"PEACE"

A Sermon By

Philip A. C. Clarke
"PEACE"

INTRODUCTION One of my favorite Peanuts cartoons has Lucy coming to Charlie Brown and saying "Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown. Since it's this time of the season, I think we ought to bury past differences and try to be kind". Charlie Brown asks, "Why does it just have to be this time of the season? Why can't it be all year long?" Lucy looks at him and exclaims, "What are you...some kind of fanatic?"

And one more bit of wisdom from Peanuts. Lucy has a score to settle with Charlie Brown. She chases him around, shouting, "I'll get you, Charlie Brown! I'll get you. And I'll knock your block off!"

And Charlie Brown, who has been running full speed, stops, turns around and says to Lucy,

"Wait a minute! Hold everything. We can't carry on like this! We have no right to act this way...the world is filled with problems...people hurting other people...people not understanding other people...now, if we as children can't solve what are relatively minor problems, how can we ever expect to...."

Whereupon Lucy interrupts Charlie Brown in mid-sentence, hitting him with a left to the jaw, knocking him out. Says Lucy,

"I had to hit him QUICK. He was beginning to make sense!"

Our theme for this Second Sunday in Advent is PEACE. Isaiah once wrote,

"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fattling together, and a little child shall lead them."

THE HORROR OF WAR Let's begin this morning by acknowledging the horror of war. It may be a bit of a sexist statement, but as soon as there were two young men on earth - two brothers - there was war and death. War has always been with us. The pages of the Old Testament are drenched with blood as are chronicles of nearly every culture on the face of this earth. We have the idea that war is deadly and awful because mankind now has such terribly destructive weapons. The truth is that war has always been deadly and awful. During the six bloodiest battles of the Civil War, an average of more than 30,000 men were killed or wounded in each of those battles.

Brother is still fighting brother. Blood is still being shed. Ironically, one of the hottest spots on earth is the very land of the birth of the Prince of Peace. The more things change, says the cynic, the more they stay the same. Another cynic remarked that peace is nothing more than that moment when the nations take time to reload.

I hope and pray with you that that is not true. There does appear to be light at the end of the tunnel right now. With the new leadership in Moscow,
the hopes of peoples are soaring. Let us hope and pray this Christmas that we will not be disappointed.

There also seems to be universal recognition that the stakes are higher than they have ever been before. Someone asked Albert Einstein one day what kind of weapons would be used in the Third World War. He answered,

"Well... I don't know, but I can tell you what they'll use in the fourth world war. They'll use rocks!"

We would rather not even think about war at Christmas time, but we need to acknowledge the horror of war. This is the first point of today's message.

WAR WAS NEVER GOD'S PLAN FOR HUMANITY

In the second place, we acknowledge that war was never God's plan for humanity. War is a product of man's sin, the sickness of a fallen world - a world, remember, for which Christ died. Never forget that!

A nervous citizen once asked a prominent scientist if it were possible for an atomic bomb to destroy the earth. "Suppose it does" replied the scientist with a shrug. "It isn't as if the earth were a major planet."

Perhaps in cosmic terms, the earth is only a tiny planet. But it is the planet to which God sent His Son. To use C. S. Lewis' words, "We are a God-visited planet". He has paid us the ultimate compliment of His presence in human terms. Certainly there is no greater blasphemy than the slaughter of persons whom Christ came into the world to save and there have been times in history when His followers have done the slaughtering. Who can forget at this special time of the year that at His birth the angels sang, "Peace on earth, good-will to men?" Christmas serves as an eternal reminder that war was never on God's agenda for humanity.

There was a famous incident amid the carnage of World War I that some of you may be familiar with as I am. 1914. Christmas Eve. All was quiet on France's Western Front, from the English Channel to the Swiss Alps. The war was only five months old, and approximately 800,000 men had been wounded or killed. But on that Christmas Eve something happened...something unique in the annals of man's bloody history. British soldiers raised "Merry Christmas" signs above their trenches. The hated Germans responded in kind. Soon carols were being heard from German and British trenches alike.

Christmas Day found unarmed soldiers from both sides meeting the enemy in the middle of no-man's land for song and conversation. Exchanging small gifts, they passed Christmas Day peacefully. This unusual outbreak of peace occurred for miles along the battlefront. At one spot, the British played soccer with the Germans, who won, they say, by the score of 3-2.

In some places, the spontaneous truce continued the next day as neither side was willing to fire the first shot. But finally, fighting was resumed when fresh troops arrived and the High Command of both armies ordered that further "informal understandings" with the enemy would be punishable as treason.

Christmas - a small pocket of sanity in an insane world. War is horrible. War has never been a part of God's plan for his children.
St. Paul in Second Corinthians, chapter five and verse eighteen tells us that "God was in Christ...reconciling the world unto Himself" and giving us the ministry of reconciliation. Jesus says to us in the Sermon on the Mount:

"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God."

And need I remind you, dear friends in Christ...that that is still our task. And sometimes we encounter that dream in the most unlikely places. Those of you who are "computer buffs" will appreciate a piece that appeared in the comic, Shoe. Santa is sitting in front of his computer typing the following sentiments:

"'Twas the morning of Christmas, and all through the house,
Not a creature was stirring, except Santa's mouse.
For there at his screen, the old fat man designed
The ultimate gift for a tattered mankind.
He squirmed and he puzzled as all through the night,
He polished the concept to get it just right.
The formula worked! The old guy was wired!
At last - PEACE ON EARTH...
(then a message came on the screen...)
STEP ONE: Some assembly required."

Peace, in other words, will never come easily. For the motivations of war are deeply etched in the soul of humanity. But, I believe, it can happen. It can happen when we acknowledge that all the people of our world have a right to be here. All the people of this world are created in the image of God. And by working together - and with the help of God - the world can yet be saved from ultimate destruction.

A LEGEND Perhaps you know the legend about the big tower of bells. Remember, there were 12 of them and each of them thought that he must be more important than the rest and so they had an argument on the subject. It went this way....

Number One Bell said, "Well, I'm Number One - of course. I'm the most important. I ring first and there can be no doubt about that. I'm Number One!"

But then Number Two interrupted, "No. No. No. One is nothing without Two".

Number Three chipped in rather angrily and said, "If you boys knew any theology, you would know this, of course. Three is the number that counts."

But before he had finished Number Four said, "With four bells you've got the perfect square. I must be the most important."

Then Five said, "But listen here...I'm one more than Four, so anything that Four claims, I can claim one extra."

Six, of course, had a great deal to say for himself as did Number Seven, Eight and Number Nine. By the time Ten, Eleven and Twelve spoke up, the dis-
cussion had gotten so heated up that the language used by Numbers Ten, Eleven and Twelve could not really bear repetition...not in church!

But they had not had the last word, because there was another present—the Spirit of the Tower he was often called—and the Spirit of the Tower spoke quietly at last and said to the twelve bells:

"STOP, my children. Be silent. You're all talking a great deal of nonsense, because the real point is that none of you is important at all by yourself. We're only here to be used by God and for the glory of God. Remember that.

And remember this, too. It's only when we all work together that we do any good to God or man. So...stop your talking....and RING all together and STRIKE all together at midnight...to the glory of God."

LET US PRAY

We pause for a moment on this, the Second Sunday of Advent, when we think of the peace that Jesus brings to us and to our world.

Let us be still and remember Him...how He healed and helped...loved and lifted those around Him. And how, as your spirit at work among us now, He still comes to us. Let us ring together and sing together in love and in harmony and make great music that will move the world from the horror of war to the peace that passes all human understanding, that comes from You, Our God. In the spirit of the Child of Bethlehem, the Prince of Peace, we pray. Amen.
PASTORAL PRAYER: December 10, 1989

O GOD, OUR FATHER...

Once again, you have brought us to this joyous season of the year when "there's a song in the air"...and the world around us begins to take on a new look.

Because of Bethlehem...because of the star and the stable...because of Mary and Joseph and the child in the manger, we know YOU as ONE who is not just "up there" or "out there"...beyond us...but rather as ONE who is very much a part of our life...here with us now...identified with infants and well as infinity.

LORD, we meditate this hour upon that ONE LIFE, born of Mary...and remembering how she "pondered" the meaning of that Holy Birth.

We, too, would "ponder" the meaning of that life in the days of this glad season...of what Christmas can and should mean to us.

We remember His lowly toil and His lonely way.
   His lifting words, His deeds of caring...
   His friendship for the defeated,
   His hope for the discouraged...

LET the carols take us back to see again the warmth and the wonder, the tenderness of Your coming.

LET our minds comprehend as never before the glory and the joy of the deep meaning of this divine event.

In His coming, You have shown us that Your love is for everyone.

   No one is too small or too weak.
   No one is too poor or too lowly...
   No one is too selfish or too sinful.

Melt any hostility we harbor as we meditate on the One who came to love and to forgive.

OPEN our hearts to Your coming, dear God, that you may come into our lives and make them new...then we shall be able to sing about ourselves:

"All is calm. All is bright".

In the spirit of the Child of Bethlehem, we pray.
I. GREETING / VISITORS

A. We greet the visitors in the congregation...delighted to have you here with us...and we hope we shall have the opportunity to greet you personally before you depart.

B. Be free in the sharing of your name with us...fill out...or sign one of the Guest Books. Join us downstairs for coffee. Worship with us on other Sundays...come and work with us in our programs of outreach.

C. We minister here in the name of Christ...have been doing so since 1837 - 152 years...and we greet all of you in the loving spirit of our Lord on this Second Sunday of Advent.

II. PARISH CONCERNS

A. The parish concerns are written up for you in the bulletin. Review them on your own noting the various meetings that are scheduled, the study opportunities offered, and occasions of fellowship with others to enjoy.

B. December's a busy month. Next Sunday is the children's gift of the Nativity pageant to us at the conclusion of the service. You won't want to miss it. Also the Adult Fellowship has a caroling party next Sunday in the late afternoon, Refreshments at the parsonage following.

C. Note the envelope for those wishing to remember loved ones with Christmas flowers...it's there in the pew and usually we receive a generous amount for the wreaths, trees and the poinsettias.

D. We'd like to "wrap-up" the canvass. We have some "90 and 9" members that we'd like to hear from regarding their giving plans for 1990 for the Church. New pledges are needed as well as renewals and increased pledges if we are to meet our goals of 2h0 pledges and $10,000.

III. OFFERING

A. Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive". In this spirit....
SECOND SUNDAY

Today is the Second Sunday in Advent. Each Sunday during Advent, the boys and girls of our Sunday School are joining us down here...to sing and to lead us in the lighting of the Advent candles.

Today, Marisa Lombardo and Mary Joyce are going to help us with the lighting of the first two candles - first, we relight the candle of hope and then we light the candle of peace.

Our second Advent banner is here on the wall reminding us of the peace of Advent. Jesus always brings hope and peace into our lives, boys and girls. Before we light the candles, the children are going to sing for us:

"Light the Advent Candle - TWO.
Think of humble shepherds,
Who filled with wonder at the sight,
Of the Child on Christmas night.

Candle, candle burning bright,
Shining in the cold winter night.
Candle, candle burning bright,
Fill our hearts with Christmas light."

THE SINGING AND THE LIGHTING

The boys and girls are going to gather on the steps, sing...and then Marisa and Mary will lead us in the candle-lighting...and then a second song...and a brief prayer.

PRAYER

"Fill our hearts, O God, with the Christmas lights of hope and peace. And help us to listen carefully that we may hear the song of the angels and see the light, once again, of the star of Bethlehem. Bless these children, dear Father, our most precious gifts. In the spirit of Christ." Amen.

RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS:

Page

CAROL: "There's a Song in the Air" (No. 249)
NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome into the membership of our Church the following persons. We trust that this fellowship will be a real blessing to them as it has been to us and we welcome the contributions which they will make to the richness of our Christian life together.


Miss Marcelline Zigue Colome Azani: 35 West 70th Street, New York, New York 10023. Reaffirmation of Faith. Protestant Church, Ivory Coast, Africa.


Miss Lisa Ingram: 35 48th Street, Weehawken, New Jersey 07087. Transfer of Church Letter. Epiphany United Methodist Church, Vienna, Virginia 22182.


Mrs. Marilyn McKeown - Funk: 1735 York Avenue, New York, New York 10128. Transfer of Church Letter. Kingwood United Methodist Church, Kingwood, Texas 77339.

Mr. Chester E. Naramore: 35 West 90th Street, Apt. 3K, New York, New York 10024. Transfer of Church Letter. First United Methodist Church, El Dorado, Arkansas 71730.


Miss Julie D. Predmore: 312 East 82nd Street, New York, New York 10028. Transfer of Church Letter. Ayersville United Methodist Church, Defiance, Ohio 43512.


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AN INVITATION

The coffee hour today is in honor of our new members. We invite you to join us downstairs in the Russell Room following the service to add your word of welcome to our newest members.

Pictures of the new members will be taken. These will appear on the Russell Room bulletin board next Sunday. We suggest that you wear your name tag and make a point of introducing yourself to those who have joined the Church this morning.

Thank you.

The Membership Committee
Park Avenue United Methodist Church
December 10, 1989
ANTHEM: "Fecit Potentiam"

"He hath showed strength with His arm and scattered the proud."

ANTHEM: "Et Misericordia"

"And He showeth mercy to them that fear Him throughout all generations."

ORGAN POSTLUDE

The organ postlude - a final offering of our praise to God - is played after the Benediction. Time permitting, we invite you to share in the beauty of it.

FOR THOSE WHO SING

New members are always welcome to audition to sing in the Choir. Rehearsals are held on Wednesday evening at 6:15 pm.

HANDEL'S MESSIAH

The Oratorio Society of New York under the direction of Lyndon Woodside will present Handel's Messiah on Tuesday evening, December 19th, at Carnegie Hall at 8 pm. Plan to include this performance of the Messiah as a part of your Christmas.

PICK UP YOUR COPY

Be sure to pick up your copy of the December issue of our monthly news sheet, "A Word In Edgeways". Copies are by the door in the narthex as well as on the table in the downstairs Russell Room.

THE ADVENT WREATH

The Advent Wreath with its four red candles is one of the traditions of the Christmas Season. Our Advent Wreath - made possible through the kindness of one of our members - is on the chancel steps.

Today, on the Second Sunday of Advent, we light the second candle - the Candle of Peace. Today's candle lighters are Marisa Lombardo and Mary Joyce.

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS

Those wishing to give to the fund for Christmas flowers in the church are invited to use the envelope in the pew.

"HOUNDS OF HEAVEN"

The "Hounds of Heaven" meet on Tuesday evening at 6:30 in Fellowship Hall. The "Hounds" have started a new six-week study based on The Unsettling Season by Donald J. Shelby. Mary Lou Risley will be leading the class in the weeks ahead. New friends are always welcome; old ones, too!

ALDERSGATE CLASS

The Adlersgate Class meets on Wednesday evening at 7:30 pm in Fellowship Hall. Charles Wire is leading the class in an overview of the New Testament.

YOU CAN'T GO WRONG

See Dee Schaffield for your one pound bag ($6.00) of delicious holiday pecans.
MEETINGS THIS WEEK

Both the Education Committee and the Finance Committee will be meeting this coming Thursday evening, The Finance Committee will meet at 7:30 pm in the Russell Room. The Education Committee will meet at the same hour in the lounge area of Fellowship Hall. Both are very important meetings and all members are urged to be present.

NEXT SUNDAY

The children of our Sunday School will offer their presentation of the Nativity at the conclusion of next Sunday's service. The party for the children will follow in the Russell Room.

The Adult Fellowship Christmas Carolling outing will take place next Sunday in the early evening and will be followed by hot chocolate at the parsonage.

A SATURDAY FEEDING PROGRAM

Volunteers are needed for the December Saturdays for the Feeding Program for the Homeless. Be in touch with Janet Ernst if you can lend a hand (288-6936, evenings). It takes place from 1:30 to 3:30 at the Par Avenue Christian Church, 85th Street and Park Avenue.

THE NINETY AND NINE

The 1990 Financial Canvass continues. Pledge cards are still being received in the Church office. To date, 143 pledges totalling $103,757 have been gratefully received. Our goal is 240 pledges and $140,000.

If you're one of the "97" who has not yet pledged, may we invite you to consider doing so today. We'd like to "wrap up" the Canvass as soon as possible. Pledge cards are available in the narthex.
SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT  
December 10, 1989

ORDER OF WORSHIP  
11 A.M.

ORGAN  
"Andante"  
Vivaldi

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN NO. 211 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (Verses 1, 5, 6, 7)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (seated)

Lord, forgive the dimness of our sight and the good we do not see; the quickness of our tongues and the harm we work on others through intemperate speech; the heaviness of our hands, so slow to help; the dullness of our hearts, so reluctant to believe. Forgive us for coming to terms with an age that has so little time for Thee; and for starving our souls in the pursuit of goals and prizes that are here today and gone tomorrow. We believe that thou art able to forgive. Dear God, forgive us now, as on Thy name we call. Amen.

SILENT MEDITATION - WORDS OF ASSURANCE - LORD'S PRAYER

A SONG BY THE CHILDREN

LIGHTING OF THE SECOND ADVENT CANDLE

RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS (Page 48)

ANTHEM  
"Fecit Potentiam"  
Vivaldi

SCRIPTURE  
Isaiah 11: 1 - 10  
Page 595

PASTORAL PRAYER

PARISH CONCERNS

ANTHEM  
"Et Misericordia"  
Vivaldi

PRESENTATION OF THE OFFERING WITH THE DOXOLOGY

HYMN NO. 248 "On This Day Earth Shall Ring"

SERMON  
"Peace"  
Mr. Clarke

HYMN NO. 238 "Angels We Have Heard On High"

BENEDICTION

ORGAN  
"Trumpet Voluntary"  
Purcell

LAY READER

We welcome Richard Bates to the lectern today. A native of Illinois with an MBA from the University of Michigan, Richmond is an Investment Analyst for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. Here in the Church he serves on the Finance Committee, the Outreach Committee, is an usher and is also the Treasurer of the Church.

ALTAR FLOWERS

The flowers on the altar today are given by Cary Danford in loving memory of her father, Edward Danford and grandfather, William B. Parkhill.

GREETERS AND USHERS

The greeters today are Nancy Nyquist and Lynn Clarke. The ushers are Susan Langley, Ann and Gordon Bryant, Cary Danford, Michael Hajek and Al Thomas.

AN INVITATION

Coffee and tea will be served in the Russell Room following the service. Members and friends are invited to share in these moments of warmth made possible for us today by Mary Lou Risley, Jane Chaney, Elizabeth Kashey, Marlene Mare and Donna and Bruce Evans.

CHURCH SCHOOL AND NURSERY CARE

Sessions of Church School for children are offered Sunday mornings from ten-thirty to twelve. Nursery care for infants and toddlers is available on the fourth floor in the Day School Room.

ADULT BIBLE CLASS

The Adult Bible Class meets on Sunday morning at 9:30 in Fellowship Hall. Janet Ernst is leading the class in a study of the book of Daniel. All are welcome.