

12/22/19 - Advent of Peace (Dwelling)

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Date: 22 December 2019

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[0 : 00] Today's sermon is going to be on the dwelling peace of Christ, and we're going to be looking at Ephesians chapter 2, verse 14 through verse 18.

And once you get there, I'm going to have a word of prayer as we get into the text today. Okay. Ephesians 2, verse 14 through 18. Please join me in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the sufficiency in your words and the implications that it has in our lives that we need to look no further than what is in your words. We don't need to add to it. We don't need to take away. We don't have to work towards the things in your word. It is a gift of grace, the things that are in your word. And Father, we thank you for that and bring this to life in our church today as we look at the dwelling peace of Christ, looking specifically in Ephesians 2. Help me to work mightily and labor for you this morning. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So I would say that the world, majority of the world, usually, I think, is desires to seek peace.

[1 : 34] Peace with one another, peace with God, peace with whatever kind of anybody's impression of what God might be like, having peace with that. Many times in families, we want to have peace with our in-laws. You know, we throw around peace. We want peace. I got my first amen on the in-law statements.

Noted. Okay, that's two. We're doing good. Okay, see, his power is made perfect in my weakness. Now, back in the 1960s, 1969, there was a song out in that time period. It said, Give Peace a Chance. Does anybody remember that song back in the hippie era? Yeah?

It was running in my head when I was preparing today, so I don't have any idea why, but it made me start thinking, okay, so the world is talking about this. They're putting it in songs, and it goes. Everybody's talking about bag-ism, shag-ism, drag-ism, mad-ism, rag-ism, tag-ism, this-ism, that-ism, ism, ism, ism, ism. All we are saying is give peace a chance. All we are saying is give peace a chance, you know? You're familiar with it. So peace is not uncommon to the world. The world is seeking peace. Well, the Bible also speaks about peace as well. The Old Testament anticipated a certain peace to come, and the New Testament confirmed that peace, and that peace was a person which that song, Give Peace a Chance, was unknowingly longing for. They really didn't know what they were asking for. It's nothing that they could actually achieve, but was accomplished through a person.

Isaiah 57 verse 19 talks about this. Peace, peace, to the far and to the near, says the Lord, and I will heal them. Speaking of Jesus. But Brad, Pastor Brad talked about it a little bit, so you kind of hit on what peace is. You know, in English, the word peace conjures up a passive picture, one showing an absence of civil disturbance and hostility, or a personality free from internal or external strife. So just everyone's kind of getting along. But the biblical concept of peace is much broader. It's much larger than our English word. It rests heavily on the Hebrew word shalom. And this shalom actually means something broad and is applied in multiple different variations in the Hebrew language, but overall it means to be complete or to be sound. It's Christmas time. We're going through Advent, obviously. There's churches all over the valley and the world talking about Advent peace, the Advent candle of peace. So it's Christmas time. We're all talking about this. We're all looking at it. But there is such a uniqueness in the peace of Christ, regardless of the cultural definition of peace, of something that you can achieve rather than something that's been given, or even the culture's antonym of peace, which is actually war. The complete opposite of peace to the culture is war. But biblically speaking, church, peace and war actually close partners in the objective of true peace. And we're going to talk about that today. This peace came down from heaven to obliterate and destroy. Specifically, it was a war on Satan's divide and devices. And most of all, the results allowed access to the eternal God of all people, of all ethnicity. So we're going to discuss the peace of

Christ, specifically between various people, meaning the Jews and the Gentiles in this passage, but also the inclusion of those Gentiles who were outcasts. And finally, we're going to look at the implications of how that dwelling peace applies and should manifest in our lives today.

[5 : 49] So as we get into this, consider what our initial reaction of peace is, our understanding of it, and let's look at what peace is defined at in Scripture. Let's read Ephesians 2, verse 14.

I think it's up on the screen. There it is. It says, For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 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, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father. Now, if we wanted to kind of dance around the text a little bit, we want to pull in some context because our text is informed. It has a specific meaning and a specific purpose.

And this section of passage today begins by focusing on the Gentiles, specifically, and their inclusion. Back in verse 11, if you just scroll up a little bit in your phones or take your finger up in the Bible up to verse 11, it's talking specifically about Gentiles and their exclusion from God and his people. The Gentiles were bleak, a bleak picture of their distance from God. They were alienated from his blessings and separated from God's chosen people. However, Paul encourages the church of Ephesus of the new closeness to God that is available to them, not by covenantal signs of circumcision like the Jews, or rituals. Not of anything of works, actually, but solely because of the blood of Jesus Christ. Those who were far off outside of the covenant are brought near, just as Ephesians 2, 13 states, but now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far, far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. So now, Paul is continuing his exposition of the implications of Christ being the basis of dwelling peace. So point one this morning, let's look at verse 14 of the unifying peace of Christ.

Verse 14 says, for he himself is our peace. Paul's statement here, that he himself is our peace, Christ himself is our peace, Paul's statement is rested in the Christological interpretation of what was previously spoken in Isaiah 52 and Isaiah 9, where Isaiah 9 said, for 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. And Isaiah 52, how beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, your God reigns. Church, there is no peace outside of him. This verse says it clearly, for he himself is our peace. We need to know, look no further than Jesus Christ as a person.

He is our peace. He's all-encompassing peace. He's the object of peace. But this verse also continues to talk about the results of this peace. So looking at the audience of the church of Ephesus, there is a new opportunity here when it says, who has made us both one. There's something happening in this passage that Paul is specifically addressing to the church of Ephesus. And it was an opportunity for all Gentiles who were alienated from God to have this close relationship with him alone by faith.

[10 : 10] Those who were once divided are now united by the anticipated peace of Christ. Peace was given to mankind through Christ. Where it says in verse 14, he himself is our peace, remember? And he himself bestowed this peace when he said in John 14 verse 17, peace I leave with you, my peace I what? Give you.

The results of peace. Let's talk about the method of peace. Look in this verse how it talks about breaking down. It is actually a picture of violence. It's not very, you know, unicorns and rainbows. He came with a sword. He says, and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility. Isn't that interesting? He was broken down in his flesh.

In his flesh of his incarnation of the baby in a manger, but also outside of that manger of him nailing his own flesh on the cross. Has broken down, has declared war on Satan.

Paul has in view here the temple of Israel. And while I'm actually reading this at first glance, I was like, interesting. Like, he's probably talking about the veil being torn and, you know, all having access. But within the context, this is where context is key when we're reading this, the Bible, because he's talking about this relationship between Jews and Gentiles. He's not talking about access in this passage right now about access to the Father, but this relationship between Jews and Gentiles. So, many commentators agree that this is a temple illustration.

[11 : 58] So, I have a picture of the temple here. It should be on the computer, Dom. So, the temple. Are you guys familiar with the picture of the temple? Anybody? You guys are? Yeah? Yeah.

So, at the heart of the temple, I wish I had like a laser pointer or something, but at the heart of the temple is the holy place. And that is the holy of holies. You know all the illustrations, all the talk about the holy of holies that we're entering in. Inside is the throne of God. And actually, Brad, it's really cool. You talked about it, so I don't really have to go too much more into detail. But the high priest, after going through strict rituals and everything, he would be able to go into the holy of holies. And notice the outside part of this. You see the outer court, the inner courtyards, where there's actually designated sections for the priest courtyards.

You'd have the women's courtyards. And there'd be all these different sections, but these courtyards were specifically only accessed by Jews. Jews could only enter these inner courtyards. So, that leaves us with, he's talking about Gentiles, that leaves us with the outer courtyards, everything down. Down the stairs and the flat plain around, that is the Gentiles' courtyards.

That is as far as they can go. And actually, in 1930, they're still uncovering the actual inscriptions on that wall. And you know, like, hunters posted, or property owners posted for hunters, you know, trespassers will be prosecuted. Well, the inscriptions on this wall that separated these two courtyards was, trespassers will be killed. Gentiles were not allowed in. There was great hostility between the Jews and the Gentiles. But church, where did all this come from?

Why? Why is there this hostility? Where did this come from? Why is there a wall between these two people, between fellow men, between these two ethnic divides? The hostility between brothers and sisters.

[14 : 20] Well, this is not something made up. It didn't happen by coincidence. But all this hostility, actually everything, every chaos, every ounce of chaos and division in this world is linked to one garden and two people. The moment that Eve was deceived and took the fruit and ate of it and gave some to her husband is the moment that all of this happened. But by God's grace, he sent a cure.

He didn't allow us to stay divided. He had a cure and a plan from the very beginning. Wrap your mind around that one church. To wage war on that division. To come and to dwell in the midst of that, the economic and political and social chaos. Coming down in the flesh, in a manger, in such chaos and disorder. But he also came to bring peace in order to that which was divided, specifically in this text between the Jews and the Gentiles. Let's continue in this text in point two.

With the nullifying peace of Christ, as verse 15 continues, it says, 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, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. Verse 15 talks about abolishing the law.

That sounds pretty good, right? All those strict requirements and demands. Man, we're free. Let's live as we want. You know, that makes me think of like going to amusement parks and being dragged around. Well, we'll say I was dragging my parents around at that time. But you know, me getting dragged around by, say, my kids at an amusement park, and you get an all-access pass. You can do whatever you want. Man, that's an exhausting day for any parent or any grandparents. All-access, free refills. Yeah, just load up on sugar. Perfect. Thank you, amusement park. And so, you know, when we read this of abolishing the law, this is not necessarily an all-access pass to do whatever we want, but it's an all-access pass to an eternal God and a relationship with that eternal God.

The Gentiles didn't want any parts of that dietary law, that sacrificial system, or the traditions that were set down by the rabbis. In verse 15, it actually explains the previous, verse 14. Because remember, we started out, Jesus himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by, now verse 15, by abolishing the law of commandments, the Old Testament law. He doesn't annul the moral law, but he fulfills the dietary laws, the sacrificial laws, all this do this and do that and don't do this and don't do that.

[17 : 37] As far as working towards this old covenant and the requirements of this old covenant, there are still do's and don'ts that are still good to be practiced in our Christian lives.

He fulfilled all the requirements of the law, and he put aside all these human traditions that were barriers to that union among the people. You see, God is holy, church. He's holy.

And those who are not under his covenant are estranged from God because he is too holy to look upon our iniquities. It is crucial to understand the profound implications of what Christ truly did.

Think about this. This is not just your coming to Sunday and raise your hand and sing some songs. Like, this is a profound reality that brings the dead man to life. Like, this is no simple truth. You get that. Our estrangement from God has everything to do with who he is and also who we are. He is holy, and we have violated God's law, and God has no fellowship with lawbreakers in the least bit. This was true until Christ's blood was shed for us, and the demands of the law were met, and where there was no trace of peace to be found between Jews and Gentiles. Specifically, true peace came at his last dying breath on the cross.

[19 : 07] Church, this is good news to celebrate, to get excited about. This was God's peace treaty, and it has no expiration date.

This is not an all-access path to do whatever we want, but this is an all-access path to God through faith in Christ.

Just as Romans 5, 1 says, since we have been justified through faith, we have what? Peace with God. Jesus Christ is a champion of peace between God and man.

Verse 15 talks about this unity here. In, let's see, verse 15, it says, In himself one new man in place of the two.

So making peace. What does this sound like, church? What does it sound like? I immediately thought of talking about one man from two. I was thinking about a marriage.

[20 : 13] The wedding. It sounds like that to me. It sounds like reconciliation. This brought together not only God and man, but also Jew and Gentile.

But doesn't man fail at this constantly? Like, think about things like the Holocaust. The awful things that happened at the Holocaust during World War II.

And other church areas and church history areas. There they go. Let's have a word of prayer for the firefighters.

Father, we lift up to you our dedicated firefighters today. And to talk about the closing of Station 7, just down the road from us, and the lives that it's helped, and that they're quicker to respond to the needs in our community.

Father, help them to be safe right now on this call. Father, be with them and protect these men and women who are going out to protect civilians like us.

[21 : 29] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So it's talking about one man into two. Taking one man into two.

A marriage. An image of marriage. But man has been so rotten throughout history. I mean, you look at various people doing things in Christ's name to bring violence, to bring bloodshed, to express their disdain against various people groups all throughout history.

The peace of Christ expresses within this community between one another, but also to other members that don't look like us. Of all races. Of all ethnicities.

Of all ages. Sometimes of all sizes. It is everyone. Those overzealous members of the Christian church have fallen for a lie, and are advocates of discord, hatred, and persecution.

But look at it with me in verse 16. I'm going to read it here. It says, And might, and that, let's go back a little bit, because it's just an odd place to start.

[22 : 35] By abolishing the law and commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two. So making peace. And might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross.

And thereby killing the hostility. The reconciliation of God to man is the expression of reconciliation from man to man.

I'm going to talk about that in just a moment. Because since Christ has made peace with God, we should, as a church, be seeking peace between one another. Between not just sitting in the room today, but also people outside of these walls.

Of all different ethnicities. This isn't advocating for some sort of social justice agenda. This happened between the Jews and the Gentiles. Two people who just had this wall of hostility between them.

Because of Christ. Because of who he is. He is our peace. And if he is our peace between the Jews and the Gentiles, how much greater is it for us to have peace with one another within this room and outside?

[23 : 45] Which leads me to point three. A proclamation of the peace of Christ. Proclaiming the peace of Christ. Verse 17 and 18. Come to a close and say, And he came and preached peace to

you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

For through him, we both have access in one spirit to the Father. Look at this really carefully here, church. Jesus Christ came and he preached peace to you.

Specifically, Paul's talking to the Gentiles who were far off. And also to those who were far off, but also to those who were near. The same peace. Peace to those who were near.

Meaning the Jews in this context. Through him, we both have access in one spirit to the Father. So those who embrace Jesus Christ in faith, no matter Jew or Gentile, slave or free, are reconciled into one family, one body by their common devotion to Christ.

This is true peace found in Christ. Peace available for all people. And church, there's one thing this world needs.

[25 : 01] There's no more barriers. It needs peace. This world needs a person. This must be our prayer when we open up the newspaper.

How many of us are just so jaded anymore that we just don't want to watch the news anymore? We don't want to read the newspaper. It's just kind of so, I don't know, just so chaotic and disordered.

And you can almost feel as a Christian, I feel like you could feel the disorder and the lack of hope.

The world needs Jesus when we open these newspapers.

When we see the chaos in this world. And if the world needs peace, then we know the world needs Jesus. There's no untying or unraveling the two. The mission field outside of these walls is crying for peace.

They were talking about it back in 1969. Give peace a chance. Unknowingly, the only way to achieve that is through a person. So church, let's get busy.

[26 : 09] Can we get busy? Reconcile relationships with one another. If there's anything going on between this chair and that chair, or maybe a lot of people are on vacation, between us in these chairs and those outside in the world right now.

If there's anything going on, bringing a wall of hostility, the peace of Christ crushes that. And we have to get over our drama, get over ourselves, and come unified with the peace of Christ.

Too many churches can't even make it outside of their inner hostility within these walls. That they're... If they want any significance to have any effect of the hostility outside these walls, they're going to be empty-handed.

There's nothing we have to offer if we're disunified within our own body. If within this body, within these church walls, if we are not unified, what do we have to offer to the world?

We have nothing. We must herald this message of peace, not just in word, but in deed and in action. And while I can't account for everything in the past of this church, nor the issues at the church down the streets, nor the tense past of relationships between different ethnicities, we can do something right here and right now to allow this place to have shalom, peace.

[27 : 41] Let's get this right, church, and be able to offer true peace of which the world so desperately needs to hear about and experience, because we are His family, we are His peace, and we are His church.

We need peace between one another. I said it, but I'll say it again, and I say it in great love. What do we have to offer to the lost if we have nothing to offer to one another?

That should burn a little bit. That's good. A church that is hostile towards each other will appeal to the world nothing more than an empty-handed hypocrite.

We have nothing to offer that if we can't get our relationships right. If Christ has divided the wall of hostility between the Jews and Gentiles, we can work our stuff out, and we need to, to be true witnesses of this peace.

Let this never be something that we have to experience in this church. And now this doesn't mean that we can't disagree at times. I think good disagreement sometimes refines us. It helps us practice empathy.

[28 : 49] We can have good disagreements on the secondary issues, but let's get Christ right. Let's get peace right. So we go out and we are ambassadors of the Word. And if you are not in Christ today, if you are hearing the gospel, if you're hearing this access, these walls being broken down, the outcasts being allowed in, the whole image of the temple is just completely crumbled.

We have access to the Holy of Holies. This is good news for you today. The word access is found actually only three times in the New Testament. If there is one thing to understand in addition to the reconciliation of Christ, it would be the understanding of the beautiful depiction of access.

Think about it. We have access into grace. God's throne is the throne of grace. Number two, we have access to the Father. Through Jesus and through his sovereignty, we can approach him as a child to a father.

We have access through Jesus Christ. The blood gives us boldness to come to the throne.

Hebrews 10, 19 talks about that. We have access by our faith. I'm just going to repeat that one just for the people.

Think about it. We have access by faith. There's nothing you can do to obtain that access except through faith in Jesus Christ. This is good news.

[30 : 23] So what are you waiting for? If you are not in Christ, come to faith and receive access to God our Father. He is our dwelling peace, church. Let's get this right.

Let us be unified with peace that comes from Christ. Shalom in this place so that we have something to offer that is tangible to this world when we go out of this building. Let's have a word of prayer.

Let's advance himself. Let us see in the video. God bless you. Your mother is out of this building and be able to keep us together. Let us pray. Let us an applause so this is anxious. Let us pray in this city describes worldly peace without temptation there.

Let us say Do you see ■■ peaceful and all a generous of each person here.

Let us find what means in it and sometimes our