

On Peace

Luke 2:14 (KJV)

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

Christmas season confronts us with the idea of peace

- It is a troubling thought – for though Christmas announces peace - we seem not to have it - neither peace within nor peace without
- Our world is sick
- Wars and rumors of war are constant reminders of our failure to “just get along”
- Rogue nations are rushing to get the force of nuclear weapons – weapons that the world has already seen at work
- Such weapons in the hands of evil men without consciences bear terrible and frightening consequences
- The dream of weapons being beaten into plowshares seems far removed from our present sin-sick world

And yet, the Christmas hope for peace and good will toward all men cannot be dismissed as a kind of pious dream

- Wisdom born of experience should tell us that war is not the answer to man’s problems – it is part of the problem – a fruit – an outgrowth - evidence of how dark the heart of man really is
- We pray for that day when war will be no more
- There was a time when war served as a negative good by offering the hope of preventing the spread of evil
- The possibility that war may serve as a negative good has been diminished because of the widespread ownership of the most terrible weapons
- We must either learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools

And so,

If we assume that life is worth living,

If we assume that mankind has a right to survive,

Then we must find an alternative to war

We must explore the conditions for peace

This morning I invite you to think with me about the meaning of the Christmas hope of: *“Peace on Earth, Good Will toward Men”*

I. WE NEED TO TAKE PEACEMAKING SERIOUSLY

1. People who want to defend war and violence usually go to the OT to do so
2. You just don’t find much support for violence in the NT
3. While Jesus admits to the reality of war, He never condoned it
4. Instead you find Jesus saying things like “turn the other cheek” and “those who live by the sword, die by the sword” and “pray for those who persecute you” and “I could have called 10,000 angels” and “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do”
5. Violence was clearly not a part of God’s original plan
6. Mankind’s escalating inhumanity to man is part of the tragic story of the man’s downfall
7. Violence is so much a part of our nature now that we defend the use of violence in the name of peace and give little serious thought to what is required of God’s call to be “peacemakers”
8. It’s interesting that the Single Action Colt Revolver - first produced in 1873 --- and used by the Army and such famous cowboys as Wyatt Earp — was also known as the “Peacemaker”
9. It’s ingrained in us that peace comes by way of force
10. Nations carry on peace talks based on the number of warheads they have
11. But the Bible teaches us about the “prince of peace” and the gift of peace
12. The Bible teaches us about a kingdom of peace ruled by God
13. Violence will not be a part of *that* kingdom

(Rom 14:17 ESV) -

¹⁷ for the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

(Is 2:4 ESV)

they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

(Is 9:2-7 ESV) –

² *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.*

³ *You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.* ⁴ *For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.* ⁵ *For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.* ⁶ *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.* ⁷ *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.*

(John 18:36 NKJV) –

³⁶ *Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."*

14. We long for it . . . God wants us to live for it

II. WE NEED TO TAKE THE KINGDOM OF GOD SERIOUSLY

1. The Kingdom of God was central to the ministry and message of Jesus
2. In fact Jesus began His public ministry by proclaiming *"the kingdom of God is at hand"* (Mk 1:15)
3. What did Jesus mean by this?
4. Jesus announced the coming, the in-breaking of the kingdom
5. The kingdom of God was present in Jesus
6. Jesus came to reveal and build the kingdom of God
7. The call to salvation is not just to heaven – it is a call to move from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light - to live a life in this world that will make a difference
8. The call to salvation is the call to join with Jesus in the building of God's Kingdom on earth in the here and now – *"thy kingdom come, they will be done on earth as it is in heaven"*

9. Our citizenship in God's kingdom must transcend our race, our tribe, our clan, our class, and our nation

10. We are first and foremost citizens of God's eternal kingdom (Phil 3:20 NJKV)

²⁰ *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,*

11. As the kingdom was present and revealed in Jesus, it is to be present and revealed in us
12. This is the meaning of being salt and light – a continuing, permeating influence
13. We are *"a city set on a hill that cannot be hid"* (Matt 5:14) – a visible outcropping of the kingdom of God
14. Christmas reminds us once again that God chose to change the world, not by withdrawing from the world, but by coming *into* the world (John 1:14 – *"the word became flesh and dwelled among us"*)
15. As Jesus was sent to live in the world, we too are sent to live as kingdom people in the midst of worldly people

III. WE NEED TO TAKE THE GOSPEL SERIOUSLY

1. The word "gospel" means "good news"
2. The "good news" is meant for everybody - all people – everywhere
3. The "good news" – this *gospel* is the power of God to save (Rom 1:16)
4. It is the truth of Christmas - God Incarnate – in the flesh – as a human – one of us
5. It is the truth of *"God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself"*
6. It is the truth of reconciliation – not only between God and man – but man and man
7. The way to peace is the way of the gospel
8. The gospel is not an end in itself
9. Once received it must be shared – passed on –
10. Luke 2:8-18