

Peace on Earth

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon emphasizes the importance of peace in our lives, highlighting the promise of peace from God through Jesus Christ, and encouraging listeners to strive for peace in their hearts, relationships, and circumstances.

Duration: 33:36

Scripture: Isaiah 55:1, Matthew 5:3, John 14:27, Romans 5:1, Philippians 4:7, James 1:5

Topics: "Peace"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of making peace with one's past in order to live a peaceful life. He encourages the congregation to accept their past and not dwell on past mistakes, as God can still make their future beautiful. The preacher also highlights the need for peace within relationships, particularly with grown children, as a lack of peace can ruin everything. He concludes by discussing the four kinds of peace promised by God in the Bible, including peace with God and the assurance that He will take care of His people every day of their lives.

Transcript

Let's read through some of the Christmas story. Luke 2. At that time, Emperor Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. And when this first census took place, Quirinius was the governor of Syria.

Everyone then went to register himself, each to his own hometown. Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the town of Bethlehem in Judea, the birthplace of King David. Joseph went there because he was a descendant of David.

He went to register with Mary because of the census, who was promised in marriage to him. She was pregnant. And while they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have her baby.

She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in cloths, and they laid him in a manger. It's very interesting. Swaddling clothes, which is the phrase that I heard growing up from the King James Version, really doesn't give you any of the significance because we don't use those words, swaddling clothes.

Literally, in the Greek, it means they were so poor, all they had to cover the baby were strips of cloth. And that's what baby Jesus was covered with when he came into the world. And they laid him in a manger,

which is where animals were, because there was no room for them to stay in the inn there in Bethlehem.

There were some shepherds in that part of the country. Shepherds, by the way, were looked down upon in the Jewish culture. If your job was a shepherd, you were one of the low-life people.

You were not esteemed very highly, but it was God choosing shepherds to hear about the birth first, who were spending the night in the fields, taking care of their flocks. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone over them, and they were terribly afraid. But the angel said to them, don't be afraid.

I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. This very day in David's town, your Savior was born, Christ the Lord. And this is what will prove it to you.

You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. You see the significance there is, how will you know the baby? Because this is not typical. This baby's so poor that all he'll have is cloths covering him, and he'll be lying in a stinking manger, not in an inn or a proper home.

That's how Jesus came into the world. Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel singing praises to God. Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased.

When the angels went away from them back into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, let's go to Bethlehem and see the thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us. So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and saw the baby lying in the manger. And when the shepherds saw him, they told them what the angel had said about the child.

All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said. And Mary remembered all these things and thought deeply about them. The shepherds went back singing praises to God for all that they had heard and seen.

It had been just as the angel had told them. One of the most repeated phrases on Christmas cards is the famous Christmas-related phrase, peace on earth. Lots of cards just have peace or peace on earth on the cover of them.

Because Christmas, the message was from the angels, there will be peace on earth. This is what God is sending now through Jesus, peace on earth. Jesus is called in Isaiah chapter nine, verse six, prophesying about him.

He is called the prince of what? Prince of peace. And yet there's a contradiction somewhere here because before Jesus was crucified, when he spoke about future days before he would return, he said there will be wars and rumors of wars continually until he comes back where he will then establish perfect peace. There is very little peace, isn't there? We started a church more than 25, 27, 28 years ago out of this church.

There's several churches throughout the city that we helped begin and I give oversight to. One of them is Christ Tabernacle and they lost one of their members last night when two police officers were executed in their cars. One of those police officers is a Latino brother who went to be with the Lord, Officer Ramos.

And with all that's happening in our country and the deaths of citizens and the deaths of police officers, boy, there's sure so little peace on this earth and ISIS and North Korea and racial tension. And yet Jesus

came to bring peace on earth. He's called the prince of peace.

Well, the reason there's so little peace on the earth and the reason there's wars and rumors of wars is the only way you can have peace in the world is to have peace in people's hearts. People who don't have peace in their hearts can never create a society which will be peaceful. How many say amen to that? So this promise of peace is to the individual first.

God wants to, through Jesus, in a way never found in the Old Testament, he wants to bring peace. In fact, the Old Testament people, the Jews, Israel fought wars, claimed territory. This is something that does not apply to the new covenant that we're part of, the people of God, followers of Jesus.

We are people who the Lord told us, blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God. People who cause friction and rabble, rouse and get people against each other, whether it's family members, people who stir up tension because of past hurts, racial rabble rousers, these people are not promoting peace. Christians are supposed to promote peace everywhere we go.

How many say amen? And that's why getting involved in politics is very dangerous territory in this sense, be involved in politics, vote your conscience, but you got to be careful that that angry spirit that politics brings doesn't get in your own heart. How many know what I'm talking about? Now the next thing is you're screaming and it's us against them, whether you're Democrat, Republican, liberal, conservative, because Christians are supposed to be known by having peace. Jesus would say over and over again when he met people, peace I give you, not as the world gives, my peace I give to you.

The greeting that Jesus made to the disciples was shalom, peace, which meant more than an absence of friction and fighting. The word meant not only that, peace, tranquility, but it meant blessing and well-being, peace, peace. There's so little peace.

There's so little peace sometimes in churches. Churches are fighting and folks are fighting and boards fight and pastors fight and members split. And I visited a church recently and they told me, yeah, we've been going through a lot.

In the last 20 years, we've had four church splits. People take off, start another church, fussing and fighting with one another. And all the while we're proclaiming Jesus is prince of peace.

Can't even get along with each other. Bad testimony. How many say amen? We're supposed to live in peace.

The Bible says, as much as it's possible on your side, live at peace with all men. Notice what it says. You can't live at peace with everyone because some folks just are never going to be peaceful with you.

Am I correct? Otherwise Jesus wouldn't have ended up on a cross. He was the prince of peace and they killed him. But as much as it's possible on our side, we're to live at peace with everyone.

This Christmas, wherever we celebrated Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, let's pray for peace. Not only peace in our city, peace among the citizens of the city and country, but in our own family and in all our relationships. How many want more peace and less fighting than ever before? Just lift your hand.

Just between husband and wife, let's not fight. Let's have peace. Let's have peace with our children, especially the grown ones where walls can come up.

We need to have peace. A lack of peace ruins everything. Am I correct? You can't even enjoy a good meal.

Let me just leave you with these thoughts on this Christmas season. There's four kinds of peace that God has promised us. There's four kinds of peace that are promised to us in the Bible.

First of all, there's peace with God. Jesus was sent to bring peace and there's four different kinds of peace. And just because you go to church or celebrate Christmas or have a tree or sing like Caleb or preach like I do, doesn't mean you automatically have peace.

That's not true. Some people have everything but peace in their lives. So let's concentrate.

The first piece that the Bible promises us is peace with God. Peace with God. Say that with me.

Peace with God. When you believe in Jesus Christ and you put your faith in him and you know that his blood and sacrifice that he made on Calvary 2,000 years ago has washed away all the guilt of your sin, the Bible calls that having peace with God. Instead of thinking of him as judge, because he will be the judge of the living and the dead in the end, because of Jesus, he becomes father.

Not judge. Our relationship is father. Jesus told the disciples, when you pray, pray this way, our father which art in heaven.

So today, from the top of the front, the most important peace that God wants all of us to have is peace with God. Peace with God. No acrimony, no tension, no rub with God.

How do you get that? By confessing your sins and putting your faith in Jesus Christ. The more you violate your conscience and justify it, the more you make excuses and give a song and a dance about how you were raised and nobody knows what you've been through or nobody's perfect and you're better than most other people. The minute you do that, you're now tampering with your peace with God.

You got to have peace with God. When we become Christians, we have peace with God. The devil will try to disrupt that peace.

He will try to bring in condemnation and tell you and remind you what you did last week, last year, last decade, but you have to stand on the word of God. Jesus died for me and I have peace with God. Can we just clap our hands and say yes to that? We have peace with God.

Without having peace with God, religion doesn't matter. Trying to live a good life doesn't matter. Doing good deeds, bringing in homeless people and feeding them, none of that gives you peace with God.

Only Jesus gives you peace with God. A relationship with Jesus. Not going to church, that will not give you peace with God.

Only a relationship with Jesus, faith in him. But there's another piece that the Bible promises us to have and now I'm addressing these remarks to Christians, we believers. God has promised us through Jesus, through this gift of peace, notice it's a gift, we can have peace with our past.

God wants us to have peace that covers our past. What does that mean? Many people have never resolved and given the thing over to God and asked him to cover their past with a blanket of peace. The things we've done wrong, decisions we've made.

If I would have just done that 25 years ago, why did I go there? Why didn't I go to that school? Why did I take that job? I could have been doing that now and that just regurgitates, regurgitates within us and just keeps going and now people can't live with peace today because they haven't made peace with their past. Whatever has happened, God can take your past, whatever mistakes are in it and he can still make your future beautiful. Can I see an amen? He can do that, but you have to accept that what is past is past.

Look at me everybody, can you go back and redo it? No. So you have to accept it. It is what it is.

Es lo que es. Say that in Spanish with me. Es lo que es.

It is what it is. It happened. It's over.

It's 20 years ago. It's 10 years ago. It's 10 months ago.

Whatever happened, you have to remember what Paul said. This is how he had that peace, forgetting those things that are behind. You have to forget that and let the peace of God say, God, if I could redo it, I would do it different, but I can't redo it.

So I just give my past to you. All my mistakes, my sins, things nobody knows about, but you and God. Things that no one knows about, but you and God.

You can't go back. So you have to ask God's peace to cover that past and let it be there under the blood of Jesus and let God's peace just flood your heart. That also includes what people have done to you.

I counsel people over the years. So many of them are agitated, have no present peace because they can't let go of what someone did to them. Hey, they did it to you.

You had a bad church experience. You were in something like a cult. And now you see it and you look back and you say, my, they mess with my mind.

They took advantage of me. They robbed me maybe of my money. Whatever it is, it's in the past.

It's in the past. Jesus has something beautiful for you today. Let go of the past.

Let God's peace cover that past and forget it. Let it go. You won't forget that it happened, but let God take the poison out of it.

Let God take the sharp edges out of it. Otherwise, you're not going to enjoy today and have his peace because you haven't let his peace blanket your past. And we've all had moments in our past that, oh my, we wish we could redo it.

How many wish they could redo some things in the past? Lift your hand up high. Hey, but it is what it is. God has forgiven, put it behind us.

Now he says, forgetting those things that are behind, let my peace cover your past. But there's a third kind of peace and that's peace for today, for the present. God's peace governing you today.

What do I mean by that? One of the Psalms says, I can't think of it right now, but the Psalmist is under some kind of pressure. And he says these words, I don't think they're found anyplace else like this in scripture. Oh, that I could fly away and be just in another place.

I wish I could just get out of here. This is a Psalmist, a man of God. Oh, that I wish I could fly away and just get out of this, whatever it is.

Obviously, when he wrote that, he was not living with peace. And that's what attacks a lot of us. We're discontented.

We can't enjoy peace. We can't even celebrate Christmas the right way because we're always wanting something that we don't have. And then when we get it, we find out it wasn't all that, all that, all that.

It ain't all that. So then we want something else. And then there's this constant thing of reaching, grabbing, I want that, I want that.

It's like, you know, Christmas presents. I remember opening Christmas presents when I was real little. Whatever I opened, what my cousins got always looked better than what I got.

And I couldn't enjoy my toy because I was looking over at that toy, like, why didn't I get that? And you know what? We never grow up. We adults are still like that. If I could only have that car, if I could only get that education, could only get that job, if I only, if I could only, if I could only, if I could only, if I only could move and live in another place, if I could only get that other job, if I could only, and then there's no peace.

There's no peace. Nobody has peace who lives like that. Maybe you're living like that today.

I have a word from you for the Lord. Accept where you are today and say, I rejoice in this. God has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

I will be thankful for what I have. And I will strive for those things that he puts in my heart that are legitimate, but I am not going to lose my peace because I don't have everything I want to have because I have Jesus. And when you have Jesus, come on, you have everything you need.

Am I right? Come on, let's strong with our hands, clap them. I don't have everything that I've always wanted, but I have Jesus. That's where the peace of God covers your present.

To just rest and sleep at night and not live with the what ifs and I only wish I could, if I can only get out of here and this and that. Let God's peace come and just cover your present. Accept it.

Not accept it to the point of not wanting to improve and aim at goals that are legitimate and good, but don't obsess over it. Let God's peace just let you relax. Just relax.

You know what I found out? Listen, I have been traveling around the world, been a lot of places. And one day I was in the Dominican Republic and someone arranged a meal at a pastor's house in a poor place between the capital, Santo Domingo, and the Northern city that's on the coast called Puerto Plata. Somewhere in between, I ended up in a little town and someone said, you're going to preach at this man's church.

He wants to have you at his house. I knew nothing. I went with my wife and two friends and we walked into what was literally a hut.

And the walls were like just the thinnest and there was no cement or carpet. It was dirt, dirt floor. And there was a table that wobbled because the ground wasn't, it wasn't solid, wasn't level.

And I realized I'm in the house here. This pastor is extremely poor. I felt uneasy.

I said, I wonder what, you know, we're putting him out. He had gone out that day and fished and he caught two little fish. And they took, they were six, six, two, four, six of us at the table.

His children didn't sit at the table. And we had these little fishes that you cut up. And I was hungry.

I was wishing the Lord would do the thing with the loaves and the fishes because I was like, wow. And there was one potato, as God is my witness, a potato this big. And they cut it up in six pieces and each one of us got a little piece of potato like that.

And the fish, nada mas. And somehow they had a blender, a juicer, like it didn't fit with everything else that was going on there. And they took some mango or whatever, papaya and some whatever, a little leche.

And they spun that and that was our meal, a drink, a potato and a piece of fish. And there was peace. There was peace.

And I have had, because I had peace. When you have peace, everything tastes good. When you don't have peace, you can eat a steak as big as one of these monitors and you won't even be satisfied.

How many know what I'm talking about? When you don't have peace, where there's tension, there's fighting. Let God give you peace today. Just accept the steak and be thankful, accept the fish, accept the little piece of potato.

Last peace God promises is peace about our future. Peace with God, peace that covers our past, peace that will help us today to navigate through whatever we're going through. Oh, how I needed his peace.

Oh, how I've needed his peace. But peace about the future, what's going to happen? Some people can't enjoy today, can't have peace because they're worried about the future that they don't even know they'll see. What about this? What about ISIS? What about what's going on? What about the economy? What about this? What about that? They're laying people off.

There might be a merger. I could lose my job. What if the future, who's going to take care of me? Will my pension be enough? Social security? And then you're all tense.

And God says, no, when Jesus comes, he'll give you a peace that covers not just your past and your present, but you'll just know he promised he would never leave me nor forsake me. And all my days are numbered in his hands. And every day I wake up, he's going to take care of me that day.

How many believe that with all your heart, he's going to take care of us every day of our life? I know, but Pastor Simba, I'm without a job. I've been looking for a job. I haven't found the job.

So what's going to happen in 2015? I don't know, but God's going to take care of you. Now, let me close. You got to remember two things about this peace though.

It's not logical. The peace that God gives is not rational in what people call being rational. The peace that I'm talking about has nothing whatsoever to do with circumstances.

The same peace Jesus had when he preached, blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven on the Sermon on the Mount. That's the same peace when he stood before Pilate. And Pilate said,

don't you know I could have you killed? Jesus' peace, the supernatural peace of God doesn't change because things go sideways.

When the bottom falls out, his peace holds. It's not rational. You have peace and people should say to us, why are you so happy and peaceful? Don't you see what's happening? Yeah, I see what's happening, but I have a peace that passes all... What? What does that mean? You can't explain it.

You can't explain it. So if you have the peace that adjusts based on circumstances, I'm not talking about that brand of peace whatsoever. That's the peace the world gives you.

Looking good? I'm happy. I'm up. Looking bad? What am I going to do? But God's peace is... I have peace with him.

His peace covers my past. I accept that he's with me today and he's going to... All things are going to work together for my good. All things are going to work together.

I don't see it right now, but it's going to work together because his peace tells me that. And about my future, his peace tells me he will keep what you commit to him. So it's not rational.

It's supernatural. Like everything in Christianity is supernatural. Jesus was born of a virgin.

He bore the sins of the world. He resurrected from the dead. Everything about Christianity is supernatural.

You must be born again. That's not natural. That's supernatural.

And so it is with his peace. And that's why many Christians settle for human peace, which is fluctuating every day, every hour, rather than saying, no, I want that peace. How do you get that peace? You get it by asking him.

Just like the Bible says, if anybody lacks wisdom, let them ask of God who gives liberally and won't turn anyone away. When you're lacking peace as a Christian... Now, if you're not a Christian, the only way you can get peace with God and start the journey is to confess your sins and say, I don't want to be religious. I want a relationship with Jesus so I can have peace with God.

And now I can access this other peace that the pastor's talking about from the word of God. But if you're lacking peace today, all you have to do is ask. Wait a minute.

You mean God would send his son into the world? He loves us that much, but he won't give you peace? When he sees what you're going through and you go and ask him, God, give me peace. So one day I had no peace and I was pastoring this church. I had pressure everywhere.

Financial pressure mounting into the over a million dollars that was needed in 72 hours or something. And just a lot of stuff, a lot of traveling, trying to write a book or whatever. Just no peace.

Just no peace. And I sat in a room in the house that I then lived in and I said, God, I'm not leaving this room until you give me peace. Because you can be peaceful on the outside, but inside everything is doing the samba, the rumba.

And I was a mess. I was a mess. But it's so good when you're a mess to tell God you're a mess and say, Lord, you love me.

You know everything about me. What am I going to do? Tell you I'm in good shape when I'm not? What am I going to fool you? I had those hours together with the Lord and his word. In fact, I didn't talk much.

I was too beat down to even pray and say much, but God knew my need. And I just sat in his presence like I'm going to ask you to stand for a few moments, some of you, to just let him fill you with peace. And guess what he did for me? As God is my holy witness, he came into that little room I was sitting all alone in and he filled me with a peace that so startled me.

I know that sounds contradictory and oxymoron. How could peace startle you? This peace was so deep that I said out loud as God is my witness, what is this? I said that. What is this? It was so deep.

And I felt the Lord speak in my heart. I'm giving you that peace that you need. Oh, it's so deep.

The money we needed, whatever personal agitations I was going through, it disappeared. It was like leaves being blown away in the wind. And I was just so secure.

The peace of God, it passes all understanding. Passes symbol of what had changed. Nothing had changed on the outside world, but everything changes when God gives you his peace.

I want you to have peace today. Do you know how much I love you? I really love you. And I know what makes for happiness and joy, and it starts with peace.

Would you close your eyes with me? Is there anyone here who would say, while you were speaking, pastor, I felt the Holy Spirit prodding me, saying, come. Come, you that are thirsty, and drink. You don't have to bring money.

Why do you labor for things that don't satisfy? Why do you spend your money for things that don't bring peace? That's what the prophet said to the people of Israel once in the Old Testament. Why do you run about and hustle and bustle? For what? It doesn't satisfy you. Inside, only Jesus can satisfy your soul.

Only his peace will steady you in every storm. Remember, it's not rational. It has nothing to do with circumstances.

It's a gift. You don't earn it. You just ask for it.

How many need God's help for peace today? Some area of their life, the past, the present, you don't know, everything's going crazy, worried about the future or whatever. Just stand where you are so I can say a prayer over you. Just stand.

Anybody want peace? One of you, two of you, 200 of you, just stand. God, that was for me. Peace on earth, that's for me.

I want everyone who's standing, come quickly, just so I can say a prayer over you. Grant peace to your people. We're not asking for money, fame.

We're asking for peace. Your supernatural peace, God, in my heart. Baptizing it, immersing it in this thing, this mysterious thing called the peace of God.

It's a peace that the world doesn't give. We've tried the other kinds of peace. They don't last.

We're asking for your peace today. Peace with God. We confess our sins.

We ask you to forgive us and have mercy if anyone's here, Lord, that doesn't know you as their savior. And even of those of us who know you as our savior, we know what the devil wants to do. We ask for mercy.

Forgive us for mistakes, sins, wrong things we've done, said, or thought. Let the blood of Jesus cleanse us. Even as you said, if anyone sins, let them confess their sins.

For if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us. Restore peace where there's been a rocky relationship. Give us peace for the past.

It's over. We forget those things that are behind. We're not going to live in yesteryear.

We're not going to let our present be ruined by past history. Let your peace take care of that. Let your peace take care of today.

We're not chafing. We're not struggling. We're not upset.

We accept where you have us today. And we know that even if we're going through a trial, all things work together for good to them that love God. Give us that peace that lifts us above the waves of the storm.

We give you our future, our future secure. In fact, we know where we're going to spend eternity with you. So we know you're going to take care of us every single day until then.

Thank you, Lord, for your peace. Everyone who's receiving peace by faith for the best Christmas ever, put your hands together and let's clap. Come on.

Peace. Peace in our heart. Peace in our conversation.

Peace in our family. Peace in our relationships. Peace.

Let's pray one last thing. God, this Christmas, let us be peacemakers. Where there's wrangling and hassling and fighting, give us the wisdom to say the right thing to bring peace.

Help us to pray with people and say, no, no, no, let's stop. Let's pray. Stop.

No, let's stop fighting. Let's pray. Make us peacemakers so that we'll be for sure children of God.

We ask your blessing on everyone in Jesus name and everyone said.

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