Sermon – Are We There Yet? – Peace

First of all, what is peace?

Well, peace may bring different things to mind for each person, but Wikipedia says **Peace** is a concept of societal friendship and harmony in the absence of hostility and violence. Psychological or inner peace, however, refers to a state of being internally or spiritually at peace, with sufficient knowledge and understanding to keep oneself calm in the face of apparent discord or stress. Being internally "at peace" is considered by many to be a healthy mental state and to be the opposite of feeling stressful, mentally anxious, or emotionally unstable. The psychological or inward achievement of "peace of mind" is often associated with bliss and happiness. Quite a concept at this time of year with less than four weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas!

I do believe peace is something we all want – both in society and in our minds. Sadly, as I was preparing this sermon, I received an alert about the terror attack on London Bridge in England. My first thought was, "when will this stop?". We as Christians believe it will come when Jesus returns. That is what Isaiah is telling us; he is describing a wonderful future of peace when instruments of war will become instruments of farming, when everyone will be taught God's laws and will obey them.

Isaiah is not saying probably, or maybe or perhaps, he is saying the time will come!

So, what do we do in the meantime? We cannot just sit around and wait for Jesus to act before we begin to obey him – we need to start now. Just as Judah was told in 2:5, we should walk in His light now. That is what the scripture in Matthew 24: 36 that Brian read was telling us. Do not procrastinate! Prepare! We can't keep sinning and think we will just decide to follow God at the end. We all have to act and take responsibility for our own spiritual journey now.

Recently, I have noticed ads for everything to be delivered to us – we do not have to move ourselves from our couches and La-Z-boy recliners! Someone will bring you whatever you need right to your door – groceries, medicine, books, even a Big Mac - MacDonald's to you. If Dunkin Donuts is not doing it yet, I am sure Grub Hub or one of those companies will bring you coffee and a donut just as you are rolling out of bed in the morning. Don't get me wrong, for people who have physical difficulties these delivery services are a blessing but for some of us, it is making us lazy – we do not have to do anything. Soon we will be able to wish it and it will be delivered.

What about your faith journey – you are on a journey, right? Or are you stagnant and does being a Christian mean you show up at 10:00am on Sunday and expect the sermon to fill you up for the week? Do you hear joys and concerns and bow your head for a couple of minutes for those raised in prayer and you are done – time for coffee and a snack then blast out of here in time to watch the Patriots? Well, no worries – they are not on until 8:20pm today, so I have lots of time to fill you up!!

A journey is a trip – it encompasses a destination and new experiences. What do you do when you are going on a trip?

- You decide where you want to go and how you are going to get there. You determine the items that are essential to take – map, snacks, etc.
- Are you the one who is responsible or are you going to just sit in the back seat, along for the ride? Just let someone determine where, how and why you are making this trip? Are you going to let someone else decide the best route, best places to visit at the destination, or do you want to choose the areas you want to explore?
- Are you just going along for the ride? Are you just marking time?

Here is breaking news: You have to take responsibility for your faith journey, for your spiritual growth. No one can do it for you. The sermon and hymns should inspire you to open your bible and read what the sermon was about. Pick a paragraph out of the readings and think about it and how it relates to your life. Take a copy of the sermon home, decide if you have the same understanding of the scriptures as the minister did. If you don't like to read, you can listen to podcasts, search YouTube for sermons, log on to biblegateway.com and have the bible read to you. Take time to pray – pray for peace in our country and in our world – it doesn't have to be a formal prayer, just a conversation with God. Give thanks for all we have, including freedom, freedom to worship in a country that does not threaten our lives because we believe in Jesus Christ. Bring Jesus into your life, don't just give him a head-nod and a *"whassup?"*.

You and I cannot make the whole world more peaceful, but we can begin by making peace within ourselves, our families, our friends, our neighbors and new people we meet. In the United States, there are 240 MILLION of us Christians! We have power or should I say, we should have power – power to unite and promote peace, to speak out against injustice – speak out against violence, bullying in our schools and online, local government and community priorities. We have voices – we need to use them!

Advent is a time of anticipation for something wonderful, something exciting and unimaginable that happened over two thousand years ago and something we are waiting for, that will change our world as we know it. As we wait, will you follow the advice in Luke 21:34-36,

34 "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness
and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, 35 like a trap. For it
will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be alert at all times, praying
that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand
before the Son of Man."

Or will you say, "Are we there yet?"