

## ***The Gift of Peace - Romans 5:1-11*** **Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

### **Notes from the Sermon**

Peace. Oh that we would find peace on earth. It's one of those bizarre ideas that show up at Christmas, the promise of peace. But it seems so elusive. On a global level wars roll on, and violence, senseless violence is all around us. On a relational level, well, relationships are messy. And on a personal level, stress, anxiety, and depression are real and the experience of these struggles can be heightened during the Holiday season. Meanwhile the songs ring out promising peace on earth as this message shows up in lights everywhere. Furthermore the promise of peace shows up in the story of Christmas as the angels declare that the birth of Jesus means "peace among those with whom He is pleased." But of course, this just adds guilt on top of the other issues when I don't feel at peace.

We tend to think of peace as the absence of something, the departure of conflict and turmoil. In the world we long for the end of war and conflict, and for relationships to be healed. And we hope for some level of serenity on the inside. I picture the single mom just wanting a moment of peace amidst the chaos, yet when she has that quiet moment her mind does not shut down. While there are exercises and strategies we can implement to quiet our troubled souls, and furthermore, the availability of good Christian counselors that can help us pursue peace in life, the truth is that the absence of conflict is not sufficient. The Old Testament word most often translated "peace" is the word *Shalom*, a word that means so much more than the absence of conflict and turmoil. *Shalom* also includes the presence of something more important, the idea of wholeness or fullness. When Jewish people wish, "Shalom," as a greeting, they are saying way more than, "I hope you don't get in a fight today." They are wishing people the fullness and wholeness only God can provide in our broken and messy lives. Christian philosopher Cornelius Plantinga explains, "In the Bible *Shalom* means the webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight...*Shalom* means universal flourishing, wholeness and delight—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights. *Shalom*, in other words, is the way things ought to be."

The truth is, our peace problem runs much deeper than the wars in the world, the conflict in our relationships, and the turmoil within. Our peace problem begins with the reality that our relationship with God is severed, as sinners we are actually enemies with our Creator. The lack of peace in other realms are symptoms of this core problem, that we have cut ourselves off from the light, life, grace, and goodness of God as we choose to live our own desires and wishes. As the Old Testament prophets proclaim, we claim "peace, peace," when there is no peace. This is the central problem in our humanity, because of sin we are cut off from God, enemies of His Kingdom, and deserving His justice. Furthermore, no human remedy can solve this problem. Yet Christ was born, and the angels proclaimed the outcome was peace. This is because the Prince of Peace was promised when the Messianic King was born (see Isaiah 9), and there would be no end of his rule and of the peace that comes as a result. There is a deep connection in the Scriptures between the royal presence of God and the gracious peace of God. Where the rule of Christ increases He brings peace. But His rule does not come through the imposition of peace by means of conquest of his enemies. The peace of the Gospel comes because the King gave His life away, purchasing our pardon, and creating the highway of peace between us and God. There is no true and lasting peace available to humans or to the world without peace with

God. And this peace is available only in Jesus. Yet, this is exactly what Romans 5:1 proclaims, that for those who have been justified, we have peace with God. Paul goes on to explain that this happened through Christ's death. For those who place their faith in Jesus, "We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." The Greek word for "reconciled" here is beautiful, because at the core it means that enemies have become best of friends. For the follower of Jesus, we already have peace with God, we already have entered His Kingdom, we are already friends. And the more His Kingdom and peace flow into our lives the more we will experience the peace of God, the inner joy and peace in the midst of our brokenness. And the more we will become agents of peace in the world, through loving neighbor, forgiveness, and through sharing the message of the Gospel, offering people peace with God.

### **Bible Reading for the Week**

#### Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Matthew 17	Matthew 18	Matthew 19	Matthew 20	Matthew 21	Matthew 22	Matthew 23

Reading from this past week: Romans 5:1-11

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Romans 5:1-11

### **Family Worship**

Song - *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day*

<https://youtu.be/cBlbeqQ213I>

#### Gospel Project

Unit: In Exile

Story: Daniel served God

Big Picture Question: Where is God?

Answer: God is in all places at all times and is always with His people.

Scripture: Daniel 5

#### New City Catechism

Question #51: What does Christ's ascension mean for us?

Answer: Christ is now advocating for us in the presence of his Father and also sends us his Spirit

Verse: Romans 8:34

#### Scripture

Romans 5:1-11

- Do you long for peace on earth? To you, what does this mean?
- Why won't there really be any true and lasting peace on earth or in our own lives until we have peace with God?
- How does this passage describe us apart from Christ? Why is the Gospel the only remedy for this problem?
- What does it mean that we have been reconciled to God? Why is this the best news ever?
- How does having peace with God relate to us having inner peace and peace in our relationships?

#### Prayer

\*This is the fourth week of Advent. If you have a family advent wreath, light the fourth candle and give thanks for how the birth of Jesus brought peace to use who believe.

\*Pray for our mission partners Nick & Lorraine Mosca in Papua New Guinea.