

Peace with God

1 of 6 in *Prince of Peace*

Nov. 24, 2024

Colossians 1:19-23, etc.

Although the first Sunday of Advent isn't until next week, we're beginning our Christmas sermon series today. I mean, Christmas is only one month away, so why not, right?

The series is called *Prince of Peace* and it ties into the overarching ministry theme that God has led Cornerstone to focus on for the past two years. That theme is, "Making space for joy and flourishing."

Indeed, flourishing is another way of speaking about what the Bible refers to as *peace*— a term rich with meaning and profound implications for our lives, for the church, and for God's ultimate plan of salvation.

It is through Jesus, the promised Messiah whose birth we celebrate at Christmas, that God brings his restoring *peace* into this world, and into our lives. In fact, hundreds of years prior to Jesus' birth, Isaiah prophesied that:

The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine... For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end.¹

In Luke's gospel we read of the birth of this Prince of Peace. The angel of the Lord appears to a group of common shepherds, announcing good news of great joy for all people:

The Savior— yes, the Messiah, the Lord— has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others— the armies of heaven— praising God and saying, "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."²

Why do we call Jesus the Prince of Peace? It's because his ultimate mission is to bring *peace*.

Of course, at Christmastime, we often speak and sing about peace.

¹ Isaiah 9:2, 6-7 (NLT)

² Luke 2:11-14 (NLT)

But then we watch the news; we look into our homes; we look into our hearts and minds, and so often we find that peace remains elusive.

You'd think that as time passes, the human race might get better at peace. However, the century we most recently emerged from was the bloodiest by far.

Peace has not only been elusive on a worldwide or societal scale; it can also hard to come by in our personal lives. In fact, the famous writer H.G. Wells was quoted later in his life as saying:

I cannot adjust my life to secure any fruitful peace. Here I am, at age 64, still seeking peace. It's a hopeless dream.

On the lighter side, check out this Peanuts comic strip:



Can anyone relate? Maybe our outer obnoxiousness exposes the fact that we don't have as much inner peace as we thought. After all, Jesus says, "From the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks."³

Many are confused about how to find peace, but that doesn't stop them from searching.

Jesus is the Prince of Peace, born to ultimately bring God's peace into this world, and into our lives as well. But did you ever stop to ask yourself what that actually means?

What is biblical peace— this peace we speak and sing about at Christmas— and why does it matter more than anything for this world, and for our lives?

This series will unpack those questions, and it's our prayer that in the process, God will touch your life in a special way, and fill you with a fresh sense of hope and purpose this Christmas.

³ Matthew 12:34

For the remainder of this message, I'd like to share two images with you. The first image illustrates *the meaning of biblical peace*. The second image shows us *how to enter and live into it*.



The first image is that of a **tapestry**. A tapestry is piece of thick textile fabric with pictures or designs woven into it using a vertical loom. Tapestries are often used as wall hangings or blankets.

A tapestry consists of many parts— individual threads— that are intricately woven together to form a whole. This is what makes a tapestry a good picture of what biblical peace is all about. As Tim Keller writes:

If you throw thousands of pieces of thread onto a table, no fabric results. The threads must be rightly and intimately related to one another in literally a million ways. Each thread must go over, under, around, and through the others at thousands of points. Only then do you get a fabric that is beautiful and strong, that covers, fits, holds, shelters and delights. God created all things to be in a beautiful... interdependent, knitted... relationship to one another... This interwovenness is what the Bible calls *shalom*, or harmonious peace.⁴

We often think of peace as the absence of conflict. Sometimes we think of it as having a tranquil feeling inside. And those things are certainly a *part* of what the Bible means when it talks about peace.

But the image of a tapestry helps us to grasp that biblical peace in its fullest sense is a state of everything being “put together” as it should be. It involves *flourishing* in every dimension of life— the spiritual, physical, social, and emotional; the political, economic and environmental— all woven together and working in harmony.

So *shalom*— the Old Testament Hebrew word for peace— and *eirene*— the New Testament Greek word for peace— both refer to the kind of flourishing that happens *when everyone and everything exists in a state of right relationship*.

In ancient times, woven fabrics took a long time to make, and were very valuable. This made them an apt metaphor for the wonderful world God had made. Various passages in the Bible speak of how the different parts of creation are like a garment woven together by God himself.⁵

⁴ Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice*, p. 173.

⁵ Psalm 102:26; 104:1, 6; Job 38:9

To manage and care for his world, God created human beings in his own image, male and female. Humanity walked in intimate relationship with God, and as we thrived, so did the rest of creation under our care. The Bible says that God saw this masterful tapestry of interwoven parts that he had made, and it was very good.⁶

This was *shalom*— the world as God intends it to be— where all things *flourish* together in perfect, interrelated harmony.

But as we know all too well, this state of peace was short-lived. Paradise was lost. Humanity turned away from God, rejecting his kingship, his rule. Sin entered the world, and Genesis chapter 3 describes what happened next.

The tapestry of creation began to unravel. The fabric of relationships that had existed started to come apart. Human beings became torn away from God, torn away from each other, and torn away from the whole created order:



Shalom of the heart and mind unravelled— into shame, anxiety, and greed.

Shalom in personal relationships unravelled— into comparison, suspicion, and competition.

Shalom of the body unravelled— into disease, decay, and death.

Social *shalom* unravelled— into family breakdown, crime, oppression, injustice and war.

Nature's *shalom* unravelled— fertile lands gave way to thorns and thistles, and the earth heaved with natural disasters.

With the fall of its human caretakers, creation itself now groans in pain, says the Bible.⁷

But with eager hope the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay.⁸

⁶ Genesis 1:31

⁷ Romans 8:22

⁸ Romans 8:20b-21 (NLT)

In other words, creation itself *longs* for a renewal of peace, of *shalom*— for the re-weaving and restoration of the tapestry of life as God intends it to be.

Do you ever find that you share creation's deep longing for *shalom*?

Have you ever felt a longing— for your unravelled inner world— your troubled mind and heart— to be made whole?

Have you ever felt a longing— for your unravelled relational life to be free from awkwardness and uncertainty, free from comparison and competition, free from division and strife?

Have you ever felt a longing— for your unravelling body to be made whole—free from infection, pain, injury, disease— free from the inevitability of aging and the finality of death?

Have you ever felt a longing— for your unravelled loved ones to experience *shalom*— that your child who is developmentally delayed might thrive; that your friend who suffers from addiction might find freedom; that your neighbour troubled by mental illness might find peace; that your parents, frail with age, might be renewed in strength; that your loved ones who have died might be reunited with you, never to depart again? Have you ever felt a longing?

In the midst of the ever-unravelling news cycle with its mass shootings and starving populations and ethnic cleansing and refugee crises and political polarization and special military operations— have you ever felt a longing— for loving harmony to exist between races and classes and sexes and nations, for wars to cease and poverty to be eliminated?

Have you ever felt a longing for justice— for every wrong to be set right?

Have you ever felt a longing for this beautiful creation to be set free from all that plagues and prevents it from flourishing and supporting life the way it's supposed to?

Can you feel it even now? Can you feel a longing for the healing of everything that's been broken— for all things to be put right? For the unravelled tapestry of life in this world to be woven back together again, restored to its full wholeness and beauty?

That is a longing for what the Bible calls *shalom* or peace—for life as God intends it to be.

And the astonishingly good news of Christmas is that in Jesus, the Prince of Peace, God has come into this world, and has begun to put everything back together. In Jesus, God is reweaving the unravelled tapestry that is this world, reweaving the knotted tangle of thread that that our lives have become.

As the Bible says in Colossians:

For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.⁹

The Message version of that passage puts it this way:

... all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe—people and things, animals and atoms— get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the cross.¹⁰

In other words, through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God has set into motion the restoration of his creation to a state of peace.

That's the arc of the Bible's entire storyline. It begins with creation in a state of *shalom*, and it ends with creation restored to a state of *shalom*.

You see, contrary to popular belief, God's ultimate goal isn't to bring people up to heaven. It's to bring heaven down to renew the earth—to bring *peace* on earth. It's for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. We'll be talking about this more later in this series, and into the year ahead.

In the book of Revelation, the Bible comes to a close with John's vision of all things forever made new.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth... And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be

⁹ Colossians 1:19-20 (NIV)

¹⁰ Colossians 1:19-20 (MSG)

no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.” And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!” And then he said to me, “Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.”¹¹

This is a picture of ultimate peace, of universal *shalom*.

If you follow Jesus, the Prince of Peace, this is your future, and the hope of this future will sustain you today. The hope that one day, the tapestry will be made gloriously whole again, and life in this world will forever be as God has always intended it to be.

This hope will be fully and finally realized at the Second Advent—the second coming of Jesus— when he returns to rule the earth. Although the world has not yet been restored, it’s still possible to enter into and participate in God’s peace even now.



So if the image of a tapestry illustrates the meaning of biblical peace, a second image shows us how to enter and live into that peace. It’s the image of **a wheel**.

A wheel is another picture of *shalom*— of interrelated parts that come together to form a whole. It has a hub in the centre, it has spokes, and it also has a rim.

The spokes are related to each other by virtue of the fact that they are all connected to the hub. The hub and the rim are connected by virtue of their connection with the spokes.

If the spokes become disconnected from the hub, what happens?

The wheel falls apart.

It is no longer sound. It loses *shalom*. In order for the wheel to regain *shalom*, the spokes need to be reconnected to the hub.

When it comes to life in this world, God is like the hub. He’s the centre, the one and only source of life in whom everything holds together. Human beings are like the spokes. And the rest of creation is like the rim.

When human beings fell into sin by rejecting God’s rule, our relationship with God was broken. Adam and Eve went from walking and talking with God in the Garden of Eden to

¹¹ Revelation 21:1a, 2-5 (NLT)

running and hiding from him. And when humanity's relationship with God was broken, the whole world stopped working right, because God made us in his image to be the caretakers of creation.

We became like spokes that lost our connection to the hub, and as a result, the rim— the rest of the world— broke apart. What had been integrated became *dis*-integrated.

In other words, *shalom* was lost— spiritually, physically, psychologically, socially, environmentally. The Bible makes it clear that we live in a broken world because people have a broken relationship with God.

The only way you and I can enter into and begin to participate in *shalom*, therefore, is *to have our relationship with God restored*. We are like spokes that need to be reconnected to the hub.

This is where we again find Christmas to be such good news. We've already seen in Colossians that in Christ, God has come into the world to reconcile all things— every aspect of creation— to himself. In Christ, God has begun to “make peace”— to re-integrate everything in heaven and on earth. As Colossians goes on to say:

This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.¹²

Jesus was the whole, complete human you and I were made to be, but have failed to be. And he offers us his life as a gift. Through his birth, death, and resurrection, Jesus makes it possible for our broken relationship with God to be restored. The Bible puts it this way in Romans:

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us.¹³

As long as you're disconnected from God— from the hub, the centre and source of all life— your *shalom* breaks down. Your life is no longer whole.

¹² Colossians 1:21-22 (NLT)

¹³ Romans 5:1 (NLT)

You can long for *shalom* all you want, but you can't begin to enter into it until you first have *peace* with God— until your relationship with God is restored through what Jesus has done for you through his death and resurrection.

Author John Eldredge writes about why we cannot experience *shalom* apart from having a right relationship with God.

If you give the part of your soul that is meant for God to lesser things, they will break your heart because they cannot possibly come through for you in the ways God can...

Keeping God as our first love, we are not destroyed when others fail to love us well; we are able to weather criticism, loneliness, and rejection. Our other loves are able to find their wholesome expression, and we are able to flourish as human beings... Anchored in True Love [that is, God's love], our hearts can go on to love [others]...¹⁴

We'll talk later in this series about how those of us who follow Jesus, the Prince of Peace, are called to live in peace— in right relationship— with each other, and to be peacemakers in this world.

But as I begin to wind this message down, I'd like to address two groups of people.

The first group I'd like to speak to is those who have not yet entered into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

To have peace with God you have to embrace Jesus as your Prince of Peace— you have to welcome him into your life. "How do I do that?" you may wonder.

In order to embrace Jesus so that your relationship with God can be put right, you must respond to God's invitation to repent and be baptized.

A large crowd once heard the Apostle Peter proclaiming the good news of God's forgiveness in Christ, and it moved their hearts. "What shall we do?" they asked Peter.

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit [God

¹⁴ John Eldredge, *All Things New* (chapter 3).

himself will make his home in your heart]. The promise is for you and your children and all who are far off— for all whom the Lord our God will call.”¹⁵

That includes you! Is God calling you to repent and be baptized so you can have peace, so that you can have right relationship with him?

To *repent* literally means to turn around. In your sin, you turned away from God, but when you repent, you turn back to God— you do a “180” — acknowledging that you’re a sinner in need of a Saviour.

Repent, and then *be baptized*. Baptism is a crucial step for each and every follower of Jesus.

Baptism is the gift God gives you to make your commitment to Jesus tangible. Baptism is the ceremony in which you “get married to Jesus” so to speak— so that you as well as others will clearly know that your life and identity have become knitted together with his.

So *repent and be baptized*. That’s how you connect to the hub. That’s how you enter into peace, into right relationship, with God.

Baptism – Sunday, January 19, 2025 <https://cornerstonechurch.ca/baptism/>

Our next baptism service takes place on Sunday, January 19. We’d love to be able to baptize you on that day. If God is tugging on your heart about that, don’t hesitate to act. As the Apostle Paul said to the Corinthians:

We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.¹⁶

If you’d like to be baptized or learn more about it before you decide, just go to our baptism page. There, you’ll find more information about baptism, and there’s an online form you can fill out to indicate your interest in being baptized.

The second group I’d like to address is those of you who already have peace with God— those of you who follow Jesus.

The passage we read earlier in Colossians talked about how God has reconciled us to himself through the death of Christ, and has brought us, holy and blameless, into his presence. That same passage immediately goes on to say this:

¹⁵ Acts 2:38-39 (NIV)

¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:20b (NASB)

But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News.¹⁷

So, you're a follower of Jesus. You have peace with God— you're in relationship with him. But maybe you've been neglecting that relationship. You've been drifting away. So many of us Christians have God in our lives, but we live for long stretches of time as if we don't.

The hub is in the centre for a reason. It makes the whole wheel function as it should. Is God reminding you this morning that you need to keep him— that you need to keep Jesus— at the centre of your life?

If you want to live in *shalom*— if you want all the aspects of your life to “hold together” as God intends them to— then Jesus needs to be your hub, your centre.

Perhaps God is calling you to new rhythms of daily prayer and scripture reading, for example, especially as a new year approaches. Or, to be consistent with your church attendance.

These and other disciplines like them help you stay connected with Jesus— so that he remains your centre, your hub, your shalom— the one in whom your whole life is held together.

I'd like to recommend something that can help you connect with Jesus this Advent season.

- **Lectio 365 Prayer App**

Many of you have benefitted greatly from the [Lectio 365 app](#) by a ministry called 24-7 Prayer. Lectio 365 is a free app that offers short but rich morning and evening prayers every day, and as usual, they will be running daily Advent prayers starting next week. You can listen to or read the prayers, or both, but if you haven't downloaded Lectio 365 from your app store yet, I would encourage you to do so.

Whether you take advantage of any of that suggestion, or find your own things to do, the point is get connected and to stay connect with Jesus, the Prince of Peace, this Christmas season, and always.

Can I pray for us all now, that Jesus will help us to do just that?

¹⁷ Colossians 1:23a (NLT)