

## **Jesus is our peace**

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Advent 2022 / Peace / Ephesians 2:11–22

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We've all seen the pictures coming out of Ukraine over the last year. War has brought destruction on a monumental scale.

I'm sure many of us have prayed for the war to end and for peace to come.

Of course peace - as we think about it in western terms would only be the very beginning of what Ukraine would need.

Peace may stop the fighting - it may stop the destruction from continuing

But they will need more than just peace - they will need physical rebuilding - whole cities will need to be reconstructed.

They will need to reestablish commerce - cities need grocery stores - gas stations and the resources to supply these needs

They will need emotional restoration - their sense of security will need to be restored

In western terms - peace would only be the beginning

In OT terms though - the word for Peace is Shalom - and it's way more comprehensive than just the absence of war or the end of conflict -

Shalom carries with it the idea of being whole, intact, being in a state of health

It includes the concept of success, prosperity, and completeness

Shalom - is peace in the entire situation

So when the Bible speaks of peace - when we hear that Jesus is our Peace

We can be sure that we are fully forgiven, restored, and made complete in Christ.

**Pray**

### **Ephesians 2:11-22 (make correction in Bulletin)**

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—<sup>12</sup> remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.<sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility<sup>15</sup> by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,<sup>16</sup> and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.<sup>17</sup> And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.<sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.<sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,<sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,<sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.<sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

## **When God sent Jesus to be our Shalom**

**We now have horizontal reconciliation - one family of God (V11-15)**

**We now have vertical reconciliation - at peace with God in Christ (V16-22)**

At Christmas it's good for us to remember that at the birth of Jesus - even though Jesus came as the only Savior for the world - When He came - He came to His people first - He came to Israel

Now we do see hints of the expansive nature of the first advent of Christ in the announcement to the shepherds and in the coming of the Magi

And actually everyone should have expected that because of the promise to Abraham that

ALL nations would be blessed through him

But it is true that - the timeline of announcing salvation goes - Israel first - Gentiles second.

And here in Ephesians Paul is acknowledging just how important it is to recognize this

It should cause every Gentile that comes to know the Lord - it should cause them to rejoice!

Why? Because In Christ you are given entrance into the family of God!

Before that you were a foreigner.

And that doesn't just mean that you aren't Jewish . It is more significant than that.

It also means you have no established access to the covenant

No established access to the covenant promise of a  
Messiah.

Let me put that in Christmas terms

There would be NO Christmas for you!

No unto you a child is born - unto you a son is given

No Emmanuel - God with you

No Peace on earth good will toward men

None of that would be for you.

So when Paul says you were brought near - it's worth  
celebrating!

Because now you are brought into the covenant - and given  
access to the covenant promise of a Messiah

By the way - brought near is a term used when an outsider is  
brought into the Jewish community

When a foreigner would become what they called a  
proselyte

They would say they were brought near to the people of God  
and in turn brought near to God Himself!

## Illustration

Maybe you've attended a concert once - where everyone gets to enjoy the music but a select few get to go back stage - hence the term back stage pass!

Maybe you went to a Nascar race - and you saw some people with a Pit row pass.

Before or maybe after the race - you can go down and see everything up close.

It's something special.

Well - being 'brought near' to the covenant and to God was a very special thing in Israel

So Paul uses that language to let Gentiles (and Jews) know just what happened when Christ came.

I want you to see the practical issues Paul is talking about here - he shows us the contrast from before we were in Christ and after we're in Christ

Separated from Christ - brought near to Christ

Alienated from Israel - One Body now

Strangers to the covenant - Hostility has been removed /  
Reconciled to God

No hope - Now at peace with God / God is at peace with us

## **Application**

Are you at peace with God?

Do you know if God is at peace with you?

Do you know the joy of being part of the body - part of the family of God?

The message of Christmas is meant to fill you with joy!

God has brought you near by coming near to you - dwelling here on earth as the Savior of the world and securing peace with the Father.

And so we can sing - Joy to the World - the Lord has Come!  
Because Jesus is our Shalom

## **When God sent Jesus to be our Shalom**

**He brought us horizontal reconciliation - being brought near to God - through His people**

**We also have vertical reconciliation now as well**

Listen - in the first part of our passage - Israel is near God and we Gentiles aren't

And it's good news that Christ came to bring us near to God

But we don't want to just be near to God - we want to be reconciled with Him - at peace with Him

And that's what Paul is saying happened through Christ

Now what's interesting is that it's not just the Gentiles that are reconciled to Jesus ... No

Those in Israel who put their trust in Him are reconciled as well

Ya see - as close as Israel was to God and as much as they were the guardians of the covenant promise

They too needed vertical reconciliation

And Paul tells us here that Jews and Gentiles alike are reconciled to God through Christ

and this peace, that God brought through Christ - brought us **both** access to God - this happens through faith, and is realized through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Let me just say - as 21st Century Christians - it can be hard for us to realize just how wonderful the indwelling of the Spirit is

Let me explain this idea just a little further

What Paul is saying here is that you **now have** “immediate access to God through the gift of the Holy Spirit ... which brings the conscious presence of God to you” personally - as an individual (New Bible Commentary)

did you hear that

you **now have** “immediate access to God through the gift of the Holy Spirit ... which brings the conscious presence of God to you”

### **Application**

Christmas time is a reminder that you should be experiencing the presence of God every day?

Not just at Christmas?

After all- the Holy Spirit isn't in you on just one day - but every day!

He's there when you pray.

He's there when you read the Bible.

He's there when we worship together.

He's there while you're driving down the road - while your  
at work or the grocery store

at the gym or watching the grandkids

Christ came at Christmas - God came to dwell among men

and that includes the giving of the Holy Spirit

The peace that Jesus brought has lasting effects

## **Illustration**

I'm not sure how many saw the post I shared the other day on social media

It came from the online conversation many were having about whether or not to hold church on Christmas day - maybe you read some of the arguments on both sides. Since we're here at worship this morning you can see what side of the argument we're on.

Andy Styer one of the pastors from New River presbytery wrote this ...

*“The real reason why God's people are so willing to neglect the Lord's Day (this Sunday or any Sunday) is because they don't believe that something truly wonderful and amazing and supernatural happens when the covenant people of God gather together in the name of Christ.*

*They really don't believe that what they receive in the ministry of the Word and Sacraments is Christ himself.*

*If they really believed it, they'd never trade it in for a lazy morning at home. Christ is the good portion. Choose the good portion this Sunday (and I would add every Sunday). It is far more precious than anything you'll find under your tree, or in your stocking, or even around your breakfast table.”*

Listen - Christ brought the promise of Vertical reconciliation with Him at Christmas

and one of the wonderful things about it - is that we now get to experience the supernatural ministry of Christ every week at worship!

**When God sent Jesus to be our Shalom**

**He brought us horizontal reconciliation - being brought near to God - through His people**

**He also brought us vertical reconciliation as well**

**Jesus truly is our peace and it's a peace so complete that we can call it Shalom**

## Conclusion

Now there's one last thing to look at here in our passage

Look at V18 again

[Ephesians 2:18–22](#) (ESV)

<sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

God's Shalom has the power to bring restoration - to fix all that was broken by the fall

to make us whole again - make our relationship to God perfect again - and make our place in the kingdom meaningful again - for we are now a holy temple of the Lord

God's Shalom has the power to build us into a dwelling place for God

Stone by stone - one believer after another

joined together to display the glory of the Lord

to display His abiding presence in His people ... to the world

And the wonderful thing is - As the people of God we get to do this every Sunday - not just at Christmas not just the four weeks of Advent - Not just at Easter

We get to display the abiding Shalom of God every Sunday  
and in fact every day

And what we're displaying is something eternal

The assertion here in this text is super strong - Paul is talking not  
only about something that happened here on earth - but  
something that is firmly established in heaven itself

The Shalom of Christmas - makes all who trust in Christ Jew  
and Gentile alike

It makes them citizens of heaven

And no one can take that away from you

This Christmas may you fully understand the Shalom of  
Christ

And may God empower you to share that Shalom with those  
around you

So that they see the beauty of Christmas grounded in the  
beauty of the arrival of Jesus

and the Shalom - the peace that came that first Christmas  
morning

Let's Pray

**Benediction** adapted from [2 John 3](#)

Now as you go out into the world as God's children ministering  
peace - may His grace, mercy, and peace will be with you. In the  
name of The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen

## References

Carson, D. A., R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, and G. J. Wenham, eds. *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*. 4th ed. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994.