



Sermon for Sunday, December 18, 2022

“Peace Through the Cross of Jesus Christ”

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 2:11-18 ¹¹ So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called ‘the uncircumcision’ by those who are called ‘the circumcision’—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands— ¹² remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ¹⁵ He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. ¹⁷ So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸ for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Introduction: Law and Gospel

Today is the last week of Advent. For the past 3 weeks, I have preached messages about ‘Let’s trust and wait in the Lord, our true hope’, and ‘The meaning of Immanuel Jesus’. Also, last week, I preached, “Let’s spend the season of Advent as a time of reflection and repentance on our lives.” And through today’s message, I would like to share what Jesus ultimately accomplished when He came to this earth. What Jesus came to this earth as baby Jesus and brought to us through His death on the cross and resurrection is peace.

The Hebrew word in the Old Testament that we translate as peace is “**shalom**” (שָׁלוֹם). In fact, "Shalom" doesn't mean serenity and absence of conflict. Rather, shalom, or peace, refers to the results of right relationships between God, people, and creation. The concept of peace means a state of wholeness without blemish in all life. This peace is given to us only through Jesus' love on the cross.

That's why the Apostle Paul declared in his letter that '**Jesus Christ is our peace**'. This means that **Christ made the two (gentile and Greek) into one, and broke down the wall between the enmity, and created within Himself one new man, to make peace, and to reconcile the enmity.**'

We all yearn for peace today. However, we witness many barriers that break relationships in our lives. At home, we experience discord between parents and children and between husband and wife. And we experience violence and abuse between people. We also experience murder, discrimination, and war caused by racial and religious conflicts.

What in human existence can bring us complete peace? Can the institutions, laws, and norms we have created bring about complete peace? The Bible calls these things the law. The law cannot bring us perfect peace. However, people often rely on the law rather than Jesus Christ, the source of our peace. The Apostle Paul testifies emphatically against this attitude in today's text. Paul declares that only the gospel of Jesus Christ gives us complete peace. Do you agree with these words of Paul with ‘Amen’? Or do you have other thoughts?



Body: Peace achieved only through the love of Christ on the cross

Ephesus, the background of today's text, is the central city of the eastern Mediterranean, located on the Aegean coast of what is today western Turkey. Paul stayed in Ephesus at the end of his second missionary journey. And during the 3rd mission trip, he stayed for 2 years and preached the gospel. The gospel that Paul preached while staying in Ephesus was reconciliation and unity achieved through Jesus Christ. And it was to practice it in our lives.

At that time, in the Early Church in Asia Minor, including Ephesus, there were racial, cultural, and religious conflicts between Jewish and Greek believers. Jews and Greeks confessed Jesus as their Savior, but because their eating habits, lifestyles, and religious traditions were different, they had no choice but to experience conflicts in many areas.

The Apostle Paul told the believers in Ephesus that Jesus was the one who united the divided Jews and Gentiles. In other words, Jews, and Gentiles, who were divided with enmity due to the Jewish law, have been reconciled because of the love of the cross of the Lord. Of course, because of the Lord's love on the cross, we declare that the relationship between God the Creator and human beings has been restored.

There are many barriers in the world we live in. There are barriers between parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, church members, neighbors, and differences in race, gender, and religion. As a result, we suffer and grieve. We want to break down these barriers, but only Jesus Christ can do that.

1. The best gift given to us

The Bible testifies of the best things God has done for us in our despair. **“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)**

Also, in **Romans 1:17**, Apostle Paul says, **"For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."** In other words, Jesus accomplished the righteousness of God who broke down the wall through the cross. And through His death, we have 'reconciliation and peace' in our relationship with God.

Ephesians 2:8 says: **“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”** I hope all of us can confess that the 'reconciliation and peace' we enjoy is the best gift of Christmas that the Lord has given us.

Dear brothers and sisters!

- Where Jesus Christ is, there is peace. Do you really think so?
- Where Jesus Christ is, there is reconciliation. Do you really think so?
- Where Jesus Christ is, there is restoration of relationships. Do you really think so?

Then, who makes the restoration of peace, reconciliation, and relationships in Jesus Christ? It is achieved through me, and you who have experienced the love of the cross of Jesus Christ. Are you so sure and do you believe that?

Brothers and sisters! Please don't forget. Where the barriers in our lives are broken down and the work of reconciliation takes place, there is always Jesus Christ. On the contrary, where there is discord, enmity, strife, and war, Jesus Christ is absent. So, as Christians, we have a mission. It is our responsibility and duty to work as a tool for peace and reconciliation in this world.



2. Responsibilities and duties entrusted to Christians

Dear brothers and sisters! Does this saying that Christians have been given responsibility and duty weigh heavily on your shoulders? Please don't forget! The responsibilities and duties of Christians are not forced upon us but are assumed out of our voluntary choice.

Those who know the love of the Lord and have experienced grace know the heart of the Lord for us. So, we are the Lord's instrument for the ministry of 'reconciliation and peace' that the Lord has accomplished for us. In fact, the 'responsibility and duty' we must handle are fulfilled in us by Jesus, who is the source of 'peace and reconciliation'. So we can handle 'responsibility and duty' with joy and gratitude.

We want to repay the favor by giving thanks to those who gave their lives for us or showed unselfish love. We sincerely hope that Jesus will be in the position of the main character who wants to repay grace. Please remember! Greater grace than the love of the Lord does not exist in the world.

Conclusion: Christians who live by practicing the love of Jesus

Now let's summarize today's sermon. As Christians, the love we must practice is 'peace'. The love of Jesus on the cross broke down the barrier between God and us and achieved 'reconciliation' and 'peace'. So, Ephesians 2:14-15 says: "For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. (v.14) He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace. (v.15)"

These verses say that the barrier between God and us has been removed by the cross of Jesus. That's why we call the Lord 'Mediator'.

As Christians, we must take on the role of "mediator" like Jesus. And we must take on the role of a reconciler who breaks down barriers. **1 Timothy 5:8 says, "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."**

Christians must play the role of a spiritual reconciler who restores their relationship with God to those who do not know or do not accept the Lord. We also must work to reconcile those whose relationships have been broken due to wounds. I look forward to practicing the love of Jesus as we spend the last week of Advent waiting for the coming of the baby Jesus. When our relationship with the Lord is intimate, He will work within us to use us as instruments of 'reconciliation and peace'.

