 2nd Sunday of Advent, we celebrate the Prince of Peace...

Is there anyone in this congregation this morning that does not have the peace of God that passes all understanding? Let me invite you... Is there anyone watching by Face Book Live this morning...

BENEDICTION:

May the love of God the Father fill you and surround you; May the Peace of Jesus the Son calm your hearts and minds and souls; And may the Presence of the Holy Spirit strengthen and sustain you, until we meet again. AMEN! & AMEN!!