

THE HOPE OF ADVENT, PART 2



ADVENT BEGINS WITH HOPE

HOPE BUILDS PATHWAYS TO PEACE IN ADVENT.

PEACE

Luke 1:67-79

Zechariah's prophesy – he will guide the people in peace

67. And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying,
68. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people,
69. and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,
70. as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
71. that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us;
72. to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant,
73. the oath which he swore to our father Abraham,
74. to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,
75. in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.
76. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
77. to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins,
78. through the tender mercy of our God, when the day shall dawn upon us from on high



A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS, RETOLD

Music – *Christmas Time Is Here*

Poor Charlie Brown! He has put up his decorations. Christmas is here but he just doesn't have the Christmas spirit. "It all seems just so commercial," he says to himself. "There must be something wrong with me."

He talks with Lucy, the child psychiatrist. Lucy's advice costs him \$.05, in advance, but he gets what he pays for. Her advice is that he should direct the Christmas play at the school. And Lucy introduces him to the children in the program.

But it is an unruly cast of characters that includes a dog that sometimes seems strangely human, and a boy who still carries his security blanket with him.

The cast realizes that Charlie Brown is way over his head directing the Christmas play, and so they send him off with Linus to pick out the Christmas tree.

"Bring us back a beautiful aluminum tree that has the feel of Christmas to it." And as he leaves, one child says, "... and make sure it's a pink Christmas tree."

Oh good grief.

Music – *O Christmas Tree*

Charlie Brown and Linus find a small evergreen tree that needs to be rescued from the Christmas tree lot. The small evergreen tree on a wooden stand loses needles every time someone walks near it. Some people would think it is the ugliest tree in the whole Christmas tree lot. But Charlie Brown likes it, and he determines that this will be the tree used to decorate the stage in the Christmas pageant. So they take the skinny little tree back to the school.

When he shows the tree to the other children, they all laugh at him. "You blockhead, Charlie Brown! This isn't a pink aluminum tree. This is just a tree that is too small and too scrawny to give anybody the Christmas spirit!"

Charlie Brown is the laughing stock of the neighborhood. Even his dog laughs at him. This is so humiliating. Charlie Brown finally admits, "Then I guess I just don't understand the true meaning of Christmas."

Linus steps forward and says, "I'll tell you what the true meaning of Christmas is, Charlie Brown." The whole cast becomes quiet as Linus does something no cartoon character would ever dare to do on television today. He begins to recite some verses from the Bible.



(... Joseph went) to Bethlehem...to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered.

And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Now in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear.

And the angel said to them, "Be not

afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among all people with whom the Lord is well pleased!"

A smile of enchantment returns to Charlie Brown's face. As if under a religious spell, he picks up the tree from the top of Schroeder's piano, and walks out the school door back to his home. As he proudly carries his tree home, the stars above him twinkle in the sky and remind him of the words that Linus has just spoken.

But once again, Charlie Brown's mood is shattered when he returns home to find that Snoopy's dog house has won first prize for decorations. Snoopy has put lights and bulbs and tinsel all over his dog house, and right in the middle is a bright gold ribbon that proclaims that he has won first place in the neighborhood Christmas decorations' contest.

Music – *Christmas Time is Here*

Charlie Brown has an idea. He takes the decorations from the dog house and puts them on the tree. As a final touch, Linus puts his very special security blanket around the base of the tree. This scrawny tree symbolizes what Christmas is all about. Christmas is finding love in unexpected places, wrapping your most treasured security blanket around the symbols of love, and joining the angels to sing glory to God in the highest, peace on earth to all people.

And that is a Charlie Brown Christmas. It originally aired on television in 1965 -- that's forty-one years ago. We watched it first when we were newly married; we watched it with our first baby, and our second and our third. I hope you did too.

Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown! Thanks for reminding us of the meaning of Christmas once again this year. Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown.

Music. *O Christmas Tree*, reprise.

HOPE BUILDS PATHWAYS TO PEACE

As you left worship last Sunday, I asked you to remember, “Advent Begins with Hope.”

Today, I ask you to remember, “Hope builds pathways to peace in Advent.”

Peace needs us more than ever this year. It is easier to say what you don’t like than it is to support the good that is all around you. Don’t fall victim to that way of thinking.

Hope builds pathways to peace. Be a builder, not a demolitions’ expert.

EIGHT CENTERS OF CARE

We often assume that peace only occurs on world stages or in stressful relationships. The search for peace is far more pervasive, and should be part of the eight centers of care in human relationships.

**PEACE BEGINS WITH YOU.
PEACE ALWAYS BEGINS WITH YOU,
YOU JUST CAN’T ESCAPE IT.**

In her book, *Teaching and Learning in a Diverse World*, Patricia Ramsay identifies eight different caring communities that I would like to rename. A just and lasting peace is our hope in each of these communities. I have listed them in the bulletin for you to think about this week. I’m going to read the list twice. First time through, just hear my words and let me draw you from one community into the next. On second reading, I would like you to put the face of someone you know on each one of them.

Advent begins with hope.

Hope builds pathways to peace.

In this season, God challenges you to create pathways to peace as you...

- care for self,
- care for intimate others,
- care for associates and acquaintances,
- care for distant others,
- care for nonhuman animals,

- care for plants and the physical environment,
- care for the human-made world of objects and instruments,
- care for ideas.

SOMETHING TO TAKE HOME

Last week I left you with some thoughts about hope; this week, I have some ideas about peace for you to take home.

1. Take home Charlie Brown’s quest for Christmas even when he was ridiculed by the other children, who seem very shallow by comparison.
 2. Take home the eight communities of care, and see how you must work for peace in each one of them.
 3. And take home one of the following ideas about peace and make it your own in the week to come.
- **Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek but a means by which we arrive at that goal.** Martin Luther King, Jr.
 - **It isn't enough to talk about peace, one must believe it. And it isn't enough to believe in it, one must work for it.** Eleanor Roosevelt
 - **Those who are at war with others are not at peace with themselves.** William Hazlett
 - **It is dangerous to be right when the government is wrong.** Voltaire
 - **As long as war is regarded as wicked, it will always have its fascination. When it is looked upon as vulgar, it will cease to be popular.** Oscar Wilde
 - **All cruelty springs from weakness.** Seneca
 - **War is a matter of old men's pride, and young men's lives.** Anonymous
 - **Always forgive your enemies. Nothing annoys them more.** Oscar Wilde
 - **If you want peace, work for justice.** Pope John Paul VI
 - **If I am brutal, and you use brutal methods to overcome me, you become brutal just like me.** Krishnamarti

- There is no such thing as defeat in non-violence. Cesar Chavez
- We do not inherit the earth from our fathers. We borrow it from our children. David Brower
- Nonviolence doesn't always work -- but violence never does. Madge Michaels-Cyrus



The musical interludes as noted were beautifully played on the Clavinova by Mrs. Althea Wright.

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