

WE NEED PEACE, NOW MORE THAN EVER

Luke 2:8-20

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No Peace picture here

The false prophets in the time of Jeremiah kept proclaiming “Peace, peace” when there was no peace

The nation was about to fall to the Babylonians; people would be exiled; economy ruined

The image of a peaceful existence with prosperity in a land flowing with milk and honey, was becoming a distant memory from the past

As in Bible times, there is much world tension, much division, greed and simple hatred

And so just wishing for peace, or baselessly proclaiming it as the contemporaries of Jeremiah were doing, isn't going to achieve it

Brook picture here

Peace = the presence and experience of right relationships, the absence of conflict, contentment

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the angelic chorus announced his birth with a promise of “Peace on earth, goodwill to mankind”

You may well ask, where is the fulfillment of that promise today or at any point in world history

Treaties are made and then broken

War statistics

35 wars in our own nation's history

Civil War – 625,000 casualties (most of any)

Holocaust – maybe 11 million

Today we are plagued by acts of terrorism, random shootings, unending wars

Freedoms are compromised with security measures

There is a lot of tension in this world, and there always been

Absence of peace in our own society:

Crime – every day you hear of another shooting

Recently New York went a whole weekend without a fatal shooting – that was news

The antics of congress – no peace there; political division in families (holiday discussions)

Domestic violence – broken relationships

Stop the World picture here

It's really enough to make you bury your head in your hands and say, “Woe is us”

If that's all there is, if that's the way it's got to be, well, stop the world and let me get off!

But, it doesn't have to be that way for me or for you

What we need to do is look at peace in the context of an internal state, that is within ourselves as individuals rather than primarily seeking broader, world wide peace

We can and we should do all we can to obtain peace among nations and those efforts have saved

lives and prevented massive destruction - “Blessed are the peacemakers”

But the reality is that this sinful, imperfect world, will always be characterized by separation, mistrust, prejudice and animosity

World and domestic peace would be possible if we would heed the teachings of the “Prince of Peace”, Jesus, but so many will not **Love God and Others picture here**

The formula is there “Love God and love your neighbor as yourself”

But when the formula is compromised or rejected, it isn't going to work

If you want to bake a cake, you look at the recipe and if you follow it, you'll succeed

If you don't, it's going to flop

Jesus give us the formula – but what are we going to do with it?

Jesus Calms Storm picture here

Well, let's see what Jesus says about peace

Mark 4:39 – Jesus calms the storm

That storm was a real hurricane type of event; a natural phenomenon

There was no peace on Galilee that day, only turmoil and chaos

The disciples were helpless and in fear of losing their very lives

And into that tempest, Jesus reached out his hands over the waves and wind and commanded, "Peace! Be still!" and the wind ceased and there was great calm

The storm you find yourself in may not be weather related, but instead an upheaval of something significant in your life.

You may be as distressed as these fishermen were that day on Galilee
Jesus can and will step into your tempest and bring a great calm

In this same account the next thing Jesus asks the disciples is, "Why are you afraid?"

Have you no faith?" - and he would ask that same question of us

We need that faith to calm the storm – to bring about the peace we seek

Woman Healed picture here

Mark 5:34 - "Go in peace" following a healing

Here we have a story about a woman with a long term health problem – doctors couldn't help

She approached Jesus, not to ask anything, but simply to touch his garment believing that would be sufficient to heal her and it did

Jesus noticed that he had been so touched even in the midst of a crowd and said to

her,

"Your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your disease."

Notice again, the role of faith in finding the peace that is so elusive

Now, we need to sidetrack for just a moment here

Does this mean if one has sufficient faith they will be cured of any illness?

The answer to that would be "yes", but with some provision

- supernatural healing
- healing by the hand of a skilled physician (used and guided by God)
- natural healing from the miraculous design of our bodies
- an ability to live with the limitations or discomforts we may be facing (Paul)
- sometimes the ultimate answer to healing is transition to eternal life, truly free of pain and suffering – absolute peace

Peace is elusive in pain/suffering; when alleviated it is a peaceful feeling – sense of wellbeing

Divided picture here

Luke 12:51 – "Do you think that I have come to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division

This indicates the need for internal peace

Jesus recognized that those who follow him won't have it easy; there will be opposition

Even family members will be less than receptive when one turns their life to Jesus

And you can see how holding Christian values today can embroil you in controversy

But while the peace may be elusive with the surrounding world; it is possible within

Peace I Give picture here

John 14:27 - "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you"

This corresponds to that statement Jesus made about bringing division which is what the

world gives. Jesus instead, provides internal peace even as the world becomes more

and more bizarre all the time

Jesus Enters Upper Room picture here

John 20:19 ff – Jesus enters the upper room filled with fearful, anxious people and announces

“Peace be with you” (twice!)

When they believed Jesus to be gone from their lives and world, they were afraid
Maybe any one of them might be the next to be arrested and put to death
Where they had gone about teaching & preaching before, now they only wanted to hide
They felt alone and lost – Peace? There was no peace in that room; not until Jesus

came

in and gave them not only peace, but confidence and assurance as well

Going to Church picture here

The writings of Paul have helpful thoughts about finding peace as well

Ephesians 1:2 is the beginning of a letter from Paul.

First thing he says is, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” That peace results from a common bond of faith

When you come to church, you ought to find a place of acceptance and peace

A place where you can be yourself

A place apart from the stress of the everyday world

A place where you can find encouragement and support

A place where you can find assurance of salvation and the peace that results

from

that assurance, which so many do not have in their lives today

Fruits of the Spirit picture here

Galatians 5:22 – peace is a fruit of the Spirit

When we give our life to Christ we are given various spiritual gifts (discussed a few weeks ago), and accompanying that, what is termed “fruits of the spirit”

Fruits of the Spirit are things that result from that commitment

They include love, joy, PEACE (all Advent themes) plus patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control – all good things to have in our lives

All things that contribute to peaceful coexistence with others around us

None of us want to live in a state of turmoil, upheaval and tension

We want to live in harmony and peace and faith helps us accomplish that

Pray for Leaders picture here

1 Timothy 2:1-2 – a means of achieving peace is offered here in Paul's letter to Timothy

“I urge that supplication, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way.”

This would seem to be especially timely in our present time/place

I can't recall a time since the Vietnam War when our nation has been more divided

We are not at peace with ourselves

Paul would encourage us to sincerely pray for those in high positions, to be godly and respectful in every way – that is a quote

The result, according to Paul is quiet and peace – I for one, pledge to pray for that

I'm tired of being angry over current events

I'm tired of all the animosity, the disrespect, the name calling even in religious circles

If we, as Christians don't set the example, who on earth will? And if no one does, peace on earth, the peace we need now as much or more than

ever,

will continue to prove elusive

Peace on Earth picture

here

Christ came at Christmas as the Prince of Peace to bring “peace on earth, goodwill to mankind” and has provided the means to do just that – that we may know peace in our lives now, more than ever.