

The King Is Among Us – Peace Has Arrived

12/10/17 – Pastor Randy

Ephesians 2:12-18

In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.

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. He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.

He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

The title of our series is "The King is Among us!" Today's message is: "Peace has Arrived!"

In Ephesians 2:12-13 we are told that Jesus is the one who has brought us hope.

"You lived in this world without God and without hope. But now you have been united with Christ Jesus."

That was last week's message: Because Jesus has come to us and for us, hope has arrived!

But the main focus of this passage is on the fact that the arrival of Jesus has brought with it the arrival of peace.

I. What Kind of Peace?

The peace that is mediated to us through the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus primarily refers to the removing of hostilities in order to bring about unity. When the scripture announces that Jesus coming is the arrival of peace, it refers to relational peace. The resolving of conflict between parties. It is not referring to peace in the sense of serenity or inner calm. The focus is not on peace of mind and freedom from worry, although that kind of

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peace is a by-product. Jesus has arrived to establish peace among those who were formerly enemies. Jesus didn't come to bring about a peace that simply removes conflict, He came to bring a peace which resolves conflict.

Here are the statements that expound on this move from no peace to peace:

1. "...you were **far away from God**, but now you have been **brought near to him through the blood of Christ**.

2. 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.**

3. Christ **reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.**

4. **Now all of us can come to the Father.**

When we say that Jesus has come to bring us peace we are communicating that He has come to remove the hostility and effect reconciliation between enemies, turning enemies into friends; adversaries into associates.

According to Ephesians 2, Jesus has brought peace on two levels. He has brought us into peace with God and peace among men. The primary emphasis in this passage is on the peace that Jesus has created between Jews and Gentiles, but the although Paul's concern was to argue for unity among Jewish and Gentile Christians, the basis for their peace with one another, for living as a reconciled and unified body, was the mutual peace they now enjoyed with God the Father. God's children can't be at peace with Him and not with one another. God doesn't have many families. He has one family. He doesn't have His Jewish family and His gentile family. He doesn't have his European family, and an African family, and an Asian family, and an Indian family, and a Hispanic family. He Has ONE family!

How has this peace been affected? How has this reconciliation between former enemies been accomplished?

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*through the blood of Christ
in his own body on the cross
by means of his death on the cross
because of what Christ has done*

Our peace with God came at a high price! Why?! Why did Jesus have to die in order to bring us peace with God? How does Jesus death affect peace between us and God?

Now we return to the theme of this series: The incarnation of Christ. Last week we began to talk about why the incarnation was necessary.

Look again at what we read last week from Hebrews 2:17

Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people

Hebrews tells us that Jesus had to become a man in order to fulfill the role as our representative High Priest, offering himself as the sacrifice, satisfying the justice of God (Romans 3:26) as He took upon himself the penalty for our sins which we deserved (Isaiah 53). That statement cannot be understood without some knowledge of the old testament and specifically the religious system of worship established by God and revealed through Moses.

It would take a few weeks to thoroughly cover all that the scripture says about how Jesus fulfilled the role of the OT high priest, so I will only be able to summarize. The role of the OT priest was mainly to act as a mediator between the people and their God. This begs the question why a mediator? The reason is that due to Our sin our relationship with God has been severed and we are cut off from his full presence. This mediation involved the presenting of a blood sacrifice before God in the tabernacle. The structure of the tabernacle communicates the separation between a holy God & sinful man.

The whole OT religious system centered around the sacrificial system. Praise and preaching were present, but the sacrifice was prominent. The sacrificial system was elaborate, involving daily, weekly, monthly and annual sacrifices. The two most important sacrifices during the year were Passover and the

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Day of Atonement; the most important annual festival on the Jewish calendar referred to as “The Day”. On the DOA the high priest would take extraordinary measures to safeguard against becoming ceremonially unclean. On that day he first offered a bull for the sins of the priest and himself – took the blood into the MHP as an offering before God’s presence. Next he took two male goats for a sin offering for the whole community. One was killed and the blood taken into the MHP. He laid his hands on the live goat, confessed the sins of the people symbolizing a transfer of guilt. The goat was then driven away into the wilderness symbolizing the removing of the sin from them. At the heart of OT worship was the blood sacrifice. At the heart of the sacrifice was the notion of substitution: One dies in the place of another. What lies behind the idea of substitution is the notion of judgment for sin. The sacrificed animal was absorbing the penalty that was due God’s people. The role of the High Priest was crucial: ONLY he could offer the sacrifice for the people. ONLY he could enter beyond the veil, and he could ONLY enter with the blood.

Here are the realities communicated: God desires to dwell among his people. There is a separation due to sin. The penalty of sin is death, but that penalty can be averted by the substitute death of a sinless member of the offending group who acts as the representative for the people. The problem is that there was no sinless substitute available. These OT sacrifices were symbolic and provisional, meaning they were insufficient in themselves but served temporarily representing a future sacrifice that would be sufficient!! That is why the veil remained in the Most Holy place and the people, other than the high priest who had been symbolically cleansed of sin, could not enter.

The purpose of the DOA ceremony was to foreshadow what Jesus would do and what only Jesus could do, because by being both God and man, Jesus was uniquely qualified to represent both God and man. that is why the veil was torn in two at Jesus crucifixion.

Last week I mentioned that the incarnation is beyond human comprehension, but it is also true that the incarnation is what makes sense of the whole OT sacrificial system. Without the incarnation it is like a puzzle that is missing

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too many pieces which are needed before you can tell what the picture is supposed to be.

But there is still another question that needs to be answered. Why couldn't God just forgive us? The answer is found in Romans 3:23-26 (NLT)

“For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.

Here we have the solution to one of the most vexing questions related to our sin. How can God forgive sinners without violating his holy and just character? God, in the OT revealed himself as one who does not allow the guilty to go unpunished.

If one of our criminal court judges decided, “I am going to begin the new year by being more merciful so I am not going to let all those convicted walk”, people would have his head! He can’t do that! His job is to make sure that justice is upheld.

"It is part of the righteous character of God that He is absolutely opposed to sin and will not turn away blindly from injustice; it is also the nature of God to love sinners and to offer them mercy and forgiveness. Only through the cross could God be faithful to both aspects of his being; his justice and his mercy.

Charles Cranfield expressed it this way:

We take it that what Paul’s statement that God purposed Christ as a propitiatory victim means is that God, because in His mercy He willed to forgive sinful men and, being truly merciful, willed to forgive them righteously, that is, without in any way condoning their sin, purposed to direct against His own very Self in the person of His Son the full weight of that righteous wrath which they deserved. (A Critical and

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Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. 2 vols. Edinburgh: T & T Clark; vol. 1, 1975, p. 217.)

Some have mischaracterized this revelation of scripture as “cosmic child abuse” as if God takes out his anger on his own son instead of us.” This betrays a failure to recognize the divine-human nature of Jesus. This is not an act of the Father punishing someone else, namely His Son. The father and Son are one so this is God taking upon himself the punishment we deserve. What we are talking about is the SELF-SACRIFICE and SELF-SUBSTITUTION OF GOD. As Stott put it, “Divine love triumphed over divine wrath by divine self-sacrifice!!” ...and we are forgiven, justified, made right with God!!!!

God’s wrath is not the expression of vindictive acts in response to His feelings being hurt or His pride being offended. God doesn’t have childish temper tantrums. His anger is not arbitrary or capricious. His wrath is His righteous response to actual evil, real injustice, veritable corruption. God is not tolerant of, or indifferent to, immorality and injustice. If God were either unwilling or unable to deal decisively with sin and evil, he may be a gentle and nice being, but He would not be a good and just being.

Our sin had broken the peace between ourselves and God. We have broken God’s laws, rebelled against His good and perfect will, and harmed His people. Our sin against God is a real offense creating real hostility, enmity, and division. This was no mere “stepping on toes”. “We were dead in our trespasses and sins.”, “we were sons of disobedience”, “there is none righteous.” “All of have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” and “the wages of sin is death”.

The incarnation was the necessary means by which God could forgive our guilt and remove our condemnation while simultaneously being true to his Holy character which will not allow him to unjustly leave sin unpunished. Only a fully human high priest could represent humans before God. Jesus had to identify with us in order to be the substitute for us. Only another human – not an animal or angel – could be qualified to represent us and give his life as a sacrifice for us.

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By taking on a human nature in addition to, not in place of, His divine nature, Jesus was equipped to do what He could not have done otherwise; to die in our place, offering himself as the substitutionary sacrifice for our sins.

I tie up these thoughts with one more passage of scripture:

Hebrews 9:11-12; 14-15

"So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world. With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever..."

"...Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. That is why he is the one who mediates a new covenant between God and people, so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance God has promised them. For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed under that first covenant."

This new covenant is what the prophet Isaiah called the Covenant of Peace that God promised he would establish one day when God's anger and judgment would be removed and replaced with his mercy. This new covenant of peace has now arrived. As it says in Romans 5:1, "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."

God is not your enemy anymore! You don't have to live as God's enemy anymore. Satan can't accuse you anymore.

And not only has Jesus incarnation-crucifixion-resurrection made peace between God and us, reconciling us to himself. He has simultaneously reconciled you to all his other children. He invites you to his table, but guess what? There are others at his table as well and peace with God turns into peace among men! (Watch the sermon video to see Illustration).

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Over the past months the news has been filled with stories that remind us that evil does not only surround us but lurks within us.

Charlestown, Virginia

Las Vegas

NYC

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Sutherland Springs, Texas – 26 killed and 20 injured. About half of the victims were young people. An 18 month old and a 5 year old. The almost daily revelations of sexual harassment. The victimizers are not limited to a particular sphere of We are so upset about these incidents while at the same time condoning a culture where pornography is not only accepted but celebrated aspect of American culture.

John Clark & Marcus Peter Johnson

“This last and life-giving Adam confronted and bested temptation as we did not (Luke 4:1-13); he fulfilled the law as we did not (Matt. 5:17); he loved his enemies as we did not (Luke 22:50-51); he trusted the Father as we did not (John 11:40-42); and in abject affliction he submitted his will to the Father as we did not and do not (Luke 22:39-45).”

He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him. - 2 Corinthians 5:21

*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.
- 2 Corinthians 8:9*

Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.

*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, **but emptied Himself (READ “SACRIFICE”)**, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.*

***He humbled Himself (READ “SACRIFICE”)** by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

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