

Last week we talked about the idea of Hope and Expectation.
Hope and expectation we said is the notion that things as they currently are,
are not supposed to be this way.
That there is something amiss in culture, society and us.
Also,
we have hope and expectation that Christ's arrival in His first coming some 2000 years ago,
has set the stage for his second coming,
which is what the season of advent is all about...
waiting,
waiting for Christ to make his return so that we too might be rescued.
This brings us to the theme of the second week of advent,
peace.
In the scheme of our march to Christmas,
we begin with hope and expectation for Christ's return,
but for what?
In our epistle St. Peter tells us what for;
"Therefore, beloved,
while you are waiting for these things,
strive to be found by him at peace,
without spot or blemish;
and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation."
As we are in this season of waiting,
in hope and expectation,
we do so looking for the peace of God to reign in our lives.
But what is peace?
It might be different than what we think.
When I think of the term peace,
I think of a lack of conflict,
such as between militaries in different countries,
or between my sister and I when we were kids.
Or if you really want to think of peace,
I think of a lack of conflict between the fans of the red sox and the yankees.
Now granted,
I am not a fan of either;
but I will say that my two favorite teams are the Mets and anyone who beats the Yankees!
When the bible talks about peace,
it not only means that there is no conflict amongst people that usually are at each others throats,
although thats part of it.
The greek word that Peter uses in his letter for peace is the word eraina?
In the Old Testament,
the word for peace is shalom.
Eraina and shalom are amazing words in the ancient world.
Not only does they mean a lack of conflict,

but they also mean wholeness,
restoration,
well-being,
and reconciliation.

Peace is wholeness,
in that it acknowledges that when something is not complete,
it doesn't function properly.

One of my favorite TV shows,
is American Restoration.

The series focuses on Rick's Restorations,

a company owned and operated by Las Vegas area metal artist and antique restoration expert

Rick Dale,

who has been restoring various vintage items for almost 30 years.

People will bring there vintage items,
ranging from old coca-cola machines,
to barbers chairs,
and even antique slot machines.

When he gets these various items,
they are all disheveled,
badly rusted out,

and missing several mechanical parts.

The items are never in working order,
and one has a hard time imagining that they can be brought back to their original state,
Then,

at the end of the show you see the finished products,
and they are in AMAZING, working order!

They probably look better than when they were brand new!

This is what is meant by peace in Christianity.

A broken world and a broken people,
who at one time worked the way they were intended in the Garden of Eden,
are hoping and expecting to be made whole again.

We are like those old vintage items that are rusted out,
missing parts so we don't function they way God meant for us.

In the season of Advent we acknowledge that we are waiting,
waiting to find peace,
and to experience wholeness in our lives.

How many of us feel like that ?

I know I do.

Every time I struggle in life,
or I commit some sin,
like gossiping,

or letting my temper get the best of me,
I am reminded that I am a broken person in the need of God's restoration.
Maybe we have relationships that are not working the way they are supposed to;
maybe we have family or friends that we need to be reconciled to.
This is what Christ does for us.
This is the peace that He offers us.
We also need to have our relationships with the Lord restored and reconciled,
to experience PEACE.
Everyone of us needs to have our relationship with our most Holy and Loving God made whole.
The bible tells us that we all have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God.
So how do we have reconciliation with God?
Once again,
look at our epistle reading:
"Therefore, beloved,
while you are waiting for these things,
strive to be found by him at peace,
without spot or blemish;"
We will be found at peace,
when we are without sin.
Now,
we might say to ourselves that we can never be without sin,
on one hand this is true,
but God requires of us to be reconciled to Him and be without sin.
We can be without sin when we acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord,
and submit ourselves to his grace and mercy that he offered up when he died on the cross.
The bible also tells us,
that all those that repent and turn back to God,
no matter how many times they fall and sin,
God is faithful to forgive and make us whole again.
There is nothing you or I can do that will separate us from God's forgiveness and His Love.
But we must take the step to ask for His forgiveness.
Sometimes asking is the hardest part isn't it?
Starting next week,
every Saturday at 4:30,
and whenever someone wants to schedule a time,
I will offer the opportunity for people to come and make their confession,
and to tell God they are sorry,
and that they have fallen,
and they need Gods Love and mercy to get back up again.
In this months tidings I talk about my own journey with sacramental confession.
I talk about when we fall,
and we sin against God,
it breaks His heart.
But all He wants to do is give us his forgiveness,

pick us up off the ground,
wipe our tears,
and put us back on the right track.

This is what the sacrament of reconciliation is.

Its not that the priest has the power to “forgive your sins”

but what the priest is empowered by God to do,

is to tell each and everyone of us that God forgives us when we confess our sins.

It is a reminder that we are always being made whole,

that God is always at work in bringing peace to us and a fallen world that is hurting and in pain.

A song I love sums this up so perfectly.

The lyrics say,

“We are His portion and He is our prize,

Drawn to redemption by the grace in His eyes,

If grace is an ocean, we’re all sinking.

So Heaven meets earth like a sloppy wet kiss,

And my heart turns violently inside of my chest,

I don’t have time to maintain these regrets,

When I think about, the way...He loves us,”

This is what Peace is.

It is having the dirt and gunk wiped off of us by our heavenly father,

because of the love he has for us,

and that we are His pride and joy

and that he will continue to make us whole,

as he offers us shalom,

the shalom that passes all our understanding.

Amen.