

Jesus: Our Prince of Peace

DARRELL DELANEY

I can remember the anticipation and excitement I had looking forward to Christmas morning. As a kid, it was hard to go to sleep the night before. I can imagine you know all too well the feeling of wondering what gifts you might get. Advent is the season full of anticipation and excitement for the greatest gift of all, Jesus Christ. In this episode of *Groundwork*, we will talk about that gift and explore what it means to experience the Prince of Peace. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are on the fourth and final episode of our Advent series, and we have been housing it in the verses from Isaiah 9:6, that calls Jesus the Messiah, the *Wonderful Counselor*, *Mighty God*, *Everlasting Father*, and in this episode, we will talk about *Prince of Peace*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I think in the very first episode of this series, when we looked at Wonderful Counselor, we set this table a little bit for the whole series by reminding ourselves of the historic context in which Isaiah wrote, particularly this first third. Isaiah, we said, divides up into three sections: One is the section before the people went into exile; the middle section is the section of comfort while they are in exile; the third section, at the end of the book, is sort of post-exile in a time of rebuilding.

So, this first part is a part of a lot of judgment because the nation of Israel, Darrell, was in pretty bad shape.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I think it harkens all the way back to Deuteronomy, where God told the Israelites before they were going into the Promised Land: You need to remember me; you need to honor me; you do not need to forget me; and if you do... You obey what I have commanded you here, you will be blessed; if you disobey me, you will be cursed; and it specifically said they will be dragged away by foreign nations and taken into exile, captive; and that is the situation they are heading in. So, Isaiah...in the first part of the book, as you said...he is bringing judgment, but also, in the midst of that judgment, you have this glimmer of hope that says they will not be completely wiped out; and it is interesting how they respond in that situation, knowing that exile is a painful and desolate place.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, they...and we know this from all the prophets, including the minor prophets, like Amos and Micah, that there was injustice rampant in the land. The poor, whom God had gone on and on in the law to say: You gotta protect the poor; you gotta protect the vulnerable; give them extra provisions. Instead of that, the leaders of Israel actively exploiting the poor. They were making the poor's plight worse; and the prophets assailed Israel, both the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom, for their failures; and indeed, the Babylonians are coming; and around 587 BC they do come, and they drag the people from Jerusalem; and the last glimpse of the city that a lot of the exiles saw was the temple was on fire, the palace was on fire, the walls of Jerusalem...the ramparts...had been breached. It was just a terrible time, and we see that reflected in some of the writings in the Old Testament, Darrell, including in some of the psalms of lament.

DARRELL DELANEY

There are psalms of lament, particularly Psalm 44, Psalm 69, Psalm 78, Psalm 137, that express the raw emotion that they felt during that time of discouragement. I am really glad that the scriptures give words to how people feel in different seasons of their lives in different expressions, which gives us permission to name the things that we have felt in our times of joy and despair; and specifically in Psalm 137, you can hear the words and you can understand how they might feel.

SCOTT HOEZEE

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. ²There on the poplars we hung our harps, ³for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!” ⁴How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land? ⁵If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. ⁶May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.” ⁷Remember, Lord, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell. “Tear it down,” they cried, “tear it down to its foundations!” (And then this terrible ending to this Psalm): ⁸Daughter Babylon, doomed to destruction, happy is the one who repays you according to what you have done to us. ⁹Happy is the one who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks.

That is a brutal...a brutal statement...but it is a cry of pain, Darrell, from people who have lost everything.

DARRELL DELANEY

I am glad that the scripture does not omit out the raw emotion of people in their human experience, because it gives me permission to name how I feel when I see injustice, when I see racism, when I see brokenness in the world, when I see famine. It really hurts my heart and breaks my heart; not just because I have experienced it, but because God’s people are experiencing it all over; and you can see in this situation where they are being taunted and teased by their captors, saying: Why don’t you sing us one of those songs? Well, I don’t feel like singing right now—I don’t. How can I sing in this situation? How can I have joy in this situation?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, and those Babylonian captors knew full well, probably, that a lot of the psalms that they wanted the people to sing said things like: Oh, Jerusalem; you will never fall; you will...you know...God’s city is eternal; and now, it is in ruins. So, go ahead; sing it.

My friend Neal Plantinga has a sermon on this particular psalm, and he mentions a true story from World War II, how in one of the Nazi concentration camps, the Nazis once told a rabbi to strip naked, stand up on a table wearing only his little yamaka...you know, the little cap on the head. He had to preach the sermon he would have preached in the synagogue that Sabbath* before he was captured. They wanted him to preach the sermon and humiliate him; and here is what the Babylonians are doing. They wanted them to sing the old songs of how everlasting would be the holy city of Jerusalem...the House of Zion...as a way to mock them. So, Darrell, you can see why, for these people, it might be really important to hear that they are going to have a Prince of Peace come to them.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, because in this situation, Scott, they are really in a chaotic situation that is now beyond their control. Their sin has brought them to this place; and sometimes we do things that make our lives unmanageable as well. There are some people who I know that are going through twelve-step recovery programs, and they admit in Step 2 their lives have become unmanageable; they actually need God, their divine power, to restore them back to sanity. So, they know that they need intervention; and Isaiah is prophesying the intervention that they are going to need by saying it is not going to end in destruction totally; it is not going to end where you all are wiped out. We are going to bring you hope, to let you know the Messiah will come and set all of these things right; and Israel is not the only one that needs that word; we need that word today.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right, exactly; when I preached on these titles when I was a pastor, Darrell, the sermon on this one...I named it *Captain of Shalom*...that is one of those sermon titles that for some reason stuck with people. They still mention it. They needed a champion...Israel needed a champion. They needed somebody who would bring them peace in the midst of the chaos; they needed order out of the chaos that you just mentioned, Darrell; the peace here...and we are going to talk about this more in just a moment...the peace here is indeed that rich, rich Hebrew concept of *shalom*. As you said, Darrell, ancient Israel needed it; we need it today; and so, in just a minute, we will continue our study of the concept of the Prince of Peace, and what it meant then, and what it means now. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, we have been talking about how the Israelites got themselves into a terrible situation, because they had forsaken the God who had shown them grace, mercy and compassion. They had forsaken the God who in Deuteronomy, before they entered the Promised Land, the people with one voice when Moses said: Will you serve the Lord faithfully? Will you uphold your end of the covenant? Yes; the people said; and in centuries to come, the answer was actually no. They were not living up to it; and so, a time of exile and complete disorientation was to follow.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is interesting that Joshua could see the writing on the wall in his book at the end, in [Chapter] 24. He says: You are not going to be able to serve the Lord because you are compromising even now; and he could see that they were not going to do that; and then a generation came up that neither knew the Lord or what he had done, and they fell off into this destruction and this destructive pattern; and sin has its very own consequences. I don't have to tell you that, Scott, because today we know that sin has consequences; and the world has a way that they want people to do things. It is okay to cheat on your taxes; it is okay to have an extramarital affair; it is okay to get drunk and party; it is okay to do these things, but we know that that is not the way God has called us to live, and there are always consequences for those types of actions.

SCOTT HOEZEE

All of us mess up our lives...all of us...and unfortunately, even the Church...yes, unfortunately, even the Church is guilty of, in Neal Plantinga's phrase...to invoke Neal Plantinga yet again, from his book *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*: We all end up being guilty of vandalizing shalom—we vandalize shalom—we ruin the good order God set forth, and fracture shalom as a result. So again, we need the Prince of Peace; we need the Captain of Shalom—the Champion of Shalom to come to our lives today, too, just as the Israelites did long, long ago.

DARRELL DELANEY

Sometimes even though God can forgive us when we confess our sins that there will be consequences for those actions. You know, he forgave David, yet the child still died; and the Lord spared David's life, but then the consequences still hit his family; and so, I have seen in the jail ministry where I work, there are people who have sentences in there and they can pray the prayer and ask for forgiveness right then and God will forgive them, but then that is not going to just open up the door of the jail cell to let them out. I think another thing that is important for Israel's sake, that they forgot their whole purpose was to be cross-cultural missionaries to let God's salvation be known, and they missed that mark.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But God, later in Isaiah, when we get to the part that points more directly toward hope and deliverance, Isaiah 49:6 is going to remind them of what you just said; that they were supposed to be a beacon. They were supposed to be the beachhead for God, by which he would save the whole world, you know; God said that to Abraham already in Genesis 12: 3b paraphrased: Through you all nations will be blessed. That was Israel's vocation. So, in Isaiah 49:6 God, through Isaiah, will make that clear:

"I will [also] make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."

So, one of the things we need the Prince of Peace to do in coming, to bring shalom into the chaos we in our sin have created, is to make us again a light...a witness...to the better things of God.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think it is really beautiful that God, after the judgment, would remind them of who they were supposed to be, and empower them to be that light and witness. It is really interesting that they didn't understand that before; and after the judgment, in that section of Isaiah, God is saying: This is who you are; this is your real calling. We need that light and we need that witness today, Scott. I mean, we see wars and rumors of wars; we see brokenness; we see famine; relationships between God and humanity; and then humanity with each other, and then brokenness with creation as well.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is all the vandalism of shalom, as we just said. So, all of us...our families, our communities, our nations, our cities, our churches...we need Christ to restore things as the Champion of Peace—the Champion of Shalom; and that can only come, Darrell, when relationships are restored. So, shalom...as we have said before on other *Groundwork* programs...shalom is not just an absence of conflict; shalom is a positive thing; it is when everybody is webbed together into mutually edifying relationships. You and I are related; we are related to all people; we are related to the whole creation...to the non-human creation. Shalom is when everybody is webbed together with everybody else; and everybody is working hard to make everybody's existence better; and only Jesus can do that, and he can only do that, as we hear in Isaiah 53, through his own suffering...through his taking on himself the punishment *our* sin deserves.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, it says in Isaiah 53: ⁴Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. ⁵But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

So we see in that situation where Christ is the atoning sacrifice that actually brings peace between God and people when we confess our sins and when we ask him to forgive us for those things.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is Christ's suffering for us...it is Christ taking the punishment we deserve, that brings us peace...that brings us that sense of shalom, because it reconciles us to God; and again, you are not going to have shalom...you are not going to have true lasting peace unless everybody's relationships are restored, starting with our relationship with our Creator God, and that is what Jesus brings; and he brings us peace. Maybe we can listen to these words from the New Testament this time, from Ephesians Chapter 2: ¹⁴For he (Jesus) himself is our peace, who had made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two thus making peace, ¹⁶and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. ¹⁹Consequently, (therefore) we are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the [chief] cornerstone.

So, there we've got it from Paul...peace, peace, peace. That is what the work of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, has established.

DARRELL DELANEY

And because he is the Prince of Peace, we now have a different relationship with one another. I don't need to be divided from someone else just because they are a different race than me, a different culture than me, a different political affiliation than I have, because Jesus Christ is now the bond. Our belief in Jesus makes us one. It doesn't erase who we are, but it also enhances our new humanity in him; and since we are now reconciled to God, we can have his power to help us reconcile to one another; and once we do that, we can do the cultural mandate that God gave Adam, which was to tend to the Garden...the creation...and be agents of transformation there, with recycling and things of that nature, to actually fulfill that call. So, I think that God is calling us to do these things, and even though they are not done perfectly, we still can work toward them today, and work inch by inch to that regard.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And so, coming up as we wrap up both this episode, and this series, we will think a little bit more about that...about being agents of renewal...agents of shalom already now. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and Scott, it has been a treasure and a fun thing to be able to explore this Advent season and the names of Jesus with you: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and now Prince of Peace.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And indeed, we can now go, as it is the time of Advent, but it is also the time of Christmas, and as we think about...as we wrap up this episode and series...thinking in this episode of the Prince of Peace, we have this familiar story in Luke Chapter 2: In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ²(This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³And everyone went to their own town to register. ⁴So Joseph went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

DARRELL DELANEY

⁸And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks by night. ⁹An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shown around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, Jesus is no sooner born, Darrell, and what is the first message that the angels bring? Peace on earth. Jesus is indeed the Prince of Peace that we read about all the way back hundreds of years before in Isaiah Chapter 9; and so, the first order of business in announcing the birth of God's Chosen One—of God's Messiah—is that he is going to bring peace on earth to those on whom his favor rests.

It is interesting, Darrell, and we maybe have noted this before: the first people to whom that message was proclaimed were not the people whose names head the chapter...Caesar Augustus and Quirinius...and you know, we could add King Herod or Pontius Pilate. No, no, no; the message of peace comes to people who maybe need it the most; you know, lowly, poor, impoverished shepherds who lived on the margins of society; whose lives themselves probably bore the marks of our societal brokenness and fragmentation. They are the people who need to know shalom...shalom has been born.

DARRELL DELANEY

If you think about where we are in the scriptures, if this happens in the book of Luke—the New Testament—if you think about that one page between the last book in Malachi and the first book in Matthew, there are about four hundred years of silence where God hasn't spoken anything; and so, this address of God saying: I am going to bring in peace as one of the first things that I tell you about what is happening, is actually something that they could look forward to as refreshing and as encouraging; and he is actually letting that word be made known that Jesus is the Prince of Peace in the midst of their situation.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And this is good news: The Messiah has come; and it is good news. Indeed, you know, the season of Advent that we have been going through recently that leads up to Christmas...advent means arrival...it means arrival. Advent is a time to prepare spiritually to celebrate again the birth of God's Messiah...the birth of God's Son; but Darrell, you know, in the tradition of the Church, Advent always has two foci. We focus on the first Advent, in Bethlehem, which we just read about in Luke 2; but we are also supposed to think about the second Advent...the Second Coming...that hasn't happened yet, but that when Jesus comes and fully returns to bring his full justice and his full shalom forever.

DARRELL DELANEY

When I think of shalom, Scott, we talked about it a lot in this episode, I just think about how when his kingdom has finally come in its fullness, there will be nothing missing, nothing broken, and everyone will have everything that they need. Everyone will be able to share and live... So, there was a glimpse of that in Acts 2, but this will be the full manifestation of it, and we are all looking forward to that time, where there will be no more crying, no more sickness, no more pain, no more discrimination, no more judgment, no more racism and those things; but there will be actually a fellowship that is perfect between God and humanity, between people and each other, and then also with creation.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But that is not pie in the sky. It is not here yet, right? We live in the already and the not yet; but Darrell, this whole idea of Christ bringing shalom, that he is the Prince of Peace, that is not just something that we sit back and wait for God to do it all, you know, when Jesus comes again. No; we are called to lean into that. We are children of God, as we reflected, particularly in the previous program in this series...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

When we thought about the Everlasting Father. We are children of God. Romans 8 tells us the whole creation is groaning—yearning—to see the children of God revealed; but we are called to be agents of renewal right now, right? You know, John the Baptist's big job was to point to Jesus. That is what our job is; to point to the kingdom; to point to the shalom that is already coming...it has already begun breaking in...and it is our job now, Darrell, to live as agents of renewal in this world. We are agents of shalom, and we are called to fight against everything in our lives, and in the church even, and in society that fights against the coming of shalom.

DARRELL DELANEY

I believe that if we take to heart the fact that we are witnesses to what Jesus has done and who he is, and the fact that 2 Corinthians 5 calls us ministers of reconciliation, then we can live into our true calling, which is to represent Jesus here; and if he walked around and showed peace in the way he lived and the way he treated people, I think that that is what we are called to do as we imitate him; and that his Spirit empowers us to live in a way that is the peacemakers. Just like you said about those in the Beatitudes: Blessed are the peacemakers, for theirs is the kingdom of God. We are called to be peacemakers; we are called to live into what that means; and it is exciting that he empowers us to do so.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And in that Ephesians 2 passage that we looked at just a little while ago on this program: (verse 14) Christ broke down the dividing wall of hostility. Darrell, there are so many dividing walls of hostility still in the world. There is racism, there is bigotry, there is sexism, there is discrimination of all kinds; people against people; the dividing walls of hostility are run right through the center of so much of our society; right through the center of our cities; it is our job to call out that that is wrong; that we are called to break down the barriers and to become one, across racial lines, ethnic lines, socioeconomic lines, all lines. We are called to be one.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, even though we are called to do these things, we want to make sure that we remember we have the help from the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace, who can guide us into this new humanity together; and may these words encourage you and keep you in perfect peace. Thanks be to God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Darrell Delaney. We hope you will join us again next time as we continue to dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives.

Connect with us at groundworkonline.com. Share what *Groundwork* means to you, and make suggestions for what you would like to hear discussed next on *Groundwork*.

DARRELL DELANEY

Groundwork is a listener supported program produced by ReFrame Ministries. Visit reframeministries.org for more information.

***Correction:** In the audio of this episode, host Scott Hoezee misspeaks and says "Sunday," when he meant to say "Sabbath."

<https://groundworkonline.com/episodes/jesus-our-prince-of-peace>

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