



## **A History of Peace**

Peter Hartwig

Good morning - or whatever time of day it is for you! My name is Peter Hartwig.

Jesus talks about the peacemakers in the Sermon on the Mount. As you are likely aware, Mathew 5:9 says “blessed are the peacemakers, because they will be called the sons of God.” The word “peacemakers” in Greek is the awkward term eirēnopoioi. The word serves to remind me that peace, as it turns out, has to be made. Making peace entails a decision on our part to learn peace and then to collaborate with God in the making.

So what I'd like to do for the rest of my time here is give us all an unforgivably brief history of peace.

“In the beginning, when God made the heavens and the earth, the earth was formless and void and darkness was over the face of the deep.” That’s how the Bible starts: formlessness, void, darkness. But out of that mess, God crafts a world that can sustain living things.

Then in Genesis 2-3 we have the story of how this peaceful world was broken. The human beings eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In so doing, they put a widening crack in the shell of creation.

Genesis says that when the freshly fallen humans realize their nakedness, they are ashamed and they try to cover themselves. But God does something rather striking: the LORD makes garments for them out of animal skins. It’s a subtly gruesome vision, I’ll admit, but I think the point is this: God is willing to get into the mess of creation in order to do the difficult work of making peace.

We should not be all that surprised, then, at the way Jesus lived his life and at the nature of his death. Jesus went about ancient Israel making peace, often at great cost to himself. That small

crack in creation from way back in Genesis had continued to widen and deepen. By the time Jesus was born, just about everything that could go wrong had gone wrong.

And so it was that Jesus found a world of brutal brokenness and thwarted attempts to heal it.

In the face of such a daunting reality, Jesus does exactly what the God of creation had also done: Jesus decides to *make* peace, even at great expense to himself. His mission of peacemaking comes to a climax in his cross - the ultimate self-sacrifice. It is on the cross that God offers his own self, his own body as the cost of peace.

In Jesus' life and in his death, God becomes the great peacemaker. Because he's willing to get into the mess of creation in order to do the difficult work to make peace.

This is why the church is able also to be peacemakers: because God has first made peace for us. In creation, in Jesus and then in the life of the church. This is what Paul is getting at in Ephesians 2 when he says:

*For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.*

Jesus' own body has become the place where hostility has been defeated. As such, his disciples are able to make peace in this world precisely because they are disciples of the one in whose flesh the dividing wall of hostility has been broken down.

Peace needs to be made. It is a discipline. But just like every discipline, you don't have to go learn it alone. You are part of a history of peacemakers, a long tradition that descends from Jesus himself.

He himself is our peace.

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*Journal Prompt:* How will you make peace in your area of influence today?