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“THE KING OF PEACE”
Luke 1:57-80

■ {Jer 8:15} **“Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace.”** Jeremiah made that lament some 600 years before Christ – but isn’t he describing our world, too?

⊙ {Chamberlain, 1938} **“It is peace for our time,”** the doves say as they sign their nonaggression pacts. But a tyrant cannot be trusted whether he is a national leader or a schoolyard bully.

⊙ {Orwell} **“War is”** the way to **“peace,”** the hawks say as they commit to hostilities. But the benefits of violence are {Gandhi} **“temporary; the evil it does is permanent.”** Force can maintain *order*, but it cannot create *peace*.

⊙ “At least *my* community is at peace,” we say. But the frequency of estrangement, loneliness, bigotry, divorce, addiction, and domestic violence even in Mayberry, USA disproves that illusion.

The kingdom of the world seeks peace by ignoring the conflict, appeasing the adversary, deceiving the foe, intimidating our enemy, and crushing them with force. Some approaches are better than others, but none has ever ushered in lasting, holistic peace.

“Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace.”

□ Please turn to Luke 1:57-80.

John the Baptizer has just been born. {1:67} **“Filled with the Holy Spirit,”** his father Zechariah prophesies about John and the Messiah.

◆ Peace is the theme that holds his message together.

◆ In verses 74-77, Zechariah praises the Lord who for acting **“to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.”** Then, speaking to John, he says **“And you, my child... will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.”** That is vertical peace with God.

◆ In verse 71, Zechariah rejoices that God is granting his people **“salvation from [their] enemies and from the hand of all who hate”** them. That is horizontal peace with people.

📖 The world generally defines peace as the mere absence of conflict, but Scripture takes a holistic view. The Old Testament term *shalom* and the New Testament word εἰρήνη imply: wholeness; completeness; fulfillment; and unbroken fellowship with God, community, and the Creation.

📖 What is more, the kingdom of the world identifies the lack of conflict as peace however it is secured. But in God’s kingdom, peace is always the fruit of covenant relationship with God.

☹ These definitions help to explain the world’s endless failure not just to achieve lasting, holistic peace, but even to recognize it.

☞ Take John the Baptizer. He lived in the desert, wore crude garments of camel’s hair, and ate bugs and

wild honey. By kingdom of the world standards he resembled nothing so much as a deranged homeless man.

■ Neither did he *sound* “peaceful.” He preached {Lk 3:3, 7b, 9} “**a baptism of repentance.**” “**Brood of vipers!**” He warned. “**The ax is... at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.**”

Yet John was an effective agent of peace, sent by God to prepare the way for Christ!

☞ As for Jesus, He is the One in whom God has {2 Co 5:18} “**reconciled us to himself.**” Verses 78-79 call him “**the rising sun**” who has come “**to guide our feet into the path of peace.**”

■ But what a path! For Jesus, it began when He made {Php 2:7} “**himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant.**” It stretched before him as He dealt with sinners, touched lepers, and washed dirty feet. It subjected him to temptation, rejection, and betrayal. The Lord’s “**path of peace**” culminated in his glorious resurrection and ascension – but only after his agony in Gethsemane and death on the cross! Hardly the stuff of a serene Thomas Kinkadee painting!

★ Yet Christ is the *Αλφα* and *Ομεγα* of peace, the source and measure of peace, *the* one and only {Isa 9:6} “**Prince of Peace.**”

In Luke 1:57-80 God is inviting us to participate in his peace and to help bring it to the world. What does it reveal about Messianic Peacemaking?

📖 (By Messianic Peacemaking, I mean peace work that is inspired by, empowered by, and practiced in obedience to Jesus the Messiah.)

① Messianic Peace is a priority.

Many in the Church live as though peacemaking is irrelevant or even contrary to evangelism and discipleship. How can we believe that when it was such a vital part of Christ’s ministry?

② Reconciliation to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the starting point for Messianic Peace.

We must {2 Co 5:20} “**be reconciled to God**” in order to reconcile others. It is impossible for us to share what we do not have. Fleshly peacemaking is often well-intended – yet it is doomed to failure.

③ Messianic Peace requires fresh repentance.

📖 Repentance is a) agreeing with God that we have sinned, thereby meriting physical and spiritual death; b) asking God to forgive the guilt of our sin and liberate us from its power; and c) striving to obey God as we turn our back on sin.

I need repentance as much as any gutter sinner. Not just once, but day after day. I sin even as Christ works to conform me to his character! Are you any different? Every time we sin, we strengthen the worldly hostility and alienation our Lord died to overcome!

④ Messianic Peace requires us to imitate Jesus.

Within the Kingdom of God the *how* of our words and deeds is as important as the *what*. The Lord Jesus is our standard. He humbled himself, served others, and (when necessary) suffered unto death to win peace.

Appeasement, deceit, intimidation, and violence are the safer, more expedient, seemingly more effective ways to deal with conflict and disorder – but they are

not the ways of Jesus, his kingdom, or its citizens. It is only in the imitation of Christ that we, the people of God, become Messianic Peacemakers.

“**Peace, peace,**’ [the false secular and religious prophets] **say, when there is no peace.**”

But “**Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel!**”

There *is* peace – real peace, lasting peace, holistic peace, in which we can participate now and through eternity.

Messiah has come “**to guide our feet into the path of peace**”!

Where is the peace?

It is in Jesus! He is the King of Peace.