

Living At Peace in the Present

Luke 3:1-14

Introduction

I love superhero movies. There, I said it. Now you know, your pastor is a big kid. My favorites are the ones about Marvel comics characters, especially the *Avengers* movies. They have such a great assortment of types of hero. Some are demi-gods, some are genetically altered, some are chemically enhanced, and others just have uncanny abilities. Each are heroes in their own right. But they have so much more strength when they work together. I liked the last two movies the best—*Infinity Wars* and *Endgame*. What made those the best was Thanos, the villain. A common law in Superhero movies is, “The stronger the villain, the greater the conflict. The greater the conflict, the better the movie.”

Conflict—Not Our Natural State

All stories have one form of conflict or another. Without conflict, a story wouldn’t really be a story. And with all the conflict around us in the world today, one might think that conflict is a natural part of life. But that’s just not so. While it may make the story interesting, conflict is not natural to us. In real life, it makes us uncomfortable at the least. We were made to live in peace, not conflict. Conflict often leads to violence, crime, and the possibility of war. In 1914, Gavrilo Princip a Bosnian Serb, had Ferdinand, the Archduke of Hungary assassinated. The tense situation escalated into open warfare between these two countries. Then their allies joined in the fray, culminating in WWI, where more than 8 million people were killed in combat.

Sin—The Source of Conflict

What is the source of conflict? That’s sort of like asking, “Who started the Hatfield-McCoy feud?” When two people are in conflict, they can each tell you how the other one was to blame. It reminds us of chapter three of *Genesis*, where God confronts Adam about eating the forbidden fruit. Adam blames Eve and Eve passes the buck to the serpent. But that’s as far as it could go, for Satan was speaking through the serpent. He is the true source of conflict, for he is the source of original sin. So, whether it comes from the devil, the fallen world, or our own sin nature, the source of all conflict is sin. To live in peace, we must attack conflict at the source. Somehow, we must get rid of sin.

Salvation—The Antidote for Sin

Where we read, *All flesh shall see the salvation of God (Luke 3:6)*, Augustine says that it could read, “All flesh shall see the Christ of God.” For, Christ is obviously the Salvation of God. Christ is the Answer because He, and only He, offers forgiveness of sins. Through His broken body and shed blood, our sins are removed; the source of conflict is taken away. Forgiveness gives peace because, by taking away sin, it breaks the cycle of conflict. It takes two forces to make conflict. When one is removed, there is no more conflict.

Peace At Last!

All flesh shall see Him also reminds us of *Philippians 2:11* (Read *Philippians 2:6-11*). That “therefore” tells us that the Father exalted Jesus because He emptied Himself, took on the form of a

servant, and was obedient to death on a cross. Everyone will see Him when He returns in glory. That's when every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord. On that day perfect peace will be restored.

Peace Now

But what about now? Can we have peace now in this fallen world? "Advent" means "He comes." Not "He came" or "He will come." Advent is about looking to the past and preparing for Christmas. It's also about looking to the future and Christ's second coming. However, the color is blue, the color of royalty and the sky. Advent is looking up, looking up to the King, for He comes. As Jesus ascended bodily to heaven, He said, "*I am with you always, to the end of the age*" (**Matthew 28:20**). That wasn't like when people were saying, "We're in this together." That was just spiritual solidarity. He is really with us as He comes to us in the means of grace. He comes to us when we hear the Word and, bodily, when we receive the bread and wine, bringing us forgiveness of sins and peace.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
