

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon Title: Peace In Christ, Various Scriptures

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INTRODUCTION: As followers of Christ, we are in a constant struggle, aren't we? We are in a battle. Yet, Christ is called the Prince of Peace. Where does peace come into all of this—in this world of chaos? The Bible tells us, before the creation of the world, there was darkness. The earth was here without form and void, and darkness prevailed upon the face of the deep. But, for some reason we tend to think the beginning was chaos and God brought order into chaos. But, I believe that's a wrong way of thinking. With God, it's always been peaceful. God took what was peaceful and put his creation in the middle of peace. God didn't take chaos and make order. There was already order. It was his divine order. And today, man brings chaos—because of his sin. Sin is what brings chaos. But, Jesus comes and brings peace.

Today, we are going to talk about the gift of Christ in our hearts—which is his peace.

There are three main points to my message today:

1. Christ came in peace.
2. Christ's peace is not the world's peace.
3. Christ gives us peace at the harvest.

First, CHRIST CAME IN PEACE.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:14 ¹⁴“*Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.*”

EXPLANATION: The angels announced Christ's coming to the shepherds. And, in their praise, they gave glory to God and declared peace on the earth. The pronouncement of peace was the announcement of Jesus to the people “on whom his favor rests.” The Greek word used here is *eudokias* (yoo-dok-ee'-ah), which means “good pleasure.” Some versions say “good will toward men.” I believe the meaning here is through Jesus. Peace only comes through Jesus. God takes great pleasure in his children. The pleasure of God upon man is true peace. A life

separated from God is the opposite of peace. People try to find peace in all types of ways.

ILLUSTRATION: I remember years ago, the rock and roll star, Kurt Cobain, died of a cocaine overdose, if I remember correctly. He said all he wanted in life was a little bit of peace. And, then in 2009, I remember Michael Jackson's death. This man had traveled the world, and millions of people had heard him sing and dance. He had a huge following. But, Michael Jackson, in an interview, said all he wanted in life was a little bit of peace. And, the anesthesia he was on, which allowed him to check out for periods of time and which eventually killed him, was a vehicle he was using to have periods of peace in his life. How sad!

But, I want to go back to Isaiah Chapter 9, to the prophets who foretold Jesus' coming long, long ago. Isaiah 9 prophesies the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ—calling him the Prince of Peace.

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 9:6-7 [first part of verse 7] *⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.⁷Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end...*

This is one of the most quoted scriptures this time of year. It gives us wonderful descriptors—names of Jesus. It calls him the Prince of Peace. One of these days, he will return as the King of Peace. He won't be a prince any longer. But, what is peace?

- Christ came in peace—

Second, CHRIST'S PEACE IS NOT THE WORLD'S PEACE.

We have a way of coming up with our own definitions of things. If I were to ask you to define America, you would probably have a definition that may be a little different than someone else. Or, if I asked you to define Thanksgiving or the meaning of family, or if I gave you other terms like loyalty or friendship, all of us would have different descriptors.

If I asked you to define peace, what would you say? I think one of my earliest impressions of peace goes back to when I was a child watching television during

the Vietnam protests. And, I saw hippies putting daisies in riffles. Do you remember that picture? We get these impressions in our minds as to what defines peace. And, we think these impressions are peace. But, Christ's peace is not the world's peace.

SCRIPTURE: John 14:27 ²⁷*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

EXPLANATION: Jesus said his peace is given in a different way than the world gives peace. But, he promises to give us peace—a peace that should drive out worry and fear from our hearts.

ILLUSTRATION: Do you remember a few weeks ago, when I preached to you about children and the vision I feel came from the Lord for us to reach children? And, I told you about my Sunday School teacher. I was afraid to go to church. And, I was taken to this classroom while my parents walked away. And, I remember running and jumping up on the half door, wanting to get out. Do you know what the teacher did in her wisdom? She taught me the scripture about having peace. And, she taught me to memorize it.

ILLUSTRATION: A woman took a trip abroad, and she had the same taxi several times. And, she got to know her taxi driver. She learned he was a man searching for truth in life, and he was willing to have spiritual discussions. This woman started asking him questions, and she determined he was not a believer in Jesus Christ. He talked about his previous struggle with drinking, and how he had stopped, though. The two soon got to the topic of meditation. My friend asked him why he meditated. His response was somewhere along the lines of—*it takes my mind of things. Huh, this woman said, So, it's kind of like sipping a little bit of alcohol...numbing the pain just enough.* His eyes widened with understanding, *Hmm...yes, you're right.*

Meditation is one way the world offers peace. Some people look for peace through yoga or exercise or training for a marathon or eating right. These things might make us healthier people. But, none of things take care of the peace problem of the soul. Some people might soak in hours of TV and alienate themselves from uncomfortable situations. But, truly all of us have an internal disease—an internal struggle—seeking peace—trying to numb the pain. But, Jesus is the one who gives

us peace. The more you know about Jesus, the more you let Jesus live through you—you in him and he in you—the more peace you will have in your life.

APPLICATION: If you are experiencing a time right now where there's not a lot of peace and there's anxiety or pain or grief or anticipation for future, here's my challenge to you: Learn more about Jesus. Put on more Jesus. Let Jesus live through you.

ILLUSTRATION: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a pastor during the violence of Nazi Germany stood in the face of injustice before the Nazis just took over. He spoke against it, while many of the pastors around the country were silent. He is well-known for his work, the *Cost of Discipleship*, and his letters from prison are still read and studied. As a part of the resistance in Germany, he understood how to so badly want justice and peace on earth now, but he also understood Jesus' peace is different from ours. He understood the battle we are fighting, and he recognized the illusion of peace the world puts forth.

And, in a speech in 1934, he said, "*There is no way to peace along the way of safety. For peace must be dared, it is itself the great venture and can never be safe.*"

[You know Bonhoeffer had an opportunity to come to America and avoid all of that, but he stayed.]

Peace is the opposite of security. To demand guarantees is to want to protect oneself. Peace means giving oneself completely to God's commandment, wanting no security, but in the faith and obedience laying the destiny of the nations in the hand of almighty God, not trying to direct it for selfish purposes. Battles are won, not with weapons, but with God. They are won when the way leads to the cross."

Do you hear that? Peace must be dared and can never be safe. It is not secure. Ultimate peace comes the opposite way from what the world says. From the outside, somebody might not consider Bonhoeffer's life peaceful. His life ended with execution in a concentration camp, a few weeks before the war was over.

But, Bonhoeffer knew battles are won with God, not weapons. They are won through the cross. And, ultimately victory comes through the cross and nothing else.

And, many people talk about the Christian life as a battle. And, it is. But, there is a difference between the battles of this world and the battle we fight in Christ—in Christ, with Christ, and watching Christ as he fights the battles for us—just like

there is a difference between the peace the world gives and the peace Jesus Christ gives.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 6:12 ¹² *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

EXPLANATION: And, because we are fighting against the powers of the dark world and the spiritual forces of evil, we will not succeed if we fight the way the world fights. The world wants to fight through physical violence and weapons. But, Jesus' weapons are different.

Go back a few verses in Isaiah 9. Before Jesus is prophesied as the Prince of Peace, Isaiah writes about the ultimate outcome of violence.

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 9:5 ⁵ *Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.*

EXPLANATION: When Jesus brings peace on earth, there will be no need for weapons and uniforms anymore. Do you see the image Isaiah tells us, that we have yet to see but we can hope to see it? One day, when Jesus sets up his earthly kingdom—a kingdom of peace—there will be a massive fire. And, that fire will be fueled by boots of uniforms that are no longer needed—fuel for the fire. One day, we'll warm ourselves by the fire of uniforms intended for battle because there won't be any need for them anymore. And, you thought recycling was a new concept. It was around in Isaiah Chapter 9.

However, back to the point—the peace of Christ is different than the peace of the world. In Matthew, Jesus wants to clarify a life in Christ will not be easy or “peaceful” according to the world's standards...

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 10:34 [One of the hard sayings of Jesus] ³⁴ *Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.*

EXPLANATION: That sounds like a contradiction doesn't it. Jesus just rebuked someone for using a sword. And, here he talks about swords, saying, *I came not to*

bring peace, but a sword...? I've heard something else referred to as the sword before.

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 4:12 ¹² *For the Word of God is sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

EXPLANATION: That doesn't sound very comfortable—because according to the world's standards, peace is calm and happiness. But, when the Word—Jesus—speaks to your heart, some things in you might have to die. And, it might be painful to let go of some things you're holding onto. The spirit stirs, and this spirit is called the Word of God.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 6:17 ¹⁷ *Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

Here we have it—the sword is Jesus, the Word of God, the Spirit of God living within us. And, as it penetrates our spirits and judges the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts, it might not be comfortable or feel like peace at first—but once we accept his love and worship in spirit and in truth, his peace will rule in our hearts. And, the world can fall apart around us, but we will be at peace. This is my prayer for all of us this morning, *internal peace!*

So we have—

- Christ came in peace.
- Christ's peace is not the world's peace, and now—

Last, CHRIST GIVES US PEACE AT THE HARVEST.

We live in a unique period of history. Christ has come, and he is coming again. And, in the meantime, we have a mission. Jesus told us...

SCRIPTURE: Luke 10:2 ² *“He told them, the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.*

What in the world does the harvest have to do with a sermon on peace? Well, I'm about to tell you. In Jesus' commission to go and proclaim the coming of the Kingdom of God, Jesus told his disciples to greet people with peace.

ILLUSTRATION: Some years ago, in Marshall, Texas, there was a new church that sprang up. And, these people were fervent about everyone coming to faith in Christ. It actually became cultish, as I understand it. And, they had a meeting, and they discussed, "What about people who don't want to come to faith in Christ?" They said, "Then we're going to take them by force." And, then the FBI showed up to investigate.

APPLICATION: You see, when we reach out to people with the gospel, folks, it's not a shotgun wedding. We don't hold a shotgun to someone and say, "Walk this aisle and profess Jesus as Savior and Lord." We first greet them in peace. You remember how I've said numerous times, the first act—the first step—in witnessing, is just being friendly. Is that something we can do?

Jesus said,

SCRIPTURE: Luke 10:5-7 ⁵ *"When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.'* ⁶ *If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you.* ⁷ *Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.*

EXPLANATION: This is an interesting scripture, which we can unpack another time. But, what we see here is Jesus came in peace, and he commanded people to go in peace. He came to bring peace on this earth in our hearts through his truth and through our restored relationship with God. And, he wants us to proclaim this peace to all people. I want you to know there are people of peace who will welcome Jesus' message. And, we are to seek out those people of peace and stay with them.

Let me tell you something I've learned about peace and how God works among people through peace. I've taken several mission trips. I've been involved with different groups of people and all types of people. And, I have learned there is a person of peace in every group. And, when I began working with a new group (It could be something as simple as being on a Boy Scout committee), I will scan the room and try to get to know people. And, I will seek out the person of peace—because God has planted a person of peace in every group.

It's a gift God gives some people—to be the person of peace. As you think about your family, you can think of the person of peace—the person you can go to, the person you can trust—the person of peace.

So, Jesus told us to go in peace, to share in peace, and to befriend other people with peace. But, no, not everyone will respond to you with peace. In fact, at times, many won't. But, Jesus has a promise: If there is not peace, and you go as a peaceful person, he will return it to you. So, no matter what, if you are seeking to please the Lord, to live out his principles, to let him live through you, to be available to him to live through you, to reach out to others—if you seek to make his Name known in peace—his peace will dwell in your hearts.

I know when we suffer loss, we have deep times of grief and depression. Loss could be death, loss of a job, a rejection. During those times, we need to pull from the reservoir of prayer and peace built up in our lives. And, hopefully, those times will only be temporary. And, with peace in Christ, we will pull out of those times. We will come out on the other side with a deeper appreciation for the peace of Christ—the peace that surpasses all understanding.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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