

# *Jesus* : The Prince of Peace

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent: December 19, 2010

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Welcome to this Sunday before Christmas. The season of Peace and Joy. How are you doing on the Peace and Joy thermometer?

(Story: of Christmas)

This Advent season we have been focused in the Old Testament. Looking at images that the prophets and the writers of that portion of the Bible have left us, that speak of the coming Messiah, Emmanuel.

Today the last of these images in the Old Testament before Christmas Eve when we move into the New Testament comes from the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah was what scholars call a major prophet in the Old Testament, primarily because of the length of his book.

He ministered roughly from 740BC to 700BC during a time in Israel's history of great intensity and upheaval. The nation was divided, literally into a Northern and Southern Kingdom. Isaiah was a prophet to the Southern Kingdom.

In the middle of his ministry, a neighboring country destroys one of the Kingdoms and but for an act of God, almost destroys the other Kingdom.

In the middle of this turmoil, Isaiah steps forward as a significant voice of his time. He tells both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of imminent disaster unless they turn around and return to God. Isaiah talks to King Ahaz – the King of the Southern Kingdom and tells him to seek God and ask for a sign, the King refuses to ask God for a sign.

Then Isaiah says, “God will give you a sign anyway... and Chapter 7:14, quotes Isaiah as saying “the virgin will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel”

In chapter 9 Isaiah further describes this child, and in reading this description, two words emerged for me Abound and Abide. Isaiah was describing a person who knew how to

- Abound meaning take on the responsibilities of life and in the midst of all of the intensity and still prevail,
- and a leader who knew how to Abide in the presence of the Lord.

He was calling Israel to

Following Someone Who Can Abound and Abide

*“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.”*

*Isaiah 9:6-7*

When God begins to move whether in a nation or a church, or a family or even a person;

It is not often peaceful, in fact, most of the time God's movement is associated with a lot of upheaval and intensity, just like the conditions in Israel when this prophesy was spoken.

In this prophesy we have these two very distinct pictures,

1. The first image is of a person born among us who will be able to carry the weight of responsibility and intensity, *and the government will be on his shoulders, And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father...* All of these images speak of weight and responsibility of life. What I am calling **Abounding**
2. The second image is that of peace, *Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.* This is practically polar opposite, no weight, no stress, something far different than all the weight and responsibility. What I am calling **Abiding**

So it has got me wrestling with some things, Is it possible to Abound and Abide? When it is not intense, it really doesn't matter, its all theory. But when life is intense, you have to ask yourself, Is it possible to walk in the spirit, Abide in the presence of the Lord and Abound in the work of the Lord, same time, same body.

So let's take a quick look at these 2 images captured here by Isaiah

**Abound: to have a full life**

With all of its victories and all of its weight and responsibilities. What I am talking about here is easy to relate to. It is the stuff that makes up our lives. From the business deals and budgets at our work, to the pulling off of a great holiday dinner, from the meetings and decisions to the reading of bedtime stories. It is the things that make life full. The image here is that Immanuel (this child born to us) would be one who would handle the intensity of a full life perfectly.

I believe this an important distinction to look at right now because as we move forward in ministry and our lives, I begin to hear, maybe you do to "Things are hard." When it comes to people moving forward with things they believe God is calling them to do with their life. I will hear "This is hard".

Have you ever heard this? And perhaps found yourself thinking, here this person is, they really have a great life, yes it is intense but everything out of their mouth is letting everyone else know Life is hard. I don't know about you but when a ministry leader comes to me and says "This is Hard, I find myself thinking of a line from an old country song, "Here's a quarter call someone who cares.". You know what I mean, Life is hard, to abound, to take on responsibility and do something well, is hard. It's like with people like that, you know, you want to say, "The clue phone is ringing and it's for you". Yes life is hard, ministry is hard. We are battling the 2<sup>nd</sup> most powerful force in the universe, and we are wanting to take territory away from Him and claim it for the Kingdom of God. It's going to be hard.

Jesus took spikes and a spear for his mission, the disciples died for this. I think that qualifies in the 'Hard' category.

Paul said it this way

*"For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world."*  
*Ephesians 6:12*

John said it this way

*“But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil.” 1 John 3:8b*

This describes this child born to us as battle ready. That life is hard is not a productive phrase for me, I don't know what that means, of course life is hard. What is more understandable when we are trying to imitate Christ is this.

### Is it Doable hard? Or is it Destructive Hard

If it is Doable hard, then I want to say Buck up. Look at the models of those who took Christ seriously, and through major hardships, and even facing death pushed on through. Look at Paul who was practically beaten from town to town, he said

*“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13*

The 2 most powerful forces in the cosmos are trying to destroy each other and we are caught up in the middle of it, we can expect a little resistance.

The world often looks at the church and just smurks because too often we are so quick to just throw in the towel on our mission.

Sometimes we get soft thinking and we need to push on through.

The other however is:

### Is it Destructive hard?

If the responsibility that has fallen to you is doable, then do it and do it with excellence, but if it is destructive, now that is a whole other story.

Sometimes we fall into patterns of living when we are trying to Abound that become damaging, and Hard becomes destructive.

When a person begins to experience Spiritual disillusionment, Physical Deterioration, or Relational Damage.

It may be due to any number of things:

- An unrealistic pace of life
- Perhaps a scope of responsibility that has over loaded you
- Maybe you are on a Dyfunctional Team for too long
- Or you have been working outside your giftedness or passion for too long

When these kinds of occurrences take place it is not a sign of courage to keep going. This is not the time to just Buck up. It is time for a Big Time Out

Pushing ourselves beyond our limits is as much a sin as any other because it breaks our partnership with God. Here is how Paul put it.

*“ So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.” Romans 8:6*

If you find your self in this kind of place, then take that time out, realize that you have crossed the line from Doable Hard to Destructive Hard and you are living only one side of the equation when it comes to Christ. You are trying to live a life that only focuses on Abounding. The other side is to;

### Abide: To remain; to reside

1. I want you to stop right now and ask yourself, do you know how to Abide in Christ?....
2. Do you know how to let yourself simply come before God and be His.....

I learned how to Abide from watching my Grandmother. This woman knew the Prince of Peace. She lived in the house I grew up in and she had an Old Hickory rocking chair and years after she died as a teenage I would sit in that rocking chair and remember how I would watch her rock and look out the window and read her bible and ask me about my day. She knew how to remain – to reside in the presence of the Lord and do nothing but listen for the sound of his voice.

Was she productive? I say yes and Jesus would agree, in the Upper room at the last supper he said to his men

*“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”* *John 15:5*

There were 2 sides to Jesus. He certainly Abounded. He started a ministry with 12 men and some women that has lasted 2000 years and is still growing. He knew how to Abound, but he also knew how to Abide – to remain in the father’s presence. In fact, in his view if you couldn’t Abide then, in his eyes you were not accomplishing anything, and He taught his followers to do the same.

*“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”* *John 16:33*

He knew we would have trouble, but the secret to overcoming the trouble is to abide in him. I look around this room and I see you, we can’t afford to lose one of you. You are too valuable

We follow the one who could Abound, he certainly could, but Jesus’ signature move in times of intensity was to Abide in the presence of the Father. He knew how to do both and so must we if we intend to have any impact for the Kingdom.

*Jesus* is our Prince of Peace