

Ambassadors of Peace

Matthew 5:9

Introduction

I read a statement on a marquee in front of a church building in Cheyenne that read: “What the world needs now is love sweet love.” Although I think I understand the motive and intent of whoever thought to put those words on that church’s marquee, love sweet love is not the remedy for a world filled with violence and war. In a *Time Magazine* piece titled, “The World’s Biggest Problems are Interconnected. Here’s How We Can Solve Them This Decade,” Justin Worland suggests that those four problems are lack of global health care, endemic poverty, structural racial discrimination, and the earth’s instability due to climate change.

The United Nations published their plan to address these problems by the year 2030 and titled their proposed plan, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” This is what was written in the Preamble of their agenda:

This Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet, and prosperity. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom. We recognize that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan. We are resolved to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want to heal and secure our planet. We are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path.

The goal of the United Nations is universal peace. Their vision of what that peace looks like is written in their agenda: “We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.”

The root problem in the world for why we do not have the peace that we seek is not in the lack of global healthcare, endemic poverty, or structural racial discrimination. The need for global peace has existed long before the problems identified by the United Nations. The attempt of politicians, philosophers, and nations to address the need for peace has been and continues to be fleeting, weak, and superficial. The world’s solution for peace is fleeting because it has not come up with anything that lasts. The world’s solution for peace is weak because it is built on the shifting sands of human ideologies. The world’s solution for peace is superficial because it only addresses the surface of the problem and not its root cause.

What the world really needs is not “love sweet love” (whatever that means) but peace, but not just any kind of peace, it needs a permeating peace. It is a peace that was lost in a garden long ago when Adam and Eve sinned against God and the evidence of that lost peace was seen not only with Adam and Eve’s newfound shame but the murder of their son Abel by their first-born

son known as Cain. The peace that was lost is shalom, a Hebrew word that describes a wholly different peace than the kind of peace the United Nations is hoping to manufacture. Shalom is a deeper and more holistic peace that cannot be experienced without the existence of God. As *The New International Dictionary of the Bible* describes: “Peace is the presence of God, not the absence of conflict.”¹ The best description of shalom that I have read outside of the Bible was written by Cornelius Plantinga:

The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call shalom. We call it peace, but it means far more than mere peace of mind or a cease-fire between enemies. In the Bible, shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creature in whom he delights. Shalom, in other words, is the way things ought to be.²

Jesus came to restore shalom. It is only the restoring of shalom that we can experience the kind of joy we all long and hope for. It is the restoring of shalom that the world can know and experience the kind of love that it needs. This is what the apostle Paul prayed that people would know and experience in his epistle to the Romans: “**May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope**” (Rom. 15:13).

It is this peace Jesus spoke of in his seventh beatitude: “**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.**”

The Peacemaker is the Christ-follower

Who is the peacemaker? Is the peacemaker the person who seeks to keep peace wherever he or she is at? Is the peacemaker the person President Jimmy Carter had in mind when he thought of the Egyptian president and the Israeli prime minister who agreed to peace between their two countries? In an address President Carter gave to Congress on September 18th of that year, he concluded while looking at his two friends, despite their religious affiliation, with Jesus’ words: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be the children of God.” Is the peacemaker the person who serves and protects others? The answer to all of these questions is no.

The peacemaker is the person who found his/her hunger and thirst for righteousness satisfied in Jesus. The peacemaker referred to in the seventh beatitude is the person who first arrived at the cross of Christ as one who was poor in spirit, mourning of their sin, and meek because he/she was ready to submit himself/herself to the will of the God we are all guilty of sinning against. It is the poor in spirit who are willing to give mercy when mercy is not deserved. It is the one who mourns over his sin who seeks a purity in line with the character of Jesus. It is the meek who submit himself to the will of God who is then able to take into his world the presence of God. The peacemaker is the person who has been reconciled to God and now has the shalom of God. The peacemaker is the person who the apostle Paul describes in Ephesians 2:12-16,

¹ J.D. Douglas & Merrill C. Tenney. *The New International Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan; 1987), p. 761.

² Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; 1995), p. 10.

...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. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 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. (Ephesians 2:12–16)

The only way for you to find the peace that we all long for and desperately need is for the Prince of Peace to find you even while you are far off. To the Christian, I say this: We were far off because we were running from God! We were far off because of a love we had for a different kingdom that is opposed to the kingdom of God! We were far off because we wanted a god in our image, a god we could tolerate, a god who approved of a lifestyle that he would dare not inconvenience. We were far off because we were dead, dead, dead! Consider the significance of what it means that Jesus, the Prince of Peace, came looking and found you who were once far off. Listen to Isaiah 9:6-7,

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. (Isaiah 9:6–7)

The one whose titles include: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace found you! The One from whom we are told that earth and sky will flee away on Judgement Day took on flesh to die a death you deserved, was buried for three days, and defanged death by defeating it when he rose from the grave... found you! Because he found you, you now have shalom. Because he found you, you now have God. Because he found you, you are now a child of God!

The Christ-Follower is a Child of God

Because you have been reconciled to God through Jesus, because Jesus is your peace, because you have been born again, and because you are a Christian... you are now a member of his family. As a member of his family, you are a son or a daughter of the same God you were once an enemy of. If you are a Christian, you who once ran from God, now follow his Son because his way is the way, his way leads to what is true, his way leads to life. I love what Tim Keller said of following Jesus:

“Don’t come to Christianity because it’s relevant, even though it certainly is. Don’t adhere and subscribe to Christianity because it’s exciting, though it certainly is. Don’t give your life to Christ because he will solve your problems, though he certainly will. Don’t come to Christ and spread Christianity around because it will solve society’s ills, even though it certainly will. Come to Christ because he’s true.”³

³ Keller, T. J. (2013). [The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive](#). Redeemer Presbyterian Church.

Jesus calls you to something extraordinary that this world can't come close to replicating. Jesus calls you to a better-way, a cross-bearing-way, a dying-to-self-way, a way that leads to life, and the only way where shalom can be truly experienced. This is why politicians, philosophers, governments, and nations cannot give the peace we need, they promise to give what only the presence of God can bring, and since they seek a peace apart from God their version of peace is fleeting, weak, and superficial.

Jesus not only calls you to something extraordinary, but he also transforms your spiritual death into extraordinary life. Here is what we are told of the person who has been brought near to God by Jesus: **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come”** (2 Cor. 5:17). Just four verses later, we are told, **“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”** (v. 21). Guess what is sandwiched between those two verses? Now that you are a new creation and have become the righteousness of God, God intends to do something amazing with your life, and we discover what that something is in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20,

“All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:18–20)

If you are a Christian, you are a child of the living God with all the rights and privileges that come with being his child. You are only a child of God because you had nothing to offer in terms of your own righteousness, for you were poor in spirit. You are only a child of God because you grieved over your helpless sinful state that only Jesus could cure. You are only a child of God because you finally humbled yourself to obey the will of God for your life. Now you have a whole new life because of Jesus, and because you have a whole life because of Jesus, you now have a whole new direction in life. If you are a Christian, you are now living for him, and because you are living for him, you are now living the peacemaking life, which is the kind of life that brings the presence of God with you wherever you go. This is why the peacemaker is blessed by God, for the peacemaker is the child of God who lives his/her life in light of the new kingdom that he/she now belongs to.

Conclusion

Oh, dear Christian, do you see that Jesus is everything to you. Jesus is life for you. Jesus is your shalom. He is your everything, your every treasure, and he will not play second fiddle. You were once dead, dead, dead! Now you live, live, live! It is all because of Christ.

You Christian, are his Church, together we have been sent into a world hostile towards the Christian message. Christ has called us out of the world to send us into the world on a mission—God's mission: **“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”** (Matt. 28:19–20, NIV). We are sent into the world as Christ's ambassadors to proclaim God's terms of peace to a world hostile towards Him, ravaged by the curse of sin. We are sent into a world without peace

to bring the peace of God to those that are hostile towards God, by introducing them to his Son who seeks and saves the lost, whom we once were. This is what Jesus means when he calls us “peacemakers.” Amen!