

# Advent Reading: Peace (2018)

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Good Morning,

This is the second Sunday of Advent. This morning we are going to light the candle of peace.

On the first Christmas night the angels sang:

**Luke 2:14** "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

On the night before Jesus was crucified He said:

**John 14:27** "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives."

And in the middle of those two moments, Jesus asked, and then answered, this question:

**Luke 12:51** "Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division"

Jesus did not come to establish peace on earth. Indeed, Jesus Himself indicates His incarnation was intended to create a fundamental separation, not global unification.

Yet Jesus' incarnation is the occasion for peace to be given to people who continue to live in a fractured world with fragmented lives of lack, who long for peace but look for it in the all the wrong places.

How can Jesus' incarnation both create division and provide peace? Biblically, peace is not simply an absence of conflict or tension, but the presence of fullness and completion. It is *Shalom* in Hebrew – everything the way it is supposed to be. This kind of peace has more to do with wholeness, fullness, and completion than a lack of hostility or disrupted tranquility. In fact, it is our lack of fullness, and how we desperately seek to fill our lack, where Jesus becomes a world-divider. All of us at some point pursue filling our lack through power and pleasure, while Jesus offers us Himself and His true peace –complete fullness – as a gift.

Peace as a gift of grace received by faith is offensive. The peace Jesus offers is accomplished by His sacrifice not by our striving; His substitution, not our institutions; His resurrection, not our evolution, His selfless service, not our self-preserving power. To receive Jesus' peace, we have to receive Jesus' gift of salvation. To receive the gift of salvation, we must confess our inadequacy, sinfulness, and powerlessness to become complete apart from God. We must realize that we need Jesus to make peace with God on our behalf and to bring His fullness to us. Jesus does not give peace to us as the world gives - temporary with strings attached and expectations for payment. Jesus gives freely and fully to those who see their lack and cry out to Him to fill it.

May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless his people with peace! (Psa 29:11 ESV)

**Light One of the Purple Candles**