

Peace on Earth

DT- True peace can only be found in the source of peace.

This is the 4th week of Advent. Next Sunday is Christmas Day if you can believe that. Today we lit the angels candle of peace so of course we will be talking about the peace that God gave us through his son Jesus Christ. Today I will be asking 2 questions and making one proclamation about this peace that God has given to us. Let's pray so we can get started.

PRAY

When you think of peace, one of the things that may eventually pop into your head is the Nobel Peace Prize that is awarded each year to a particular person anywhere in the world that is somehow moving our world away from violence and closer to peace. This year's winner was a human rights activists from Belarus, Ales Bialiatski. You may have never heard of him.

The Nobel Peace Prize originates from a man named Alfred Nobel who was a Swedish inventor and businessman who left behind a fortune. In his will he declared that the money should be invested in safe securities and prizes could be awarded each year in the areas of physics, chemistry medicine, physiology, literature, and peace. The ironic part about the Noble Peace Prize and its creator Alfred Noble, is that one of his main contributions to society was the invention of dynamite. Dynamite and peace don't really seem to go together at least in my mind.

Peace is an elusive thing in our culture. The world will offer you peace through many forms of escapism... drugs, alcohol, immoral relationships, constant entertainment especially along the lines of social media. It is sought through all forms of pleasure, self-satisfaction, and even positive thinking. Many believe that peace is just the absence of trouble. The world, however, has never held the answer to true peace. Even the Nobel Peace Prize winners cannot offer us true peace.

Today we light the candle of peace because the angels proclaimed that peace had come to earth. That brings me to our first question; what does peace on earth mean?

1. What does peace on earth mean?

We say it, we recite it, we even sing it, but what does it mean? Since Jesus birth we have seen countless wars in many countries, 2 world wars, and many people today can't even find peace of mind let alone peace between one another. What does peace on earth mean? It means that Jesus came to be our peace. Isaiah 9:6 says, "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

God loved us so much that he sent Jesus to bridge the gap that our sin had left between us and God. We are reconciled to God because the prince of peace sacrificed himself so that we would have the opportunity to find peace with God. Have you ever watched an old western and the hero has shot the bad guy but the bad guy hasn't quite died yet. The hero walks up to the bad guy and often the line that comes next is something like, "You better make your peace with God." That's bad theology. You don't make your peace with God, you can't get yourself right with God, only Jesus could do that and praise God he did. Peace on earth means Jesus is here.

Have you ever heard someone make the argument or ask the question; how could a good and loving God send people to hell? God doesn't want to send anyone to hell. 2 Peter 3 tells us that God is patient because he doesn't want anyone to perish but for everyone to repent and believe. Jesus birth was not about condemning us, it was about saving us and offering us a chance at real peace. We know John 3:16 by heart but John 3:17-18 explains why this prince of peace has come where it says, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

We were already condemned; we were already without peace. Then Jesus came and saved us and brought peace between us and God as well as peace between one another if we believe and love one another like he has loved us. Ephesians 2:14 says, "For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us."

I recently heard someone describe this peace that Jesus brought. He said that to be condemned and sent to hell you must walk over the cross to get there. That's how much God loves you. He doesn't want anyone to perish, and he sent Jesus to the cross to give you the chance to find real peace. You have to trample on the cross to get past his love. When Jesus came, he came as the peace we needed so desperately.

What does peace on earth mean? It meant Jesus is here. Jesus was here. Jesus is the peace on earth, and if his life, death, and resurrection brings peace, then our second question must be this; how can we find peace on earth?

2. How can we find peace on earth?

How do I experience this peace that Christ has established. How many of you traditionally watch the Charlie Brown Christmas every year at this time? Poor Charlie is having a rough Christmas and at one point just cries out, "Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?" His buddy Linus says, "Sure Charlie Brown. I can tell you what Christmas is all about." Linus proceeds to quote directly from Luke 2 where the angel announces the birth of Jesus, and then a multitude of angels pronounce peace on earth.

It's a great scene and a beautiful text. Linus is quoting from the King James Version. The King James version of the bible was first written and published in 1611 by the order of King James. If you read any other translation you may catch a slight difference in the wording of Luke 2:14 where the angels pronounce this peace. In the King James it says, "And on earth peace, Good will toward men." In our more modern translations it will read, "Peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." Or "Peace to men on whom his favor rests."

Why the subtle difference? Why in the original King James does the earth receive peace, but in all other translations there is a qualifier? God's peace will come to those with whom he is pleased or to whom his favor rests upon. Why is there that little difference? Because it does matter. We all want peace, and knowing how to receive it is important. Do we all just get peace because Jesus was born as the King James seems to indicate, or is this peace that Jesus brings for just those with whom God is pleased and his favor rests? Why this difference?

Since 1611 when the King James version was written, we have found many manuscripts of Luke's gospel that are older than the manuscripts they had at time of translation for the King James. In those older manuscripts one letter is added to the Greek word translated "goodwill" and it changes the grammatical structure of the sentence. Instead of "Goodwill toward men" it must be translated "Men of goodwill" or "Men with whom he is pleased".

That means the peace on earth can only be obtained by people of goodwill, people whom good his pleased with, people upon whom his favor rests. My answer to the question of how can we find peace on earth would be simply this; Stay within the will of God. Stay within his will as best you can. If you do that his favor will stay upon you, and he will be pleased with you, and therefore the peace of Christ will always be given to you.

There is one important caveat about this peace. New Christians may especially wonder if Jesus is our peace then why aren't the lives of believers free from conflict. Jesus own disciples wrestled with this because they grew up thinking the Messiah would conquer their enemies, and subdue other nations, and set up a kingdom that would never end and make everything right in the world.

The disciples thought that because their understanding of God's kingdom was limited to an earthly viewpoint. Jesus said to Pilate in John 18:36, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world."

Jesus established a supernatural kingdom that doesn't take its orders from the world. His kingdom is at work in this world through us. The prince of peace rules and reigns in his kingdom and our peace on earth can be found and experienced only when we abide in him. In our greatest achievements and in our darkest moments we can have peace through Christ. The peace that Jesus brought doesn't ebb and flow like the peace the world offers. The peace we have is steady and strong and it will never fail us.

I've asked the 2 questions and hopefully answered them well. Now I want to make a proclamation. This is not a proclamation based on any clout or authority that I have; it is a proclamation built firmly on the Word of God and in the person of Jesus Christ. Here's what I proclaim based on that; Jesus is the only true source of peace.

- Jesus is the only true source of peace.

He and he alone can offer real true peace on earth. Part of the reason I wanted to point out that subtle difference in the translation of the King James as opposed to the other translations, is that peace on earth to all men is a phrase that creates a blanket statement that misdirects the lost world. They may read that or hear Linus quote that and think that peace has come and I don't need to do a thing. Well there is one thing that you have to do. You have to put your faith in Jesus, in order to be men and women of goodwill, in order to be favored by God.

If you have never done that, if you have never put your faith in Jesus, the only true source of peace, what are you waiting for? Don't you want this peace that he is offering. Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us."

By faith we have peace. True peace can only be found in the source of peace. Jesus is that source. I don't know what you've tried in your search for peace. I would imagine like myself, like many of you we have tried worldly approaches to peace. Some of those can be beneficial for your physical and mental health, and some can be much less beneficial. Those things might bring some measure of relaxation, or destressing, but being relaxed, or being less stressed is not the same as true Jesus given peace.

Jesus said in John 16:33, "I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

True peace can only be found in the source of peace. I appreciate what Jennifer Waddle wrote in her book "What is the Peace of God? How to Have Supernatural Peace", she says this, "There will be hard times; times when peace feels far away. But even in the darkest valley, we can know without a doubt that God's peace is within reach. Each day, we can ask the Lord of peace to give us His peace at all times and in every way. We can remain in the fold of His presence by His Spirit who lives in us. And, we can embrace the certainty God offers through salvation in His Son."

If you're looking for peace, don't look towards the world, it only offers a cheap imitation. Peace arrived in the little town of Bethlehem many years ago. If you want peace, look to Jesus. Jesus told us in John 14:27, "I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid."

True peace can only be found in the source of peace. Keep yourself within the will of God, and keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and you will always have peace on earth, that is given to men and women of goodwill upon whom God's favor rests.