



'Worship at home' Sunday December 10th 2023



This Sunday is the **second Sunday in Advent**, as we anticipate the Christmas celebration of the birth of Christ in his first Advent, and consider his return as King in his second Advent. Today we make time to consider the Jesus as the Prince of Peace, and God's vision for peace in our world.

Opening

In our Advent preparations, as we anticipate the celebration of the coming of Christ, we hear a voice: **Prepare the way for the Lord.** May we find hope this Advent.

In the lonely places of our lives, when we stand forlorn and alone, we hear a voice: **Prepare the way for the Lord.** May we find love this Advent.

In the dark places of our world, where conflict rages and fear and oppression reign, we hear a voice: **Prepare the way for the Lord.** May we find peace this Advent.



Reflect on what 'peace' means for you.

Is it merely the absence of conflict, or something more?

**How might you foster peace with others,
even those with whom relationships are difficult?**

How might you know peace within yourself?

"Peace on earth, goodwill to all." This sentiment is often seen on Christmas cards and heard in our carols. However, peace and goodwill to all seem far away when our lives are filled with competing expectations, stresses and complex relationships.

Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way”—“a voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’” And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside

and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptised by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.”

New International Version

Seen as the fulfillment of the ancient prophet Isaiah, John spoke into a world which was as complex and uncertain and unfair as ours. John lived in the time of the *pax romana*, latin for “Roman peace”. This was a long period of relative peace and stability for the Roman empire. However, we know through history that this period of peace was imposed on people through the use of force and the sword. Peace only came about due to power, oppression and dictatorship. Only a tumultuous change bringing a whole new landscape of mountains and valleys and paths would make a difference in such a world of tension and fear for the Jewish people. The coming of the Messiah brought the hope for such transformational change.



Our lives may look peaceful on the outside. In the time of the *pax romana*, the Roman empire was not engaged in conflict with other countries. Trade prospered and the empire flourished. However, the face we present to others does not always reflect what is going on within. Sometimes underneath our calm exteriors we churn internally with our personal tensions, of conflict, regret, jealousy or pride.

**How might you prepare
your heart
for the coming of Christ
this Advent season?**



One day we must come to see that peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but that it is a means by which we arrive at that goal. We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means.

Martin Luther King Jr



*Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me;
let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.*

Jill Jackson-Miller and Sy Miller

We may not be able to address many of the issues causing tension in our world. Individually, we cannot stop the devastating effects of Covid19 and the stress that continues to occur on individuals, families and businesses. We feel powerless in our awareness of ongoing racial injustice in so many countries, including our own. As an Australian community, we disagree over the balance of individual rights pitched against social and public health responsibilities, as we seek the best response to each of the current world events. Issues such as these create unrest, and we sometimes feel they are too big for us individually to address.

However, individually, we do have the ability to

Let there be
peace
on
earth
& LET IT BEGIN
with me

- straighten the path between us and our neighbour's door
- tear down the wall separating our friendships
- bridge the distance between us and our in-laws
- open the way for our family to talk more openly without hostility, resentment or blame
- forgive ourselves and those around us



The path to peace starts deep within ourselves, and now is the time to make space and time to change. As we acknowledge our assumptions, confront our own biases, search ourselves within, and repent, we continue to “prepare a way for the Lord”. This is the time to seek peace, for ourselves and for our world.

Pray for...

People and situations you know of where there is
conflict hurt power imbalance
turmoil uncertainty violence intimidation
division tension war antagonism



Pray for peace, wholeness, and God’s all-encompassing grace.

Closing: Prayer of St Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love.

Where there is injury, pardon.

Where there is discord, union.

Where there is doubt, faith.

Where there is despair, hope.

Where there is darkness, light.

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much

seek to be consoled as to console;

to be understood, as to understand;

to be loved, as to love;

For it is in giving that we receive,

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

*Prayer for Peace
St. Francis of Assisi*



How might you bring peace to a troubled situation this week?