

Come, Lord Jesus, ...1) As King

Isaiah 2:1-5 • 2022-11-27 • Advent Series: "Come, Lord Jesus"



Peace talks. What do you think of when you hear those words? Maybe your mind jumps to excitement over progress in the world. Or perhaps, you find yourself a little cynical and don't see much use in those words anymore. Often the only way that any peace talks can happen is if a third-party steps in to negotiate the terms of peace. But it seems too often peace talks fail. Or sometimes the peace is unstable and tenuous. Consider how the Korean War is listed as only lasting from 1950 to 1953. There was an armistice. Yet technically the two sides are still at war. And there has been no slowing of building up military strength. It's not just in places like the Korean peninsula. Many places around the world are striving to increase military spending and increase the size of its military. Some countries, like China, have increased military spending over the past 25 years. Countries like ours may have enlistments decreasing. But our nation's defense spending is well over 30% of all global military expenditure. That's one way to ensure peace talks might work.

But there is only one way we can be sure the peace talks are real. They must come from the Lord. Unless he is the one promising peace it can't be certain. But if he is, it cannot fail. As we look at all the building up of weapons and might of this world, we can find comfort in what God is going to build up. We find that in Isaiah 2 this morning.

The prophet Isaiah lived at a time when the temple in Jerusalem had long stood as the center of worship for the Lord. For about 400 years it was the place where you could find those who listened to and taught the Word of the Lord. It was a place where faithful believers would travel and visit. It was the symbol of God's presence and the reminder of his promises to Abraham of prosperity and peace through his people.

But it didn't look so high and mighty as it stood on the top of mount Moriah in Isaiah's time. Nations had been up against it for decades. It had already nearly fallen. And during Isaiah's time it remained in crisis. This was all because the people had turned the faithful city of Jerusalem into an unfaithful city. They had abandoned worship of the Lord for all the various false gods they worshipped on other mountains and high places. They looked down on the Lord and the temple of their God. And even when the nations who worshipped other gods came against them with the sword, the people of Jerusalem still didn't turn to the Lord. They sharpened their swords and prepared to make their stand on their own, without the Lord.

Sadly, Isaiah had to tell them, *"You will be ashamed ... The mighty man will become tinder and his work a spark; both will burn together, with no one to quench the fire."* (Is 1:29–31) And a few decades later, Isaiah's warning was fulfilled. Some of the Kings would try to negotiate peace or try to fight and win it. But none would succeed. The temple which had stood for 400 years would be made rubble, and the city would burn.

With all the violence and threats of war, how long until something like that happens in our world? I've been hearing a lot lately about how people feel about the many troubles in society. There are wars across the world. And even at home shooters keep killing people, sometimes they even kill at random. All you have to do is search the news for shootings and you'll see what looks like almost a new story every day. Earlier this week the brother of one of our members narrowly dodged being hit by a bullet from a shooter. He was innocently in the wrong place at the wrong time. God sent his angels that day to keep him safe. It hits close to home. Not too long ago our small town has had violence, gun shots, and death.

And to make it worse, the spiritual life of many places is not unlike that of ancient Israel. It feels like more and more people are turning away from worship of the Lord. The Lord seems far from the center of worship in our culture. Immorality is growing among us as there are fewer who acknowledge what is just and right, and more who support what is abusive, wicked, and against the will of the Lord. Laws are in the works which make it unlawful to refuse to affirm and celebrate immorality. All this violence, hatred, and turning away from the Lord! It is enough to make the Church cry out, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

So, what should we do? Should we build up our cities and sharpen our swords? Can we fight our way against the rising violence and war? Could we just maybe find the right leader and he will bring us strength, justice, and peace? If that's our plan, we will end up in the grave. And whether or not we die from violence the world around us will perish. We might even try to die as a hero. But we'll still die. And so will every sinner. Where do we look for hope and for peace?

We don't have to look any further than Isaiah's message. God has foretold of the peace talks that he would bring to this world. Isaiah saw the coming of the Messiah King. And he foretold what would happen to us in *"the last days."*

Isaiah says that *"the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it."* Some try to take this to mean that the city will literally be lifted into the air. Apparently, the highest permanently inhabited city in the world today is La Rinconada in Peru. It's about the size of Payson but sits at an elevation of three miles. Despite being the highest in elevation it really lacks

what most towns consider basic comforts, like a water and sewage system. Simply being high doesn't make a city prominent. To look for some type of literal fulfillment in which the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem is lifted up higher than mount Everest is to miss the point of this prophecy!

The Hebrew expression, "be lifted up" is often translated, as you see here in the NIV, as "exalted." Isaiah's point isn't that the city of Jerusalem will be physically higher in elevation. His point is that the place that bears the Lord's house will be the most prominent and highest in rank in all the earth.

And note, this isn't talking just about Jerusalem or the physical temple either. Many will try to limit this prophecy to merely the physical city of Jerusalem. But to do so is to miss what Jesus says about himself as the center of Scripture and about the end times. Jesus foretold that Jerusalem, and the temple would be ruined. And he said a time was coming when people would not worship the Lord in Jerusalem, but from everywhere. That is what Isaiah speaks about as he speaks about us and God's kingdom at the coming of his King, Jesus. He says his prophecy will be fulfilled "*in the last days.*" We are now living in the last days. The Messiah has already come. We are waiting for him to come again and to fulfill everything promised.

And we do see this part of the prophecy in fulfillment already. "*Many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.'*" Nations do stream to the house of the Lord to hear his Word! This is what takes place everywhere Christians gather. There are places all over the world which God has lifted up to carry his name. His Word is spoken, and people gather from every part of the world to the Christian Church.

Notice worship involves people coming to listen to the Word of the Lord! God would establish his kingdom as he calls and moves people to worship him from all over this world. They come to listen to his holy Word.

And though it may seem like many people today are turning away from the Lord, look at Isaiah's prophecy, "*Many will come.*" Throughout history the Word of the Lord has been shared. And people have come to hear it. This is what makes a place prominent. It is not how high it is physically. It is how powerful is the Word it carries. It is how God's people honor and believe his Word. And Jesus promised that wherever two or three gather in his name, he is with them. You, today, are gathered at the house of the Lord. He is present with us today as we gather around his Word and his Supper. And in all other Christian churches around the world, you will hear people of all backgrounds in so many languages saying, "*Come let us go to the house of the Lord.*"

But Isaiah's prophecy includes more than people gathering to hear the Word of the Lord. They also spread that word to all the world. "*The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*" Missionaries in the ancient church reached all across the globe. The Christian Church continues to reach all over the world. Even our small Lutheran synod has sent out the Word across the globe to places like war-torn Ukraine, Malawi, Japan, Vietnam, London, and several places in the Americas. And although we aren't in La Rinconada, Peru, we have reached church planters in parts of Peru. The word of the Lord goes out from all the Church.

And it all centers on the Word about our King, Jesus. "*He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.*" Can you picture the peace promised through our King, Jesus? The powers of this world find this kind of peace impossible. They celebrate a victory if a nation reduces its number of nuclear weapons or agrees to not use chemical warfare. They consider it a triumph if a nation only spends a limited, small portion of its budget on military spending. What about zero? What about reversing all warfare? That is the type of kingdom Jesus brings!

Jesus won this peace by defeating the devil's schemes. He freed us from all our enemies by his death. Our King told his disciples, "Put away your sword. Shall I not drink the cup (of suffering) the Father has given me?" And he did. He put an end to all our strife as he poured out his life for us to pay the price for us. God's military spending? The life and blood of his own Son in human flesh. And that was enough to win peace forever!

And when he rose from the grave Jesus indicated what the peace talks would involve. "Your sins are forgiven. You are at peace with God. Live now at peace with one another." And the prophecy of Isaiah will be fully fulfilled when Jesus comes again as king. He will make wars cease, will shatter the sword, spear, tank, missile, all of it. And we will walk in his light forever.

Now all believers join together and say, "*Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.*" We are now those who gather in his house. We are now those who listen to his proclamation of forgiveness and peace. We are now those who go out with his Word to all around us and to every nation. And when wars, injustice, and danger strike we cry out, "Come, Lord Jesus, as King!"