

(12-08-24) The Messages of Advent (2)

Peace: Reconciliation to God Through the Cross

Ephesians 2:14-18

This year has been no exception in hearing the news of wars in the world. As we know, a lot of nations have been involved in wars, such as Ukraine, Russia, Israel, Palestine, Syria, Iran, Myanmar, Sudan, Ethiopia, Haiti, Burkina Faso, and many others. We need peace in the world. Last Tuesday, I was so surprised to hear the news from South Korea that the president there illegally declared emergency martial law, preventing people from any political activities, including any type of broadcasting, publication, or demonstration. I was so glad to hear that the Korean Nation Assembly was able to repeal the declaration of martial law immediately. South Korea needs peace at this time. I sincerely appreciate your prayers for South Korea.

The United States has experienced social, political, and racial conflicts. The economic gap between the poor and the rich has widened like never before. As we went through the elections, our nation became deeply divided. The news reports of racism have become a routine ritual of our daily lives. We need peace in the United States.

Families are suffering from relational problems. Conflicts and misunderstandings between parents and children, husbands and wives, and sometimes with extended family members are inevitable in human relationships. We need peace in our family.

What about our hearts? Are you at peace? Do you feel the presence of God in your minds during this busy season? Is there anything that bothers you that you need to take care of? If so, we need peace in our hearts.

The Hebrew word for "Peace" is [Shalom](#). According to John Goldingay, "[The word shalom can suggest peace after there has been conflict, but it often points to a richer notion, that of the fullness of life. The KJV sometimes translates it "welfare," and modern translations use words such as "well-being" or "prosperity." It suggests that everything is going well for you.](#)" (John Goldingay, *Genesis for Everyone Part 1* (2010), 196).

There are the things we must remember as we hold onto the message of "Shalom:" Jesus Christ, the Cross, and our access to God through the Holy Spirit.

First of all, Jesus Christ is our peace.

“For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us, abolishing the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace,” (Ephesians 2:14-15 NRSV)
Jesus Christ came to us to be our peace. In Jesus Christ, there is no dividing wall between races, the poor and the rich, the uneducated and the educated. In the presence of Jesus Christ, we can find unity and disruption of unjust, unethical, and oppressive human conditions. That is why justice and peace go hand in hand.

Let us read the scripture on the screen together.

“The fruit of that righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence forever.” (Isaiah 32:17 NIV)

“Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.” (Psalm 85:10 NRSV)

Peace is not merely the absence of tension and conflict; it is built upon a foundation of justice. Jesus Christ reconciles humanity both with God and with one another, establishing peace through the ultimate act of justice: his sacrifice on the cross.

Let us think about the cross. The cross is the way to human reconciliation and peace with God.

“and might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near,” (Ephesians 2:16-17 NRSV)

The cross symbolizes our peace with God through Jesus Christ’s suffering and death.

In the Roman Empire, the emperors were kind of generous towards the people in Gentile territories. As long as they followed the emperors’ rules, they could enjoy freedom, keeping their own customs and cultures. However, if there were any revolts against the Empire, the emperors would send their troops, capture the leaders of insurgence, and crucify them on the crosses in public. By doing so, they could suppress the revolts and bring peace to the territories. The cross was used as a tool to instill immense fear among the subject peoples of Rome. It was not peace for the Gentile nations but only for the Roman Empire. However, Jesus Christ obeyed the cross to reveal his sacrificial love so that we can be reconciled and at peace with God and one another.

As we hold onto the message of hope during this season, we must remember that Christ came and proclaimed peace to everyone.

“So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near,” (Ephesians 2:17 NRSV)

Last but not least, because of Jesus Christ, who is our peace, we can access God through the Holy Spirit.

“Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.” (Ephesians 2:18 NLT)

As we enjoy the peace Jesus Christ has established for us, we can connect with God, follow God’s heart, and participate in God’s mission in the world. Our access to God means our participation in God’s glory, God’s heart, and God’s plan for reconciliation for the world through the Holy Spirit.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors,” (2 Corinthians 5:17-20 NIV)

Don Richardson was a Canadian missionary to the Sawi people of Papua New Guinea, a Stone-Age tribe of cannibal headhunters. The Sawi people had a culture that glorified treachery and violence. They admired cunning and betrayal, seeing acts of deceitful murder as heroic. They would build up a friendship only to betray and kill each other. This worldview made it incredibly difficult for Richardson to communicate the Christian message, particularly the concept of Jesus as a Savior who was betrayed. When Richardson shared the story of Jesus, the Sawi admired Judas Iscariot, seeing his betrayal as a clever and praiseworthy act. This cultural difference created a significant barrier to explaining the Gospel's true meaning of sacrifice, love, and reconciliation.

Despite their violent customs, the Sawi had a unique tradition for making peace between conflicting tribes. To establish trust and end conflict, one tribe would give a child (a "peace child") to the other tribe. As long as the peace child lived, peace was maintained between the tribes. This cultural practice provided Richardson with a profound analogy to explain the Christian Gospel.

Richardson explained Jesus as God’s ultimate "Peace Child," given to humanity to establish peace and reconciliation between God and people. This analogy resonated deeply with the Sawi, transforming their understanding of Jesus and leading many to embrace the Christian faith. The Sawis became people of peace, sharing the good news with the tribes they once fought. They would also start sending out their own missionaries to other areas.

Please know that we are called to be God's peace children to the world. The Cross is a symbol of our reconciliation and peace with God. It also symbolizes Jesus Christ's sacrifice to bring peace and reconciliation to the world. **Let us remember that we must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus Christ** (Matt. 16:24).