

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Fourth Sunday In Advent, December 18, 2022

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 65:1-4, 76:1, 389, 375:1-3, 235:6-7.

Lessons: Isaiah 59:1-8, Romans 3:1-20, Matthew 10:32-42

Sermon Text: Romans 5:1

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Amen.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Sermons usually begin with the blessing of words like these: *“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* 2 Corinthians 1:2 (NIV). We recognize grace as God’s undeserved love and mercy.

But what does “peace” mean? When Jesus was born, angels announced *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”* Luke 2:14 (KJV)

But look around you in the world. There is no “peace” (use fingers and make quotation marks). Nation is fighting against nation. People are fighting against people even in our nation. We hear about and see news of violence, anger, fighting, quarrels and hatred. Sometimes that fighting is the actual use of weapons or fists. Sometimes it is words between people that show hatred and bitterness. There is no peace among nations. There is no peace between men. People are fighting and they will continue to fight until the end of time. Jesus speaks of wars and rumors of wars before judgement day and tells us *“When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.”* Mark 13:7-8 (NIV)

So how can God announce

PEACE!

1. **God’s peace is not what men think about first when they hear the word “peace”.**
2. **God’s peace leads to eternal life and eternal happiness.**

The New International Version of the Bible of 1984 used the English word “peace” 250 times in 229 places. But we must distinguish between peace among men and the peace with God which men can enjoy.

Peace among men would mean no fighting, no hatred, no anger, no nasty words, and all the outward things which may grow out of sin in the heart. We might try to illustrate this as horizontal peace (maybe stretch your arms out with a horizontal motion.)

Peace with God means peace of conscience, knowing God has forgiven our sins and is not angry with us because his very Son, Jesus Christ, paid the penalty for all sins. And peace of conscience leads to calm, peaceful demeanor and it affects our whole life. We might try to illustrate this as a vertical peace. (Make some kind of up and down motion with your arm.)

In his beautiful prophecy, Isaiah tells us of the Son of God who *“will be called ...Prince of Peace.”* Isaiah 9:6 (NIV) He has restored the right relationship between God and man, making peace by abolishing in his flesh the enmity which existed since the fall of man. That peace is emphasized in Ephesians: *“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by*

which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.” Ephesians 2:14-17.

The Messiah came to give first of all a kind of peace different from earthly peace. Jesus said, ***“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”*** (John 14:27). His peace is tied to his work of redemption. He satisfied the justice of God, which demanded payment for sin. He offered himself as the atoning sacrifice for sin.

Because of that, we are at peace with God through Jesus. That peace ***“transcends all understanding”*** (Philippians 4:7). It is beyond all human understanding.

We need to look at the context of any Scripture passage to determine whether God is talking about earthly peace or peace with God. The context of a Bible passage usually shows which of these two uses of “peace” is meant. We must let Scripture explain and interpret Scripture.

Unbelievers, unregenerate mankind, don’t know the peace God speaks about. The Apostle Paul writes ***“The way of peace they do not know”*** Romans 3:17 (NIV), which is a direct quotation from Isaiah.

We see a lack of peace among men recorded first when Cain killed Abel. Of course, when Eve and Adam first sinned, there was a lack of peace between God and mankind.

How humanity has longed for peace through the ages! Peace, in human terms, will always be elusive. As long as the world endures, there will be wars, rumors of wars, discord, and strife.

So there has been a need for peace among men ever since sin came into the world. Within the last century or so, people of nations of the world have made efforts to create world-wide peace among men. After the First World War the League of Nations was a major international attempt to create and maintain peace among men. But that didn’t work and about 20 years later another worldwide war among men occurred. Then men created the United Nations, with a goal of creating and maintaining world peace among nations and the United Nations is still trying today. Has it worked? NO!

When nations aren’t getting along, attacking one another with armies, weapons, and words of hatred, that shows that they aren’t “at peace”.

And it isn’t just nation against nation. People are not at peace with one another but are fighting and not getting along in many ways. Individuals as well as groups of people aren’t getting along.

And why? Why is there no peace of any kind where people are involved? The answer is one three-letter word: sin. God’s Ten Commandments show the extent of sin and how it affects every human being. In thoughts, words and deeds, mankind, every one of us, disobeys God and sins; commits transgressions and iniquities.

Isaiah tells us ***“There is no peace,’ says my God, ‘for the wicked.”*** Isaiah 57:21 (NIV) People are and were searching for peace and have been for millennia. Men have tried to create peace among men and have failed and will continue to fail until the end of time.

So how can we enjoy any peace?

Sin, wickedness equals no peace. So what is this peace that God talks about? Remember the message of the angels at Jesus’ birth? He came to bring peace with God. Angels said ***“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”*** Luke 2:14 (KJV) ***“Glory to God in the highest!”*** Praise God, they said. Give thanks to him, for he sent his Son to reconcile the sinful world to himself. Because God sends peace through the forgiveness of sins, that shows his good will toward men.

Even though there is no earthly peace, the child of God has peace with God and this can – and will – flavor his life and influence the way he deals with people on earth.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday people were searching for peace, hoping for it, and we hear them greeting Jesus with the words ***“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” ‘Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”*** Luke 19:38 (NIV) You can be sure that a great many of those people were looking for an earthly peace, peace with the Roman Empire, so that they might have their nation be free. Many did not recognize the peace and freedom they could have when Jesus as the Savior from sin set them free from eternal death, hell, and Satan. That day Jesus said ***“If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes.”*** Luke 19:42 (NIV)

Men seek the wrong peace if they only desire the end of earthly war and strife. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, has restored peace with God. He has removed what caused all discord, strife, and war – sin. His peace is greater than anything we might imagine. And it is beyond anything that anyone else could ever achieve.

He paid the price for peace when he came to earth, suffered and died and rose again from the dead but perfect peace does not exist where sin is present. We must wait until he returns and takes us to heaven for perfect peace. Nevertheless, that does not diminish the truth that he is the Prince of Peace now. And there will be no end to his peace and ruling.

The Apostle James makes some very important applications about peace.

He asks: ***“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.”*** James 4:1-2 (NIV) In our prayers we will certainly ask God for peace, first of all that his peace rest upon us each day, and then that God's peace spill over into our lives as we deal with other people.

James also tells us: ***“For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.”*** James 3:16-18 (NIV)

When we rejoice in the righteousness God gives us, we will find peace with God and rejoice in what the Holy Spirit has done for us. And then, even on earth, we will seek to apply what God has done for us. Our relations and interactions with our fellow humans, especially to those of the household of faith will be changed so that we may have some small measure even of earthy peace. ***“The mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.”*** Romans 8:6 (NIV) ***“Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”*** Romans 14:19 (NIV)

Never forget the peace which God gives us. ***“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,”*** Romans 5:1 (NIV)

Jesus assures us: ***“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*** John 16:33 (NIV) ***“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.”*** John 14:27 (NIV) Amen.