

EFC

December 3, 2023

Christmas Series: "The Gift of Peace"

"Part 1 - The Christmas Gift of Peace with God"

Good morning, English Fellowship Church. My name is Jeremy, and I'm one of the Pastors here. This morning we begin a short Christmas series, focused on peace.

Pray.

INTRO:

- Biblical definition of peace: unity, wholeness, rightness – in relation to other people, in relation to our own selves, in relation to our lives
  - We all want peace. We pursue wholeness and try to arrange our lives in such a way that they feel whole and healthy.
    - o Sara's Calendar
    - o Paying for counselors to help us process and get a handle on things
    - o Learning good communication skills
  - These things all have good application, but in the end, they don't give us the peace we need. They can help, but there is a deeper, more certain, more unshakeable true peace we all desire
- I. There is only one source of true, enduring, solid, unshakeable peace.
- a. The Bible tells us that Jesus came that first Christmas to give us peace...
    - i. Luke 1:79 Jesus came "...to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."
    - ii. Isaiah 9:6-7 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.
  - b. ...and He did so by restoring our broken relationship with God.
    - i. Luke 2:14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"
      - 1. Eirene – peace, rejoining what was once broken
      - 2. both of these together is key:
        - a. Glory to God
        - b. Peace on earth
        - c. Like how the planets orbit the sun in peace because the sun is at the center where it belongs!
      - 3. We will not have peace if we are opposed to Christ and to God, for He is our peace, He is the God of peace.
        - a. 5 times in the NT God is called "the God of peace"
      - 4. If God is not God in our hearts, we will find ourselves going against the source of peace and without any peace
        - a. like the sick man who refuses to go to the doctor for the medication that will heal him

- b. Like the runner who refuses to stop and take the rock out his shoe
- 5. But this is the natural state of every human being, since humanity fell into sin when Adam and Eve disregarded God and rebelled against Him in the Garden of Eden, like we saw in the series we just wrapped up.
- 6. The Bible describes our natural state as one of enmity with God: we are His enemies!
  - a. Romans 5:10 specifically says we were “enemies” of God
  - b. I can’t think of a worse person to have as our enemy: invincible, infinitely smart, perfectly just, eternally unforgetting.
  - c. We are not born at peace with God, which also means we don’t have true peace in any other aspect of life, either.
- ii. True peace with God is the peace we need, and it is the gift Jesus came to earth as a little baby to give God’s enemies:
  - 1. Romans 5:1 **Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**
    - a. Justified
      - i. Definition – “Simply put, to justify is to declare righteous. Justification is an act of God whereby He pronounces a sinner to be righteous because of that sinner’s faith in Christ. According to one theologian, ‘the root idea in justification is the declaration of God, the righteous judge, that the man who believes in Christ, sinful though he may be, is righteous—is viewed as being righteous, because in Christ he has come into a righteous relationship with God’” (Ladd, G. E., A Theology of the New Testament, Eerdmans, 1974, p. 437). (<https://www.gotquestions.org/justification.html>)
      - ii. Example – pardoned criminal who was guilty and who was living in punishment is pardoned and justified and now lives free, with all the benefits of being a citizen
      - iii. Why it matters?
        - 1. The change from enemy to child, opposed to supported, “against” to “for” (Rom. 8) (really think about what it means for God to be “for” us!)
      - iv. Only appropriated by faith / believing
        - 1. Romans 5:1
        - 2. Romans 15:13 **May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.**
      - v. Only a gift of grace.

1. Isaiah 53:5 But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.
  - b. This is the true gift of Christmas – justification, salvation and new life, peace with God forever – a gift of grace
- iii. Once we have peace with God as a free gift by being justified by faith in Jesus, we are given peace in all the rest of life!
  1. This is God’s promise to us:
    - a. 2 Corinthians 1:20 For all the promises of God find their Yes in him.
    - b. Romans 8:28-32 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Conclusion: This is foundational, and changes everything. Peace with God brings peace in all of life. But the truth is, peace can continue to be elusive in our minds, our hearts and our experiences. We live in a world that is not yet made new. Yes, we are new creation in Christ, and our relationship with God is secure, and therefore we truly have peace; but we do not yet live in a world where everything is rightly related to God in peace – indeed, we ourselves have much growing to do in this, too. The focus of the coming weeks: How can we grow in our experience of the peace that is already ours in Christ; where does peace come from in the midst of difficult circumstances and relationships; what are we to do with this peace we’ve been so graciously given?