

14 December 2005  
Advent 3 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

## Jesu Juva

“And His name shall be called . . . Prince of Peace”

Text: Isaiah 9:2-7; Colossians 1:15-20; Luke 2:8-14

***“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called . . . Prince of Peace . . .”***

If there is one thing most people wish for or talk about at this time of the year, peace is it. Peace in the world, peace with our neighbors, peace within our homes, and peace within our hearts. It would be nice, wouldn't it? And even if we can't make it last all year round, at least (we hope) we can achieve it for a few weeks at the end of the year. A few weeks of peace and rest from the regular stresses and troubles of life. A few weeks to imagine, and even to *have*, a better, more peaceful world and life. That's not too much to ask, is it?

And so there are stories of long and bitter wars where the soldiers lay down their arms on Christmas Day and do not fight. Neighbors and families put their disagreements aside for the sake of togetherness and tradition. And we think: if it can be done for *one* day, why not *everyday*? Isn't it *possible*, if we just try hard enough? Isn't it *possible* . . . if I can just convince that lousy, lying, no good, rule breaking neighbor of mine that I'm right? If he would just see things my way, I'd forgive him! But noooo, he thinks the rules are made for everyone *but* him! He . . . (smile) . . . *Peace on earth?*

You see, peace can't be achieved by covering up our problems or pretending they're not there, which is what we tend to do at this time of the year for our hoped-for couple weeks of respite. But that's not peace; that's a truce . . . and as you know, truces are quickly broken. Broken, when the same problem happens again next year. Broken, when someone looks at us the wrong way. Broken when the sin and resentment in our heart bubbles up again. And when our year-end, holiday truces are broken, we wind up right back where we were before; or maybe even worse.

Yet tonight we remember that right into the midst of our brokenness – our broken truces, our broken and elusive chasing after peace, and our broken lives – comes One who is peace. Actually, He is more than peace, for Isaiah calls Him the Prince of Peace. And as a prince is one who rules, that means that this One has peace within His authority. He doesn't just come to *bring* peace – He is the One who rules peace, gives peace, and

establishes peace. And so all peace outside of Him is false peace. But with His peace, though there be no peace in the world, there is peace in the heart. The peace of which the angels sang when this Prince Jesus was born: ***“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”***

And as Christmas approaches, we remember that ***to us this child is born.*** But not just a child! Did you hear the wondrous things said of this child, this Prince, by St. Paul? This child is the Creator – all things made *by* Him and *for* Him. He holds all things together – and so apart from Him, things fall apart. He who is now born in time was before all things. All the fullness of God – not just *part* of God – but *all* of God, dwells in this child. And then the reason why this child, this Prince, has come: ***“to reconcile to Himself all things . . . making peace by the blood of His cross.”***

And so the peace this Prince established, rules, and gives was no bloodless peace; no live-and-let-live truce; no agree to disagree, “wink-wink” peace; no fleeting and elusive peace. It is the peace our Prince won through the bloody battle of the cross. When by Himself, as both God and man, He aligned Himself against all the forces of our enemy, took the blows and battle scars, and gave His life for the life – and peace – of the world. And the sin and guilt and death that our enemy so wanted to use to divide us from God and make us enemies with God, was swallowed up by our Prince. It seemed to swallow Him up, when He died on the cross. But His resurrection showed just who did the swallowing! So that with our enemy and all His weapons defeated, the Prince of Peace appears to His disciples later that day and gives what He has won. He tells them: ***“Peace be with you.”*** (John 20:19)

And so it is for us. Peace. True peace. Not because we’re at peace with God, but because God is at peace with us. For our Prince has reconciled us to God. We need not fear that we have only a fragile truce with God, that might be upset and broken at any time because of our sins, and leave us back where we started, or even worse! No, for as Isaiah said, ***“of His peace there will be no end.”*** Which means that of His *forgiveness* there will be no end; of His *love* there will be no end; of His *mercy* there will be no end; or His *grace* there will be no end; and so of His *peace* there will be no end. And that peace your Prince gives to you, through His Word and Sacraments. The peace that lives even in the midst of a broken, sorrowful, and peace-less world, from the Prince who has come to take you through this life, and into the peace of life eternal.

And so Christmas isn’t a time for wishful thinking; it is a time to remember promises fulfilled. And that it is not too much to ask to have a more peaceful world and life! For that is the very thing our Prince has come, and still comes, to do and to bring. It may not be the kind of peace many in our world (or even you and me) want or expect, but

sometimes the best gifts and the most unexpected gifts. And this gift of a child, of a Prince, of a Saviour, is the most wonderful and unexpected gift of all! God with us. God with us sinners. God as One with us sinners. Peace with God, both now and forever. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, the Prince of Peace.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.