

## Peace on Earth

Isaiah 9:6

We sing a lot about peace, don't we? Never is that more obvious than in our familiar Christmas carols. For example, "Hark! the herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn king; peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled." Or, "It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold, 'peace on the earth, good will to men, from heaven's all gracious king.'"

"Peace on the earth, good will to men." But what is peace? And if that is the message of Christmas, then we have a problem —where is the peace? It certainly isn't in our country, not with democrats and republicans unable even to talk to each other with civil and polite language. Not with killings daily on the streets of our major cities. Not in families, where divorce is rampant, teenage rebellion the norm. And all too often, not even in the church. So where is peace to be found? Let's start with an even more basic question.

### I. WHAT IS PEACE?

There is a wonderful Hebrew word for peace, the word shalom. Still used as a personal greeting among Jews, and the English word peace is even used as a greeting by certain people today. But what does it mean. On the surface,

#### A. Peace is the truce which ends a war.

Peace is the state of rest at the end of a war. Peace is the absence of conflict, the end of the battle.

Peace is the result of a treaty which is signed between two nations, or the result of a reconciliation between two people. Peace means that a relationship has been restored.

Why is peace, even at this basic level, so elusive? Why do nations fight one another? Why do people fight and argue with one another? The answer is sin. The answer is that we live in a fallen world, we are fallen people. As Christians, sin still tempts us and we still give in. And that sin enslaves and controls those who are not Christians.

James 4:1-2 "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight."

That's why there is little peace, and so much conflict. Certainly, seeking the peace which will end those conflicts is a worthy goal, whether we are talking about two nations or two individuals.

But peace, shalom, goes much deeper than just a truce. Something much more meaningful involved. Something that goes deep into our hearts.

#### B. Peace is the health and wholeness which all men desire.

That is the real meaning of shalom. Wholeness, health, completeness, soundness, fullness.

And everyone is looking for this, in some way or another. Lots of words used for this concept today. Could be simple happiness. Or well-being. Psychological health. Self-esteem or self-worth. Well adjusted.

Because we are created in God's image, we human beings long for a sense of wholeness and a sense of completeness. We long for a sense of meaning and contentment. It's a huge concept. All of that is described by one simple Hebrew word,

shalom. Translated in English, peace.

And it can't be defined logically. Psychologists and psychiatrists can't really define it. Sociologists, philosophers, counselors, even preachers, can't define this sense of wholeness. Even the apostle Paul couldn't define it. He writes:

Phil. 4:6 "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Peace of God passes all understanding, you can't define it precisely. But every one of you knows what I'm talking about. The search for wholeness or completeness is part of our nature. And as Christians, we are intended to have that peace.

Col. 3:15 "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful."

Paul is not talking about a mere emotion, but this sense of wholeness. And that real peace is hard to find in this world. Jesus spoke these words with such an obvious truth:

John 16:33 "In the world you will have tribulation."

No one will argue against the truth of that statement. But Jesus said something else. He said,

John 16:33 "...but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

And he introduces that encouragement by saying this,  
John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace."

John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you;

not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

That answers our second question today.

## **II. WHERE IS PEACE FOUND?**

For many people, this is the appeal of the gospel. The gospel offers peace, the gospel offers wholeness, completeness, satisfaction, happiness.

There is only one place to find true peace. Jesus Christ. Not mere words or easy answers that you might expect to hear from a preacher. Not superficial. This is reality, this is life.

### **A. Jesus Christ is the only source of true peace.**

Eph. 2:14 "For he himself is our peace."

People look in lots of other places, though.

Illus: Augustine was one of the greatest leaders in the history of the Christian church. Lived around 400 AD. His story could be similar to many people today. He was raised by a godly mother named Monica. She was a devoted Christian mother. His father? Well, little is reported about him, other than he didn't share his wife's religion. He was an unbeliever.

Augustine was raised well, educated well, and trained well. But he spent his early adulthood searching. Intellectually, he gave up Christianity. He thought it was too simple for an educated man. He accepted the teachings of a false religion of the day, then gave that up, too. He became a skeptic, with an feeling of emptiness in his mind, not knowing what was true, and despaired of ever getting his problems solved. Morally, he gave up Christianity as well. He gave up the restrictions that God gives us as his moral law. He enjoyed a mistress, and had a son born

of that relationship, though he never married.

He searched for meaning. He searched for answers. No different from many young people today. But in the providence of God, Augustine came under the influence of a good teacher, an Italian bishop named Ambrose. At the age of 32, he received Jesus Christ as his savior and became a Christian. His mother died one year later, undoubtedly a happy woman.

Augustine wrote his own testimony in an autobiography entitled simply, "Confessions." He wrote of his own journey to find peace. He wrote, of himself, "O Lord, you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in you."

When he found Christ, he found peace. When he found peace, he found Christ. Jesus Christ is the only source of true peace.

Jesus is our peace, our wholeness. And Jesus is the one who brings us peace with God. Here, I'm talking about a personal reconciliation. Having peace with God means that we are no longer his enemies, the warfare has ended and the relationship is restored.

Let me remind you what had happened to that relationship between God and his people. Something happened a long time ago. Something happened when Adam and Eve were still alive. They had a perfect relationship with God, and with each other. But they sinned, they disobeyed God. And God had told them that if they sinned, they would surely die.

They became separated from God, and were driven out of the garden of Eden. They were condemned. All of their descendants inherited from them this condemnation.

Rom. 5:18 "The result of one trespass was condemnation for all men."

Eph. 2:1,3 "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins...All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath."

The universal problem of every single human being born is this, they are separated from God. Their relationship with God has been destroyed. And this is the promise of the gospel,

### **B. Jesus Christ obtained peace with God for his people.**

Col. 1:19 "For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. 21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight."

Rom. 5:1 "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand."

Further explanation of that peace.

Rom. 5:6 "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more,

having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”

We can rejoice because we have been reconciled to God. Jesus Christ is the prince of peace. He is the one who has obtained peace for his people. And,

**C. Jesus Christ rules his kingdom with perfect peace.**  
v.7

Let me ask you a question. Is that true now, in the present time? Or does it refer to a future kingdom? My answer? YES. Both are true.

Yes, it does certainly refer to a future kingdom, but not a millennium! Rather, an eternity! A kingdom of peace that will last forever and ever. The throne of David is the throne of God. Jesus will sit on that throne in the new Jerusalem, the new heavens and the new earth. Forever. In perfect peace. That is what is waiting for us in eternity.

But what about now? Is Jesus Christ ruling his kingdom now, with perfect peace? The answer is yes.

Zech. 9:9 “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey. 10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.”

When did that rule begin? Why, at his resurrection and ascension. Where is Jesus Christ, the prince of peace now? He

is not in exile, waiting for the right moment to return. He is on the throne, the throne of David, which is the throne of God. He is seated at the right hand of God the Father. He is, even now, even today, the prince of peace.

Acts 2:29 “Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, 31 he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.”

Acts 2:32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. 33 Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. 34 “For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, 35 Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.” ’ 36 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Jesus Christ is the king of peace today. He rules that kingdom today. Not a physical kingdom, nor a particular kingdom or nation of this world. So when Jesus was asked when the kingdom of God would come, he replied, “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you.” And that kingdom of Jesus, that kingdom that is within you, is the kingdom of peace.

So I would ask, Do you have peace with God today? Do have the assurance that your relationship with God is perfectly

reconciled, and that you are no longer subject to his wrath and condemnation? Do you know that the punishment for your sins was paid by Jesus Christ at the cross?

If you don't know those things, then you ought to respond the same way that the people did when they heard Peter's sermon in Acts 2.

Acts 2:37 "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" 38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." 40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."

That is always to be the message of the gospel. It is the message of the prince of peace. Then, one final question.

### **III. HOW IS PEACE MAINTAINED?**

You fight for it. You have to work at it.

v.7 "Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice."

So peace is established by justice and righteousness. Without those things in your life, there will be no peace, because,

#### **A. Disobedience destroys peace.**

Simple truth, extremely profound.

Isa. 48:22 "There is no peace," says the LORD, "for the wicked."

What does that mean? Think about it in practical, day to day

terms. No peace is promised to those who refuse to obey God and walk in his ways!

Isa. 48:17-18 "This is what the LORD says-- your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea."

Isa. 57:21 "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

Isa. 59:7-8 "Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood. Their thoughts are evil thoughts; ruin and destruction mark their ways. The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths. They have turned them into crooked roads; no one who walks in them will know peace."

Jer. 6:13-14 "From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace."

Terrible problem in our day. The problem of those who proclaim peace, when there is no peace. There is no peace for the wicked. There is no peace unless there is righteousness. It seems that everyone in this part of the country assumes God's favor is upon them, and presumes that everything will be all right. But without righteousness and obedience, they deceive themselves.

Jer. 8:9-11 The wise will be put to shame; they will be dismayed and trapped. Since they have rejected the word of the LORD, what kind of wisdom do they have? Therefore I will give their wives to other men and their fields to new owners. From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. They dress the wound of my people as

though it were not serious. "Peace, peace," they say, when there is no peace.

The problem today is serious. The lack of righteousness and obedience all around us is appalling, and the disobedience of God's people in the church can be even more appalling. We can't put on band-aids when there are serious internal injuries. And we must not proclaim peace, peace when there is no peace.

To maintain peace in your life, there must be a commitment to obedience, because disobedience to God's laws will destroy your peace. But, to emphasize the opposite as well,

### **B. Personal righteousness brings peace.**

We don't talk enough about personal righteousness. We don't talk enough about doing battle with sin in our daily lives. But God does talk about it. That battle is necessary to obtain peace.

Isa. 26:3 "You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You. 4 Trust in the Lord forever, For in Yah, the Lord, is everlasting strength."

Isa. 32:17 The work of righteousness will be peace, And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. 18 My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, In secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

That's peace. It's source is Jesus Christ, and the experience of peace is the result, the fruit, of righteousness. The effect of that pursuit of righteousness will be quietness and confidence, assurance, forever. In other words, peace. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled. Jesus promised that in the sermon on the mount.

I grieve for those who search for peace and happiness in all

the wrong places. I grieve for those who search for wholeness and satisfaction in life through the pleasures of this world. They won't be filled. They won't ever be satisfied. Because peace with God begins with faith, faith in Jesus Christ, the simple act of faith and repentance, receiving Jesus Christ into your heart and surrendering your life to him. And then true peace is maintained and preserved when there is, in your daily life, above all else, a hunger and a thirst for righteousness.

Because Jesus is the prince of peace. That sense of wellness and wholeness and completeness in your soul, which comes from a restored relationship with God, is the peace that surpasses all understanding.

May that peace be yours, may God give you that peace, you who believe in the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the prince of peace.