

Prince of Peace Advent Four

*Lord, make us instruments of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let us 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.
Grant that we 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.
Amen*

“*The prince of peace*” was one of the titles the prophet Isaiah gave to the promised Messiah. “And blessed be his kingdom, now and forever,” we proclaim at the beginning of the service of the Word. A word we await to become flesh, and dwell among us, “*full of grace and truth*.” It is the reign if just this One toward which the voice of John the Baptist calls us in Advent, crying, “*Prepare ye the way!*”

Prepare ye the way! It is for the sake of peace that in Advent we have anticipated Christ’s coming in the midst of this world, for the sake of this world. The reign of God does not await some otherworldly place, some afterlife in a time beyond history. God is here at the end of Advent, coming toward us in history, through the world around us, as its new beginning. “*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*”

God desires each of us to be “born to eternal life” starting here in the Bethlehems of our own place and time, in the very places of want and need that, like the inn in the Gospel story, seem to have no room for this unlikely Prince of Peace. It is this God who is coming toward Bethlehem: Prepare ye the way!

*“What is the crying at Jordan? Who hears, O God, the prophecy?
Dark is the season, Dark our hearts and shut to mystery.
Who then shall stir in the darkness,
Prepare for joy in the winter night?
Mortal in darkness we lie down, blind-hearted seeing no light.
Lord, give us grace to awake us,
To see the branch that begins to bloom;
In great humility is hid all heaven in a little room.
Now comes the day of fulfillment,
In joy and terror the word in born!
God gives himself into our lives. O let fulfillment dawn!”*

The Miserable Offenders, Keepin’ the Baby Awake