

Waiting for the Peace-Maker!  
Micah 5:2-5a

Little Edward Hicks was born in his grandfather's house in Bucks County Pennsylvania on April 4, 1780. Sadly, when he was just 18 months of age his beloved mother died and he was left in the care of Elizabeth Twining, a close friend of his deceased mother's. At the age of 13, Edward was apprenticed to some carriage makers where he learned the art of ornate carriage painting. As he grew to adulthood, he went astray, as many youths do, and became, in his own estimation, "...a weak, wayward young man ... exceedingly fond of singing, dancing, vain amusements, and the company of young people, and too often profanely swearing"<sup>1</sup>

Lacking any sense of inner peace, Edward began to attend Quaker meetings and became a Quaker Christian in 1803. Nine years later he was called to the Quaker ministry but ran into some difficulties as a minister since his practice of ornate painting was considered worldly by many in the Quaker community. Because of this, he gave it up for a time, but nearly ruined himself financially as a consequence. A few years later, in 1816, a close friend urged him to resume his work as an artist and painter, which he did.

And so it was, somewhere around 1820, Hicks painted his first of over 60 renditions of *The Peaceable Kingdom* based on the words of Isaiah 11:6-9. In that passage, the prophet Isaiah famously says: "The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." That is one of the loveliest pictures of peace in all of sacred literature – Hebrew, Christian, Muslim, or otherwise.

In one early version of Hicks' *Peaceable Kingdom*, we see a boy in the foreground surrounded by peaceful beasts and hugging a lion's neck, while in the background a group of American colonists meets with a band of Delaware Indians. Among the colonists is the great Quaker and founder of Pennsylvania – William Penn – signing a treaty of friendship with the Indians. According to the story, Penn said to the Indians, "We meet on the broad pathway of good faith and good-will; no advantage shall be taken on either side, but all shall be openness and love."<sup>2</sup> If he actually said that then it seems he had the spirit of the Peaceable Kingdom in his heart!

Now what might compel a man like Hicks to paint more than sixty version of *The Peaceable Kingdom* – most or all of which he simply gave away? I can think of nothing else but a love – love of God, a love for others, and a love of peace!

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Hicks. Published by Wikipedia. Located at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward\\_Hicks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Hicks).

<sup>2</sup> *The Peaceable Kingdom* lesson plan produced by The Philadelphia Museum of Arts. Located at: [http://hqcgdkb.philamuseum.org/doc\\_downloads/education/object\\_resources/56662.pdf](http://hqcgdkb.philamuseum.org/doc_downloads/education/object_resources/56662.pdf)

Well the prophet Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah's and he, too, foresaw a day when God would establish peace on earth and goodwill toward all. Micah puts it this way: "In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised up above the hills. Peoples shall stream to it, and many nations shall come and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken." (Micah 4:1-4) Wow! What a vision! Wouldn't you like to see that day come?

Well how does that peace come and who can make it happen? Our text tells the tale. In Micah 5:2-5, Micah foretells the coming of our Messiah, the Peace-Maker, "But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days...And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace." He shall be the one of peace! Indeed!

Well, as you know, Jesus was born in Bethlehem while the angels sang a little song saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." (Lk. 2:14 KJV) You see, Jesus was and is the Peace-Maker. He came to give us peace: peace with God, peace with others, peace within, and peace with all! When we put our faith in him, he sets us at peace with God and gives us peace within – calming our fears as we learn to trust him! And as we follow where he leads, he leads us in the way of peace – a way which seeks reconciliation with others and the peaceful restoration of God's good creation. So you see, the closer we are to him, the greater is our experience of, and our commitment to, this peace – this peace with God, peace with others, peace within, and peace with all!

My friends, Edward Hicks came to Christ as a troubled young man and found peace with God and peace within. He then painted more than 60 version of *The Peaceable Kingdom* reflecting his love of and his commitment to that vision of peace. I wonder, have you found peace with God and peace within through the Peace-Maker's ministry as you daily trust in him? And are you painting a world of peace by your works as you follow where he leads and wait for his second coming when he will come again to give us his everlasting peace? Won't you trust him and labor with him, now? If you do then you'll live with him in peace forever! For he is your Peace-Making Messiah! That's what we celebrate in this sacred season – that's who we celebrate in this sacred season. Amen!