

Advent: Prince of Peace

Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier

Isaiah 9:6

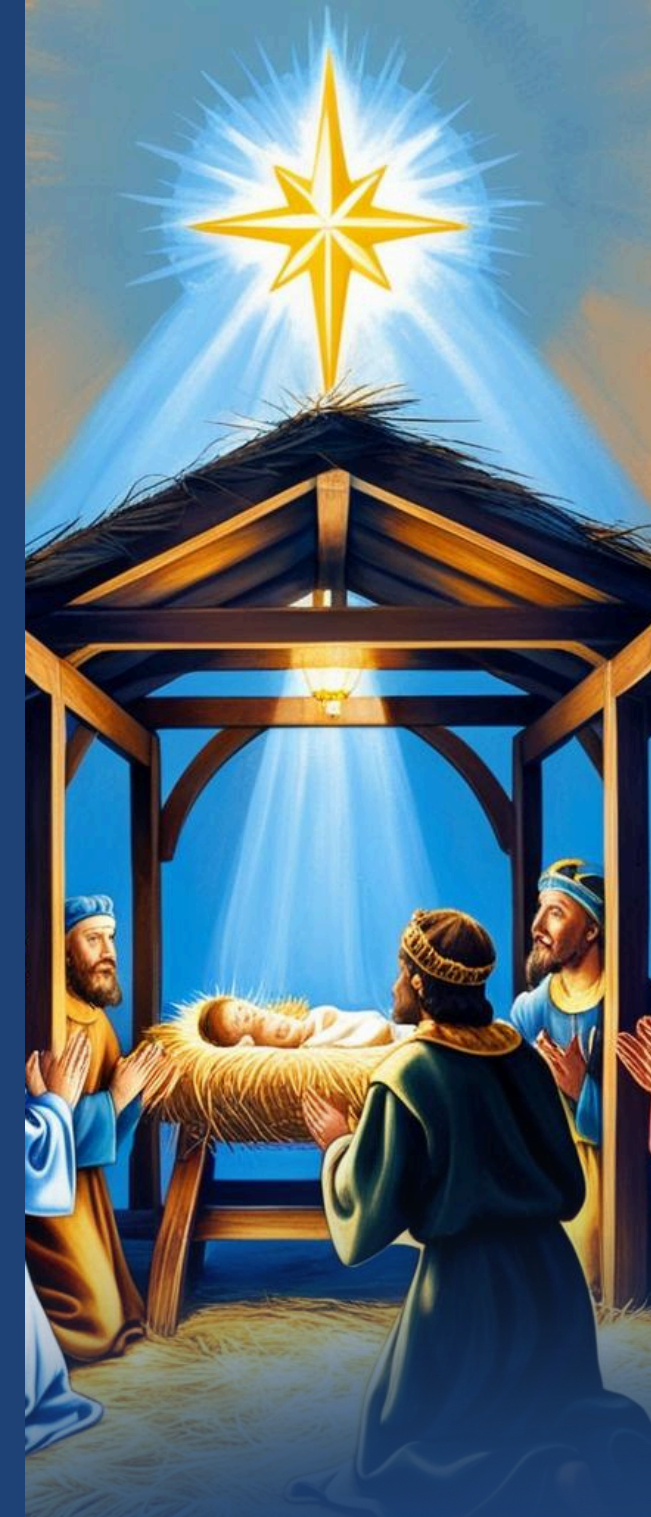
***“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace”***

Prince of peace is one of the names of the Messiah who comes as the fulfillment of the promise of God. Those of his time believed that this meant that he came to be an earthly ruler and as such to bring peace between nations. Yet during his ministry, after his death and resurrection we still see wars and rumors of wars and actually this upheaval between nations is a sign of his approaching second coming.

In our own relationships we find that peace is not always possible. Some are still reeling after the elections for we believed that we had the power to create a world that would benefit us and not winning meant living in a world created by another. Tensions ran high because so much was at stake as we all thought we could be God by using our vote. Each side thought God made them right. What type of peace then is Jesus the prince of? Or, perhaps the question is, how does He bring such peace?

Psalms 25 tells us that *“He guides the humble to justice and teaches the humble his way...All the paths of the Lord are kindness and constancy.”* Peace therefore, begins as a result of our abiding in Christ. Isaiah tells us that *“He keeps in perfect peace those whose mind is stayed on God because they trust in God (Isa. 26:3).* Peace comes as we learn to be humble. Peace is a result of justice. Peace is a pathway. On this pathway we nurture faithful kindness. This is the pathway of the Lord. It is an expression of God’s love coming to us. In their announcement to the shepherds, the angels declared that peace and good will for all humanity had come (Luke 2:14).

The peace of Jesus is not dependent on external forces or states of the world but upon the truth of Emmanuel, God with us. Trust in God forms peace in us. *“The Lord is with you”* is a very powerful statement. It is one that throughout my life has held me and grounded me in the midst of the vulnerabilities and injustices of life. When my mother was dying of cancer and my grandmother, whose prayers as an intercessor healed people told us that God had not come to heal her daughter but would take her to be with him.



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However, she said that God would be with us to give us strength. God kept his promise and I remember having great peace at the gravesite at the age of 19.

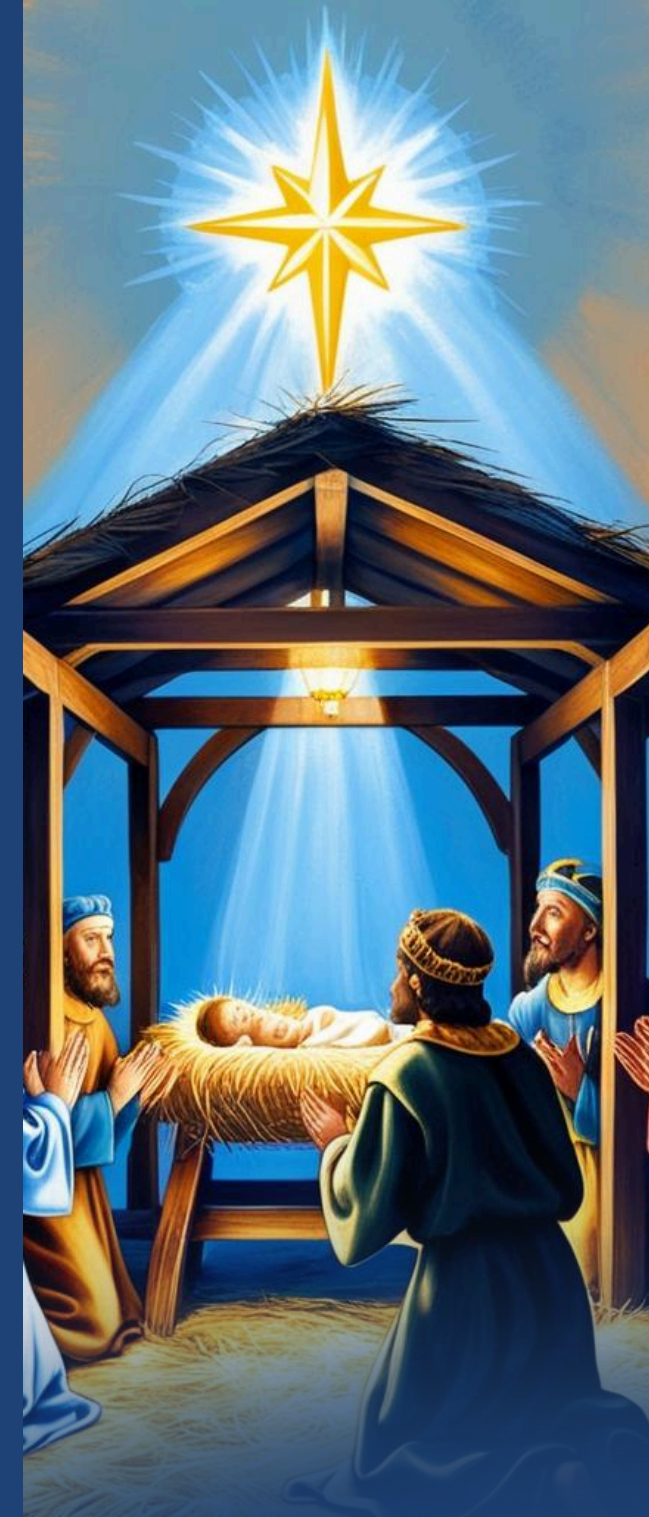
My daughter was kept out of the music department at her college because the chair of the department vetoed the vote of all the judges who found her performance excellent. His vote kept her out because he never let in black and brown people. God's peace came to me through righteous indignation and a strategy for justice that brought her into the department the next semester despite his racist ideals. Peace as justice. The Prince of Peace is coming!

Peace even comes through the pathway of depression which is the work of healing that slowly takes us through the wilderness that opens up into break through and newness of life. When I could not pray in the midst of depression, where my life needed to go somewhere else, I dared to believe that even when is so dark that I can't see God He was still there. I showed up to pray everyday and never uttered a word as others prayed all around me. I had no words except to say, "I'm here, I need you." No one prayed for me but the incense of those prayers all around me permeated my soul like when you are in a room full of cigarette smoke and when you leave even your underwear smells of cigarette. My soul smelled of the incense of the prayers. After months I once again had creativity and energy and I knew in my heart of hearts that God was with me. In your depression Emmanuel, God is with you. The Prince of Peace is with you!

Peace is not passive but the active work of God in the world. Peace is because we have community. I have you, you have me. We nurture peace by reaching out to each other rather than defriending each other. Humility is how God forms peace in and among us. Humility helps us respect and accept each other rather than blame each other for creating the world the other doesn't want or is afraid of. Humility brings us face to face to know one another more deeply and to discern the values of the basileia as disciples not tossed about by politicians and we can walk together in the midst of suffering. So that we can walk together, as disciples, we can seek to be faithful to the values of the basileia/reign of God.

We anticipate the coming of the Prince of Peace. The peace that safeguards our hearts, a defense against worries and anxieties that come when we look at the world. We abide in Jesus and He comes to us as the help, the trust in God that nurtures peace beyond understanding in the mist of trials and tribulations, the pathway to humility that forms the love of community, that nurtures peace. The Prince of Peace is coming!

Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier is an ordained minister of the American Baptist Churches. She is a practical theologian, author, and mentor to many. Her educational and pastoral career continues to leave its mark.



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