

“Tools for Peace”
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North Hill Christian Church
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Isaiah 36:1-3, 13-20, 37:1-7, 2:1-4

Throughout history kings, commanders, emperors, queens, presidents, dictators throw the word peace around as their contribution to the world, but too often it comes at the tip of a sword. We continually hear of the Pax Romana, the peace of Rome, that didn't expand the empire through cooperation, and diplomacy but rather by conquering armies and military might. We have continued to hear those in power promoting peace in the world today, once more through the use of strong militaries, to the point of instilling fear as a deterrent to keep the peace. This is how our readings for this morning started off.

We hear the Rabshakeh, the emissary or messenger declaring the word of the King of Assyria to the people of Judah. He uses language and formulaic declarations that sound like a prophet of Judah. Instead of declaring the word of the Lord he instead declares the word of the King of Assyria. Instead of speaking directly to the king or the leaders of Judah, the messenger speaks to the crowds, instilling fear in the masses that there is no hope in resisting the armies of Assyria and it makes sense to simply give into what King Sennacherib wants. No other kingdoms have been able to resist and their God's haven't been able to do anything in the face of the Assyrian armies. They fell just as your god will fall. The only hope you have is in trusting in the the King of Assyria. Only he will be able to protect you and ensure that you will live in peace.

Only by trusting in King Sennacherib will you be able to stay in your land, drink from your cisterns and eat from your own vines and fig trees... Until you are taken to a land like your own. But only by trusting in him will you know peace.

We hear this language even to this day in our political ads. If you believe in this person all your worries will go away. If you rely on this person then you will live in peace and prosperity. If you trust in this candidate all things will be made right with the country and the world. If you vote for this person, all those things that you fear will go away. All the things that threaten your way of life will be repelled. All those things that threaten your safety, actual or imagined, will be no more. If you believe in this person above all else, then you will know peace.

Political ads have gotten to the point of calling the opposition the anti-christ while comparing the other as the savior. And no, this isn't just one sided, but has been going on for years across the different political parties. But we know the fear that is hyped up among the people. among the masses to gain support, and to deter an uprising. A fresh example has been the migrant caravan making its way through Mexico as we speak. Even though these individuals who are fleeing their homes for safety, they are weeks and weeks away as they travel by foot. News outlets and political figures demonized

them and treated them as if they were an imminent threat, in order to gain the people's support. They are invading our country, they are filled with bad people, terrorists, and drug dealers. But since the mid-term elections the hype has gone silent. I still see posts about the progress of these migrants, but without the demonizing language or instilling fear in the reader.

As we hear the words of the messenger from Assyria, declare the only hope is in king Sennacherib, we are called to recognize another option than giving in. An option other than raising up arms in battle, an option that king Hezekiah, pursues. He seeks wisdom from the prophet Isaiah. Who describes this moment as a child who is about to be born but is in distress and there is no strength to come through this struggle. There is now a tipping point within the people. They are struggling and unless there is strength added they will not be able to make it through this time of trial. They are losing their faith in the living God. Something needs to happen.

King Hezekiah proves as he comes with other leaders, that there is still a remnant in Judah that are faithful to the Lord our God. There are still those who believe that God has not left them and will help them to persevere. There are still those who are willing to trust that God has not left them. That God has not abandoned them to be destroyed and led away. King Hezekiah trusts in the Lord and pursues the path of peace.

He recognized that in God there is another way to respond to declarations of fear and war. There are other ways to respond to those things that shake us to our bones. It requires that we fully rely that God will be with us and watch over us. It requires that we trust that God is indeed with us.

In the second chapter of Isaiah we hear these words. In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

In order to pursue God's peace there has to be that intentional decision to trust that God will lead us in the right paths. That God will watch over us. A trust that calls us to transform implements of destruction and war into implements for creation and planting. For as long as we create new ways to kill others, we will continue to look for ways to use them, rather than exploring ways of God's peace. The more that we let fear dictate our decisions, the less we turn our lives over to God. The more we let others declare that they are the only way for peace and safety, the more we stray from God.