

### **What Would Bring You Peace?**

If someone stuck a microphone in front of you and asked, “Where does peace come from?” how would you answer? Watch this... [Show Peace video]

[Pray]

[Show image #1 - painting of Jerusalem in Jesus' day]. This is what Jerusalem looked like as Jesus stood on the top of the Mount of Olives for the last time. He stood there with incredibly mixed emotions. On one side of Him were His followers, shouting and celebrating like the fans of a high school basketball team that had just won the championship. On the other side of Him were the Pharisees, condemning and criticizing His every move. It's like the father of the bride who stands at that door about to usher his only daughter down the aisle. On the one hand, he is so excited and happy for the new life that is about to begin for his daughter that he thinks his heart might fly right out of his chest. At the same time, it feels like his heart is about to break because of the unique and warm and exclusive relationship with his daughter that is about to end. That's what Jesus was feeling.

As He stands there amid the praise and the cursing, He begins to weep. I believe, in no more than a whisper he speaks to the city he loves:

**If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you. (Luke 19:42-44)**

Did you recognize the time of God's coming to you? That's what we need to explore tonight/today, because Jesus says that until we recognize that, we will never have peace. Never. So first, we need to realize that...

#### **I. Lasting Peace Comes in an Unlikely Manner.**

The opposite of peace, of course, is war, hostility, conflict. Whether it's between countries or between people, war, hostility and conflict is not a great place to live. In fact, only really strange and unstable people “like” living in a state of war. Right? People who love war are strange. But when we find ourselves in that state, how do we get out? How do you end a war?

**Dan Reiter** is the chairman of the department of Political Science at Emory University. He's written a book entitled, *How Wars End*, in which he examines dozens of famous wars. He says that two beliefs must be held by both parties before war can end and peace begin. Those two beliefs are:

1. That a balance of power exists that will not change (i.e. because of your opponent's strength and your strength, neither side can win).
2. That the other side will abide by the peace settlement. <sup>i</sup>

Now, this is speaking, of course, about situations where both sides possess enough strength to prevent being totally overwhelmed by the other. If one side can overwhelm the other, then surrender is how the war ends. I think this is true not only between countries but also between people. If you possess enough strength to prevent being overwhelmed, you'll keep fighting or you'll keep running for years, until your "enemy" acknowledges he's never going to win and you believe he'll actually abide by the peace agreement.

Now, if we apply this to our relationship with God, what do we see? We, all human beings, have declared war on God. This is His world, He made it. He set down certain "laws" by which this world is supposed to live, (no lying, no stealing, rules about marriage, rules about divorce, rules about not working seven days a week) but we rebelled against His laws. We took up "arms" against the Creator and said, "We will not live by Your rules. We will live by our OWN rules! So, go away! Leave us alone!"

Now, here's the fascinating (even shocking!) truth that we see in our Scripture passage today. God has more than enough power to completely overwhelm us and force us to surrender, but He doesn't use it. With the breath of His mouth, He could blow us away, but He doesn't. Instead, what does He do? He sends His Son to offer us ridiculously generous terms of peace. In the Matthew account of what we commemorate today, it quotes [Zech. 9:9](#) as the prophecy that predicted this strategically important event:

**Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion!... "See, your king comes to you... gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."**

There is important symbolism in this verse. In ancient times when a King came into the city of an enemy with his army, he came in one of two ways. If he was coming to overwhelm them as a result of winning the war, he came riding a magnificent horse. If he came to offer peace, he rode a donkey.

So, God did not start this war, this conflict between Him and us. We started it. Our ancestors began it in Gen. 3 and we've taken up arms against God and His way of life ever since. He has overwhelming power to crush our rebellion at any moment, if He wants to. But what does He do? For some unexplainable reason, He doesn't ride into our lives on a magnificent warhorse. He rides into our lives on a donkey, the foal of a donkey, the animal of peace. The crowds in Jerusalem that day recognized Who He was. They shouted:

**Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! (Luke 19:38)**

When Jesus first rode into your life, did you recognize Him? What did you call Him that day, the first day you met Him? What do you call Him today? Peace first comes to us in a very unlikely manner.

Secondly, from this passage we need to see that...

## **II. Peace Comes in Contradiction to Common Knowledge.**

The Pharisees were on a mission of peace. They were! In their own minds, they believed that the actions they were taking were necessary to bring about peace. In their view of the world, peace was not threatened by them, but by Jesus. Jesus was the rabble-rouser. Jesus was stirring up the crowds. Jesus was the cultural terrorist breaking all their carefully crafted rules to keep people in line. They really, really believed that it was unfortunate, but absolutely necessary, to kill Jesus in

order to restore peace in their country. The proof of this is that, when they eventually brought Jesus before the Roman governor, Pilate, the charge was:

**“...He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching.” (Luke 23:5)**

So, when the Pharisees saw the crowds so passionately calling Jesus their “King,” these “peace activists” confronted Him and said:

**...Teacher, rebuke your disciples! (Luke 19:39)**

And Jesus responded:

**I tell you... if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out. (Luke 19:40)**

What’s he talking about, the stones along the path? No, no. Think... where is He going? He’s coming down the Mount of Olives and heading for the gate that takes Him to the Temple. This gate is known as the East Gate. It is the first gate opened every morning as the city rises to meet the day.

But the prophet Ezekiel tells us this gate is important for another reason. It is the gate that the Messiah will walk through when He comes in power and great glory to establish His kingdom on earth. So, when Jesus responded to the Pharisees that if His Followers were quiet, the stones would cry out, He was referring to the fact that He was about to enter through Messiah’s gate. All students of Old Testament prophecy knew what this meant. Jesus was not only referring to Ezekiel but to David’s glorious Ps. 24, where he calls on all righteous people to come to the Temple Mount to welcome the Messiah and he even instructs the stones to cry out!!! Listen:

**Lift up your heads, O you gates;**

**Be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.**

**Who is this King of glory?**

**The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.**

**Lift up your heads, O you gates;**

**Lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.**

**Who is he, this King of glory?**

**The LORD Almighty – he is the King of glory. (Ps. 24:7-10)**

Jesus is underlining for the Pharisees who He is. He’s walking through the Golden Gate as the Prince of Peace. He then stops and looks at the city full of people who have bought into the Pharisee’s cheap, shallow ideas of how to acquire peace and it breaks His heart. He weeps and says:

**If you... had only known on this day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes. (Luke 19:42)**

Jesus, of course, is alive today. We’ll celebrate His resurrection next weekend. But if He were here in the flesh, would He be smiling at you as you praise Him or would He be weeping because of the way you’re pursuing peace? It’s not wrong to want peace. It’s just tragic to think you can get it any way you choose.

- You won’t find peace by pursuing happiness.
- You won’t find peace in the right diet.
- You won’t find peace by finding your “soul mate.”
- You won’t find peace by helping others.

These are a few of the things that people said in the video we watched earlier. Some of them are nice, good things to do, but they will NOT bring you peace. If you’re trying to find peace in a place or in people or in some disciplined practice –

you're making Jesus weep! Why? Because you're missing it! You're blind to the real source of peace. Peace comes from one place: a person; a unique, one-of-a-kind person; the only Son of God, Jesus Christ. 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. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.** (John 14:27, Matt. 11:28)

What this literally says in the Greek is, "...and I will rest you." "...I will CAUSE you to rest." Jesus is weeping over those who didn't recognize His coming. He's here now making the exact same offer He made 2,000 years ago. What will you do with His offer this time?

Lastly, we need to see that...

### **III. This Peace of Christ Is a Lifestyle, Not a Decision.**

So, we've seen that we miss peace when we miss Christ. Just like in Jesus' day there are "Pharisees" around today who say that Christ's way is the way of war and conflict. Have you heard those voices around you? People say that Christ's way of raising children is an abusive way of parenting. People say that Christ's way of being married is a demeaning style of marriage. They claim that they have the REAL way of peace. It's the way of tolerance and acceptance of all opinions as being equally valid. Except, of course, the opinion that some things are absolutely right and other things are absolutely wrong. Those opinions are somehow INVALID.

So, just when we think we've found rest in Jesus and are experiencing His peace, our mind, our relationships, our kids, our world are all thrown back into conflict. We're at war again! We didn't go looking for it, it just found us! How do we deal with this?

What we need to understand is that Jesus isn't offering us one meal of peace. He's offering us a lifetime diet of peace. Do you see the difference? Do you know anybody who's lost 10 pounds... ten times? They gain it, they go on a diet and lose it. They gain it, they lose it; they gain it, they lose it. My guess is MOST of us in this room over the age of 25 have done this. Why don't we just lose it and keep it off? Because we've never come to understand that we don't have a weight problem, we have an eating problem.

My Dad had a "weight problem" for about 20 years. He'd gain weight, then he'd lose weight. He'd gain more weight and lose a little less weight. Gain more, lose less... you get the picture. He went to the Mayo Clinic for his annual check-up one year and the doctor put the fear of God into him. Told him how many years he could deduct from his life if he kept it up. So, do you know what the doctor did? He gave my Dad a calorie book to keep with him at all times. Before anything went into his mouth, he was to look up in the book how many calories it was worth. Every day when he got to a certain total number of calories, he was to say to himself, "I'm done eating for today." My Dad said it was like having the doctor with him all day.

Are you on the same rollercoaster of another name, the "war and peace" rollercoaster? Your life gets overtaken with conflict, hostilities and strife. So, you go on a peace diet. You read Scripture, you spend time praying, you try yoga, listening to white noise at night, maybe go to a spa. Your stress level is reduced, so you go

back to binging on conflict, hostilities and a case of confrontation. You do that until you can't sleep anymore; then you go back to the crash diet of classical music 24/7.

**...if you... had only known... what would bring you peace...**

Peace isn't a diet, it's a lifetime of eating healthy spiritual food and drinking from the well that will never run dry. Peace is found in Christ. He's the only source. If you want peace, you need to start reading His book the way my Dad read His calorie book. He went nowhere without it. After a while he could look at a plate of food and in his head calculate the total number of calories. He lost his taste for some of the things that were really bad for him. He acquired a taste for things that were really good for him. He became a much healthier person.

The same exact thing will happen to you if you start carrying around Jesus' Book of Peace. Before you put anything in your soul, look up in His book what the "Soul Doctor" says about that. Is that website you visit health food or junk food for your soul? This book will tell you. You do this long enough, you'll be able look at a TV program and, without looking in the Jesus Book, you'll know if that's gonna make you stronger or weaker. Do it even longer and you'll actually lose your taste for things that are bad for your soul and you'll acquire a taste for those things that bring you peace and rest. It'll be like Jesus is right with you every minute of every day – because He is! His peace won't just come for a visit once in a while. You'll actually become a peaceful person. It all comes from understanding that His peace, the peace of God, comes only from Christ and it stays when we see it as a lifestyle, not a decision.

The people on the road that day in Jerusalem were truthfully shouting:

**Blessed is the king who comes...**

**Peace in heaven and glory in the highest! (Luke 19:38)**

Those people knew where peace came from and who it was who brought it. The question isn't, "Is there peace in your life right now?" No, Jesus guaranteed us that "in this life we will have trouble." The right question is, "Is there peace in your heart?" If you're walking with the Prince of Peace, you'll have peace where it counts: in your heart – no matter what the Devil may put in your life. Let's pray...

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<sup>i</sup> Dan Reiter, *How Wars End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009)