

Cross: Peace by the Cross

by G. Campbell Morgan

The sermon emphasizes the importance of finding peace with God through the Cross of Jesus Christ, which brings pardon, purity, and peace, and ultimately leads to peace within our own personality and with others.

Scripture: Psalm 34:14, Isaiah 48:22, Matthew 5:9, John 14:27, Romans 5:1, 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, Ephesians 2:14, Philippians 4:7, Colossians 1:20, Hebrews 12:14

Topics: "Peace With God", "Reconciliation"

Description

G. Campbell Morgan emphasizes that true peace in human experience stems from forgiveness and purity, asserting that sin disrupts harmony with God and leads to inner turmoil. He explains that without reconciliation with God, individuals cannot achieve peace within themselves or with others, resulting in societal discord and a lack of harmony with nature. Morgan highlights that peace is attainable through the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, which restores relationships with God, self, and creation. He encourages believers to seek peace through faith in Christ, who is the source of all reconciliation and harmony. Ultimately, Morgan calls for individuals to embrace the peace that comes from God, which transcends understanding and transforms lives.

Transcript

PEACE IN HUMAN EXPERIENCE IS THE ISSUE OF PARDON AND purity. There can be no peace so long as sin is unforgiven; there can be no perfect peace so long as impurity remains in the life, dominant and influential. Peace is a necessary sequence in experience; if indeed my trespasses are forgiven, if indeed my consciousness is purged, then issues peace.

The need of peace is created primarily by the fact that man is out of harmony with God. Here I need hardly stay to argue or discuss; I suppose it will be readily granted that this is true. This the Apostle declared in words both blunt and bold: "The carnal mind is enmity against God"; the "natural man" does "not know the things of God." He cannot know them. The natural man is in intelligence dark toward God, ignorant rather than intelligent; in emotion contrary to God, hating rather than loving; in will perverse against God, disobeying rather than obeying.

If instead of stating these things in these terms of doctrine I state them in the realm of experience, the fact is perhaps more patent. Man does not want to talk about God. In the most refined society-using that word in its very degraded and abused sense, for the only final refinement is the refinement of spiritual culture-the one subject which is "ta-boo" is God. Man is out of harmony with God, afraid of God,

unbelieving toward God, and to-day, worst of all indifferent about God.

The reason for this is sin. Find me a man who is afraid of God, and I will find you a man who is a sinner and living in sin. The sin may be manifested in a hundred different ways, but it lies at the back and is the sole reason for lack of harmony with God. It is sin that cuts man off from God, for it is sin that blinds his vision, so that he cannot see God; deadens his emotion, so that he cannot love God; turns his will into perverse attitudes, so that he cannot obey God. Sin prevents the fulfillment of purpose, and thus puts man out of harmony with God.

Moreover, sin reacts on the sinner, polluting the very sources of life, and this pollution prevents communion, so that a man is not only alienated from God by his sin, but by his alienation from God prevented from ceasing to sin. Sin excludes me from the Divine presence. Being excluded, it may be that I want not to sin, but I have lost my power not to sin, for the only power that enables a man not to sin is that of direct communion with God. That is the awful tragedy Of sin-- its reflex action in human life. Men are coming to understand to-day that if man is to find perfect peace he must find his way into harmony with God. In his Varieties of Religious Experience, Professor James tells us that he has come to the deliberate conclusion along lines of scientific investigation that, somewhere, somehow, man has business with God, and that man fulfils his highest destiny only as he submits himself to the call of God.

But men are not having dealings with Him, do not find Him; cannot find Him though they search through the long and misty avenues of scientific investigation, though they spend long and weary years in philosophical elaboration and research. God is never so found. Yet men out of harmony with God are conscious that they lack peace, and the reason of the lack of harmony and the absence of communion is sin, the direct and wilful and personal doing of wrong, when right and wrong have stood confronting man's reason and his will.

Because man is out of harmony with God he is utterly out of harmony with everything else. A man who has no peace with God lacks peace within his own personality. A man who has no peace with God, and who lacks peace within his own personality, fails of peace with his fellow man. The man who has no peace with God, and lacks peace in his own personality, and therefore fails to have peace with his fellow men, is out of harmony with the whole of Nature.

The man who is out of harmony with God is out of harmony within his own personality. My text occurs in one of the stupendous passages of the New Testament: in order that its light may flash on my subject, I ask you to consider the context. The Apostle is dealing with the great subject of creation and of Christ's relationship thereto. He speaks of Christ as being the Image of God, and also as being the First-born of creation. He distinctly says that the God-created things were made by Him and for Him. He distinctly affirms that in Him--that is, in Christ--"all things consist." Then he declares, right at the heart of the great argument, that this Christ, Firstborn of creation, Upholder of creation, shed His blood in the midst of creation; and that through the mystery of that blood-shedding, in the midst of the creation held together by Christ, and created by Christ, He will reconcile all things to Himself, both on the earth and in the heavens. That is the majestic sweep of the passage.

In Christ all things consist. Banish from your mind all the larger outlook on creation. Forget the spaces by which you are surrounded: forget even this one little planet on which you stand, and out of its myriad mysteries consider your own life. You are part of creation; the principle that obtains in the whole creation obtains in you. In Him, the Christ Who is the image of God, things consist. In Him they harmonize, part

fitting to part, power answering power, joint uniting with joint. If you banish this Christ from the life by sin, if you put God out of count, then you no longer consist, you no longer hold together. You become, within your own personality disorganized, broken up, disintegrated. Every man who is Godless and Christless is disintegrated in his own personality; he is a mystery to himself. He finds the physical--we all know the physical; he finds the mental--we are all conscious of the mental; every now and then he hears, not from without, as though a voice out of the blue addressed him, but from within, the voice of his spiritual nature. This last he stifles, silences, drives back. The mental he sometimes attempts to cultivate and refine; the physical he ministers to with all his power; but he is a broken man. The spiritual, which is the essential, is dethroned, imprisoned within the personality; the mental has the wrong vision, the wrong outlook, and, consequently, is perpetually degraded; and the physical is made the principal; that man lives, as Paul says, "in flesh" instead of in spirit. There is no harmony; and out of that discord of a human life come the questionings and the agonies, and the conflicts, and the defeats that are perpetual in human history. Out of that discord comes the dual cry of a man when he says, I would do good. Evil is present with me. I would climb, but I fall. The man who is Godless lacks peace within. There is passion within, there is power within, but not peace. Passion runs riot, power is misapplied; ambition, aspiration, desire, endeavor, all these things; but no peace. Moments that seem peaceful are broken in on by some rush of passion; moments that seem quiet are disturbed by some new mystery within the life of the man of the world.

Oh, man, thy personality is as marvelous as is God's universe, and the things in conflict are great things, God-made things. Every part of thy personality is the result of a Divine thinking, and a Divine creation; and if thou art living without the Divine Who thought, and the Divine Who created, the great forces in thy life are conflicting and clashing, and there is discord, but no peace.

The result is that man is not at peace with his fellow man. Each man being disorganized within his own personality, social disorganization must necessarily ensue. Are you prepared to say there is peace in the world? Of course, by comparison there are countries that are at peace, but I am not at all sure that the peace of to-day which is perpetually at- tempting to be ready for war is not more disastrous than war itself.

Is there social peace? Nation is divided against nation, class against class, there is commercial strife, and social strife is rife, and why? Because the units are at strife within themselves. When strife meets strife, strife is perpetuated, and you will never have the peace of a great socialism until you have the peace of a great individualism.

Finally, man is not only out of harmony within himself And with his fellow-man, he is out of harmony with Nature. I take up my Bible, and I turn over to that great psalm about man:

What is man, that Thou are mindful of him?

And the son of man, that Thou visitest him?

And now hear the answer:

For Thou hast made him but little lower than God,

And crownest him with glory and honour.

Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands;

Thou hast put all things under his feet:

All sheep and oxen,

Yea, and the beasts of the field;

The fowl of the air and the fish of the sea,

Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea.

That is a picture of God's intention for man, dominion over Nature, harmony with Nature, mastery of Nature; a beneficent mastery of Nature that leads Nature out to its highest and its best--that is God's thought for man.

At the beginning God put man into a garden; what for? So that he might admire the flowers and pluck the fruits? No! "To dress it and to keep it." He put him into the garden in order that man might put his God-made hand on God's unfinished work and finish it. The Garden of Eden was a garden of potentialities, waiting for the touch of man to make it perfect. God placed man in it, and said, Now touch it with labor, and it will laugh at you with flowers. We can see something of this even to-day. One's mind goes to the simplest of all illustrations among the flowers. Who of us has not seen the wonderful development of what in my boyhood's days was a simple country flower, the chrysanthemum? I remember it in my father's garden. It was so old-fashioned that there were gardens that would not have it, but there is not a garden that has not room for it to-day. It has grown since those days, and the petals have run out into wavy gracefulness and tender tints. What has happened? Man has touched it. The potentialities of the chrysanthemum of to-day lay in the old-fashioned garden chrysanthemum, but it waited for man to complete the work of God. At this hour Nature as a great whole is an unconquered territory because man is Godless. You tell me that the most scientific men are Godless men. You tell me that the countries that are most scientific are the most Godless. I do not believe it. Let us study the map of the world; imagine you see it before you. Now put your hand on the places where most discoveries have been made. And while your hands are resting on those countries in which men have done most in the work of mastering Nature and discovering her secrets and giving them to men, they are resting on the countries where the Gospel of Jesus Christ has prevailed most. That is the larger outlook. You bring me to some man whom you call scientific, and he is Godless, and you say that scientific investigation makes a man Godless. I tell you it is a narrow outlook. It is just as narrow an outlook as the outlook of Robert Ingersoll when he said that something happened as naturally as water runs down hill. If you think that is true, read Father Lambert's reply, and see how Father Lambert demonstrated that water does not run down hill, that the vast mass of the waters of the world are piled at the equator.

In the light of Godliness men have mastered Nature; electric light has come directly as the result of Godliness, for if you find lands that are Godless you find them in darkness in every sense of the word. Man remains out of harmony with Nature until he finds his way to God. One man tells me he will climb to Nature and find God. Never. You must find God and then climb into Nature. Neither as to its beauty nor as to its potentiality can you ever be at peace with Nature until you are at peace with God.

And how we long for peace. Oh, the restlessness of the present age! Oh, the friction! Sometimes one pauses to listen and it seems as though surging through the cities, coming up from the quieter country, beating on the listening ear, from all the continents and the isles of the sea, there is the noise of strife and battle, man within himself hot and restless, feverish, lacking peace; man battling with his brother man for territory, for commerce, for advance; man out of harmony with Nature, losing his love of the beautiful, failing to interpret its message of God, but slowly discovering its deep underlying secrets. Peace seems

absent, and yet how man longs for it, sighs after it, sings about it, courts it, and fails to find it.

But there are men and women who have peace; there are men and women living at the very center of it. There are men and women who know peace with God, within themselves, with their fellow men, and with all the universe of God. And how has this peace come? I go back again to the first chapter of Colossians, and again ask you to let the great and stately argument of the Apostle pass before you. Christ, First-born of creation, all things held together in Him; Christ bowed to death, to the awful and lonely tragedy of an earthly dying, in the midst of the lack of peace, and making peace through the blood of His Cross.

This is the third time we have come to this central mystery, and for the third time I say to you, I do not know how it was done. I cannot fathom it, but I see the infinite order in the economy of God of which Christ is Originator and Upholder. I see the awful discord and lack of peace that sweep upon men and everything to the utmost limit of the universe. I see at the center the worst disorder of all, the dying Christ, and I see proceeding from that Cross reconciliation, the restoration of peace, men finding God, men finding themselves, because they have found God; men finding their brother men and getting back to them because they have found God; men finding the secrets and beauties of Nature because they have found God. Already I hear across the nations and the continents, war-mad, strife-occupied, the song of an infinite peace. How came it? It began in the mystery of His dying, and the awful darkness of His blood-shedding. I cannot fathom it; I cannot measure it. I cannot tell you all the deep mystery of that outpoured life and flood, but this I know, that through it peace is born.

First of all, peace between man and God. Let us take three phrases of the New Testament. "Justified by faith, we have peace with God." "Peace from God our Father." "And the peace of God shall garrison your heart." "Peace with God," "peace from God," "the peace of God." This is the experience of the soul that comes back to God from sin and pollution by the way of the Cross of Jesus. No man can speak perfectly of this peace. It defies analysis, it transcends explanation, it may sing itself into snatches of song, but the great infinite experience can never be told; it must be known. Peace with God, that is, if you will have it so-judicial peace. I have sinned against Him, and I am afraid of Him. But I come to Him as He calls me by the way of the Cross, and my sin is put away, I am no longer afraid. The fear is gone, that which made me afraid to speak of Him, to think of Him, has all been put away, and small as I am in His great universe, and utterly unable as I know myself to be to comprehend the full meaning of His existence, this at least is true-fear has been banished, I am at peace with Him, at peace with Him Who holds the universe in the hollow of His hand, at peace with the infinite Force and Intelligence. As God is my witness, standing by that Cross, claiming and receiving its pardon, its purity, I have also its peace, and I am not afraid. So the soul that comes to this Cross is first at peace with God.

This peace is also from God, the quietness that comes into the life when man knows that God is pleased. There is no language that can tell the deepest truth here, but as I am accepted in the Beloved, as I am complete in the Christ, the very blessedness of God rests on me, because it rests on Him, the Christ Himself. I have been joined to Him, and "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit" And as the good pleasure of God was declared with the Christ, it is declared also with all such as put their trust in Him: pardon for the past, purity for the present, and the peace of knowing;

My God is reconciled,

His pardoning voice I hear;

He owns me for His child,

I can no longer fear.

With confidence I now draw nigh,

And "Father, Abba Father," cry.

And yet once more and most wonderful of all in this connection, not merely peace with God, and peace from God, but "the peace of God." What is God's peace? It is the peace of His omniscience, the peace of His omnipotence, the peace of His omnipresence. Do you not see how all these things must necessarily create peace in the very Being of God? What robs me of peace in the small affairs of life? My limitations. I cannot see the end, and I am afraid. I cannot be where I would be, and my heart is hot and restless. I cannot do what ought to be done, and panic seizes me. God sees the end from the beginning, God is always where He is needed. God is always equal to the demand that is made on Him, even though it be the redemption of a lost race; and, consequently, in the presence of the fall of man, in the presence of the sin of the race, in the presence of the wrong of the centuries of pain, God's peace in its deepest was never disturbed, because He knew how out of it He would bring life and light and glory, until at last heaven would be reached over the mystery of evil, and its mastery come by the way of the Cross.

The perfect peace of God is the peace of the child of God. Not that I now can see the end from the beginning, but I know He can, and so I sing. Not that I now can be everywhere at the same moment, but He is, and so while I stand here, separated by miles from my friend in danger, I speak to Him, and in the act I am with my friend, for God is with my friend. Distance is annihilated in this life of fellowship, power is perpetual, and the things I cannot do, I can do in Him and through Him. The man who is at peace with God enters into the peace of God, for he has found his way, small atom though he be, infinitesimal part of the universe, into harmony with the order of the universe.

This necessarily means that the peace that comes to us is exactly what we need in other respects, not only in relationship to God, but in relationship to self. The whole being is balanced and quiet.

Look at these two men. What is that man? He is a spirit indwelling a body, having a mind. What is this man? He is a spirit indwelling a body, having a mind. What is the difference between them? This man is perturbed, he lacks peace, he is always full of fear, he is hot, restless, feverish. That man is quiet, calm, strong. What is the difference? This man is out of harmony within himself. The essential spirit is starved, dwarfed, driven out, consequently flesh is glorified, and worshiped and served. He lacks balance, harmony, there is no consistence in this man, because he has not found God. That man has found God, his own spirit is taken out of the prison house and put on the throne. The flesh is not bruised, the flesh is not scourged, it is governed, kept under, made servant, instead of master. He has found the true proportion of things. He is consistent within himself, and his life is full of peace. Why? Because he found God, and finding peace with God and from God and of God, he gained peace within his own personality, and his life became strong, free from friction, quiet, calm, powerful.

Watch that man still; that man knows what peace is with his fellow man. I know that Jesus said, I have not come to send peace but a sword." That is perfectly true. That is the effect produced among Godless men by the presence of godly men; so long as there are godless men they will hate the godly, and so will attempt to destroy their peace. The measure in which professing Christians fail to make peace is the measure in which they are not Christians. I think the day has come when we ought to be more ready to "unchristianize" the man who libels Christianity than to "unchristianize" Christianity on account of such a man. You tell me of a Christian man who is always making disturbances; I do not believe it. Oh, but he is a

minister; that does not matter. He is a deacon; that has no signification in this connection. He has been a church member for forty years; I cannot help it. If the influence of his life is not that of peace, he is not a Christian. When once the peace of God possesses a human life, when once the peace of God dominates a human life, the influence of that life is peace. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God."

And yet that is after all but a negative way of arguing the case. Take the positive statement of truth. There are still those who dare say that war is devilish. There are some of us who still believe that you cannot justify war, and we say so because we believe in Jesus Christ. Thank God for the lonely singers! There is a good deal to be heard beside their song. There are a great many other voices attempting to express in harmony the glory of war; but I hear the singers on the other side of the sea and in this country; and even on that poor war-mad continent there are some foolish souls who believe in peace, and who will try to bring it in.

Where did they learn their song? It was never born or learned anywhere save in living relationship to God. The song of peace, prophetic, expectant, determined, is always the song of godliness, never the song of godlessness; and we know that all the peace that comes in social and national relationships is the outcome of relationship to God, restored in human lives by the mystery of the Cross.

Man finds his way back into the place of peace with nature by this selfsame work of Jesus Christ. As a side light on our subject read again the eighth chapter of Romans, and read it this time not so much in order to learn its marvelous teaching concerning personal relationship to God; listen for the larger thing in it. You will find groaning mentioned three times over. The Apostle says: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now." "We also groan within ourselves waiting for the redemption." "The Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." The groaning of Nature is everywhere. The Spirit of God interprets the agony of Nature to the godly man, and the godly man groans in the midst of it, inspired by the Spirit into sympathy with it. "Preach the Gospel," said Jesus, "to the whole creation," and the Gospel of Jesus Christ has its application to all the sorrow and the evil there is in nature. Before the Cross has won its last triumph man will be restored to Nature, and Nature will be restored to man. When God's Second Man and Last Adam went down into the wilderness, He met and mastered evil, and at the close we read: "He was with the wild beasts," and we have read it as though it were a message of terror. It means He was with them in company and comradeship, and they were unafraid of Him. Because of His own absolute perfection ferocity ceased; there was no wild beast in the presence of God's Perfect Man. Neither will there be in the presence of a perfectly redeemed humanity. The earth is not old, it is young. This earth effete? By no means. We have hardly begun to realize its resources. The race is struggling still in its kindergarten days, believe me. When by-and-by His reign shall be established, when by-and-by man shall have found peace with God in a larger sense than the merely individual, then he will begin to find Nature and its secrets, then such flowers as men have never looked upon, then such wonders as we would now call miracles, then the resurrection of Christ shall no longer be a mystery to scientific thinking. Do not imagine, my brothers, you know all about Nature. So far, you have just scratched on the surface of things. That is all the race has done. When the Lord of creation, Who is First-born of creation, shall have won His perfect victory and reconciled all things to God, then man will have found peace with Nature. Have you entered into peace with God? If not, you have never seen a flower yet:

Heaven above is softer blue,

Earth around is sweeter green;

Something lives in every hue

Christless eyes have never seen;

Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,

Flowers with deeper beauties shine,

Since I know, as now I know,

I am His and He is mine!

Peace! It can come to you, my brother, personal, social with Nature, only as it first comes with God. I beseech you, it acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace." And the only way is at the;

Trysting-place, where heaven's love

And heaven's justice meet.

The only place is at the Cross, where He made peace through the shedding of blood.

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