

1. What is peace?

VIDEO: Miss Congeniality – World Peace clip

(P) Peace is an interesting word, it can mean different things to different people. Some people talk of world peace, the idea that there will be no more wars, no more conflicts. Others think of peace as an end to conflict in their own lives. No more arguments, no more stress. Others still speak of peace as an inner feeling a personal peace. Where we are calm and at rest.

(P) There is an ancient word that comes from the Middle East that captures all these kinds of peace. In Hebrew it is shalom. In the Bible shalom means much more than just the stopping of war and conflict. It is essentially the idea of good health, order, security, relational harmony on the human level. On the divine level it means peace with God and the complete fullness of salvation.

But as much as we seek peace we also know that our world is full of trouble and conflict. There hasn't been a day in the 20th or 21st century when there has been no fighting somewhere. And of course conflict isn't only observed overseas, it's also here in Australia, in our communities, in our workplaces and homes.

Look around! What do you see? Do you see much peace? We see its absence daily in the news, in the troubles we find in our relationships and the things that we face daily whether we're at work or at home. Life often seems to be more trouble than peace. So we go in search of peace.

2. Where do we find it?

(P) The world offers many different ways to search for it. Some people think the answer is education and understanding. If we knew more about how society works then we wouldn't fight. But that hasn't prevented the world wars. Others say peace can only come at the barrel of a gun and that we need to fight to create peace. And although there have been necessary wars, this has yet to bring us lasting peace.

Solutions for inner peace seem just as lacking. Some suggest we try to find peace by avoiding the things that bring us conflict – whether it's certain types of people, or places. Some parents seek peace by putting on playschool or Peppa Pig to find those precious 10 minutes of silence and a cup of tea. Others look for peace by going away on holidays, we love it when there is no mobile reception, no people, it's just you and the beautiful landscape. Some people try to find peace through alcohol and drugs and even in desperation, suicide.

These methods, both for world peace and inner peace, have limited success. I'm sure we've all experienced moments of peace. But however hard we search when we try to find peace the world's way—it only lasts for a short time until life brings upon us another conflict whether personal or on a global scale.

There seems to be a problem when we try to find peace the world's way. We are on this continuous search for a lasting peace. Our problem is that we are starting our search for peace in the wrong place.

The Bible tells us in Romans 3:9-17 that "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.... and the way of peace they do not know."

For us to achieve total and lasting peace we need to go to the source of peace, that is, God who is the giver of Shalom.

You see the world can't achieve peace because it doesn't understand what the core problem is. The reason there is conflict in our world and not peace is because we are enemies of God – is that an uncomfortable truth for you to hear?

If you're not someone who follows Jesus yet, you might say, I don't feel like he's my enemy maybe you're thinking has been, if I'm ok with God then he must be ok with me. But that is not the way that God sees it. All of Humanity has turned its back upon God. Without God's grace, we all have this hatred in our hearts toward God, and we try to live life without any interference from God.

In Ephesians 2 verses 11 and 12 Paul is reminding us of where we are in our natural state, we are without God, without hope. we are without peace. The future that we are facing is eternal death. And No matter how hard we try to find peace ourselves, we aren't able to have it.

So if we can't find peace ourselves, how do we make peace with God?

Throughout the whole bible, God reveals to us his plan, a plan to make peace with humanity through one person, we see a glimpse of it in our passage in Isaiah. A light will be coming into the darkness, a Son will be born and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace and of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.

As we read the New Testament we find out that this Prince of peace is the person of Jesus Christ. So now the question is how does Jesus bring us peace with God. He does it by paying the debt owed to God so that we are no longer his enemies. Our response is simply to put our trust in Jesus and what he has done for us on the cross. Let me explain further:

3. Jesus brings...

Peace with God

The cost of rebellion to God is death. Peace with God has been accomplished for us by the death of Jesus Christ. He died in our place on the cross. In our passage in Ephesians, in verse 13 it says – but now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ And in verse 16 it says “he has reconciled us to God through the cross.” Because Jesus died on the cross for us, the war between us and God is over, we are no longer enemies with him. We have been saved from God’s judgement and we are forgiven for our rebellion towards God. Our relationship with God has been restored. Is this not the greatest news that you have heard? The Peace that we are looking for is found in Jesus. There is not anything that we have to do get it. God gives us peace as a gift. All we need to do is accept it. If you don’t have peace with God and you want peace with him, what you need to do is say sorry for your rebellion and trust in what Jesus has done for you. Achieving peace with God, the source of peace, then allows other peace to follow as well.

Jesus brings us Peace within

The opposite of inner peace is really stress and worry. And we worry a lot don’t we? We worry about what the weather will be like tomorrow. We worry about the way our children will grow up or the school that they are going to go. We worry about our relationships. We worry about the security of our future. We worry about our health. We worry about what is going to happen to us after death? We worry sometimes whether or not we’ve really been forgiven by God, Are we really going to heaven? we worry about a lot of things. Life is full of worry and troubles and sometimes it seems that we’re not able to have peace within us. We long for inner peace a sense of calm and control in the day to day troubles of life. Have you noticed that we worry a lot about the things that we can’t control?

But now that we are at peace with God and no longer his enemies the bible has some amazing things to say about worry. We are told we don't need to worry because God loves us, he will provide for us, and he promises nothing will come between us and him. The God of the universe, the one who has control over all things, the one who has power over all things, the one who knows how many hairs upon your head right now, loves and cares for you so much that he sent his one and only Son to die for you even though you were his enemy. As we trust in Jesus, he brings us security knowing that whatever happens to us we are going to live with him forever, and that in all situations our loving Father God knows what is best for us. does knowing that give you any peace? I know it does for me. But what about the day to day, how can I practically feel this peace? Well, Jesus, the Prince of peace promises us the experience of peace through his Holy Spirit. God doesn't promise that all our worries and troubles will suddenly go away when we trust in him. Jesus towards the end of his ministry on earth say to his disciples in John 14:27 says 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. When we put our trust in Jesus he promises us that the Holy Spirit will dwell within us and will produce in us peace.

(P) I watched a segment on Oprah about 'finding peace' and they said to get peace for the day is to take 5, 10, 15, 20 minutes of your day to just sit and tend to your heart. Now as we've already mentioned – we can't find peace on our own. But I think there is good practice here. God is wanting us to spend time in his word, let's focus and meditate on what Jesus has done for us, what he is doing for us and what he will be doing for us when he returns. Read God's word. I have learnt through my own experiences, that as I read God's word and pray to him, it reminds me of all the wonderful things he has given, the wonderful peace that he has given me. God's peace can flow through us and even in the hardest of times we can still feel it.

(P) Horatio Spafford lived in the 1800s. He had a thriving legal practice, a beautiful home, a wife, four daughters and a son. Over a few years, terrible things happened to him. Horatio

tragically lost his young Son, fire destroyed almost every real estate investment he owned, and as they were heading to Europe, their boat sunk and his 4 daughters drowned leaving only Horatio and his wife to survive. Horatio's life was full of conflict and trouble so how was he able to write the words of that well known hymn "whatever my lot He has taught me to say It is well, it is well with my soul". He had Shalom with God and he could say it is well with my soul.

Do we trust that God will love us and care for us in all circumstances?

(P) Jesus bring us Peace with each other (Eph 2:14, 18)

So Jesus brought us peace with God and he can bring us inner peace, does he also bring World peace, does he bring peace with each other? God promises, yes there will ultimately be world peace, and we will talk a bit more about that soon, but the challenge given to us today is to start bringing that peace now. God challenges Christians to start living that way now. And in Ephesians Paul speaks about peace between Christians.

Because of Jesus we are citizens in God's kingdom. Not only are we citizens together, but we are all members of God's house. We are brothers and sisters both forgiven and saved by God our Father. This should affect the way that we relate to each other. If we jump to Chapter 4 in Ephesians we see Paul pleading his case in how we are to live at peace with each other now. (P) *"I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.* It sometimes can be hard to be at peace with others in the church, but as we become Christians we are now called to live in harmony together. How much effort do we put in to keeping unity amongst us? It can be hard, to be at peace with other Christians, because we are still sinful and we will continue to hurt each other. We can seek peace by avoiding others. That's what we do sometimes isn't it? There can't be any chance of conflict if I don't interact with them, we pick and choose our friends, the ones we get along with, but that's not living in harmony. How much effort do we make to live in harmony with our brothers and sisters in Christ?

How much effort do you put in to reconcile with those that hurt us – whether they are a Christian or not. If you're a Christian, you have experienced the greatest forgiveness in the world, you are right with God, and yet we often fail to seek and give forgiveness with those around us. With God's help it is possible for us to have peace with those who have deeply grieved us.

(P) Corrie Ten Boom was a Christian woman who had been sent to a Nazi concentration camp Ravensbruck, along with her sister and father because they had been hiding Jews in their Dutch home. Both father and sister had died from sickness and starvation in this camp, yet Corrie miraculously survived the horrors and was eventually released. After the war Corrie went to defeated Germany with the message that God forgives." It was after one of the talks she gave when she was confronted by a man who had been one of the most cruel guards at Ravensbruck. He had become a Christian and asked her for forgiveness. This is her account of what happened:

"And I stood there—I whose sins had again and again been forgiven—and could not forgive. Betsie had died in that place. Could he erase her slow terrible death simply for the asking?" It seemed hours as I wrestled with the most difficult thing I had ever had to do.

For I had to do it—I knew that. But forgiveness is not an emotion—I knew that too. Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart. "Jesus, help me!" I prayed silently. "I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling." And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust out my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. This healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes.

"I forgive you, brother!" I cried. "With all my heart!" For a long moment we grasped each other's hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God's love so intensely, as I did then. But even then, I realized it was not my love. I had tried, and did not have the power. It was the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus brings us peace with each other.

4. World Peace??

(P) So what about World peace? We have looked at peace with God, peace with ourselves, peace with others around us, but what about World peace. A peace that covers the whole universe. A peace that covers all people. God does promise this peace as well and we are called to do our part to live it now, but ultimately, world peace will not come until Jesus returns. When Jesus comes again we are promised that we will experience full peace, full prosperity, and full health. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't long for that peace now, we should want world peace. But we should want the world to have REAL peace. Jesus came to preach peace to those who were far away and peace to those who were near. Jesus is the real peace that you can have. He calls us to preach the good news of Jesus to those who are far away. The world is looking for peace, we know where we can find it because God has shown it to us. Let's be willing to share that peace with people knowing that some may be hostile towards us, but also knowing that if they find Jesus, they can have total complete peace that will last forever.

Jesus brings us real peace with God, if we want real peace we need to accept it and trust in Jesus. Let me pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you love and care for us so much that you sent your one and only son to die for us on the cross. We thank you that you reveal yourself to us through your word. Thank you that Jesus can bring us peace. Sometimes we don't feel at peace in this world, Holy Spirit please guard our hearts. Help us to trust in our loving Father and trust that he knows what is best for us. Lord, help us to make every effort to live in peace with the people around us, to share the good news of Jesus. So that all we meet may come to know Jesus who brings real and everlasting peace. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Trust in Jesus the only one who brings real peace