

## Peace on Earth

### Part 2: How Jesus Brings Peace With the People Who Drive You Crazy

Ephesians 2:13-18

**Summary:** Jesus brings true peace with God and with the people who drive you crazy, even in the midst of conflict, division, and holiday stress.

#### **Main Ideas:**

Sometimes it feels like life would be peaceful if it weren't for all the people.

Real peace comes from whole and healthy relationships.

Jesus is the source of true peace

Peace with each other begins with peace with God.

Jesus tears down every wall we build to keep ourselves apart

Loved and forgiven people love and forgive people.

Peace is a gift.

The closer we get to Jesus, the closer we get to each other.

When we accept what Jesus has done for us, it sets us free to accept others... faults and all

We experience God's true peace when we offer it to each other.

#### **Invitation:**

Identify your THEM.

Ask God to show you one thing he enjoys about THEM.

Then thank him that he lived, died, and rose for THEM... and for YOU.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What is your favorite part of the holidays? What is your least favorite?
2. Why do you think relationships, especially with family, coworkers, or neighbors, so often disrupt our sense of peace?
3. Read Ephesians 2:14. How do you think peace with God serve as the foundation for peace with others?
4. How might viewing conflict as an opportunity for grace and peacemaking change your approach to relationships?
5. Who is your "THEM" (someone you struggle to get along with) and how might Jesus' love for them change your perspective?

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#### **Transcript:**

**WE:** You know what the best part of holidays is?

- People... Especially family
- The ones who bring us joy, laughter, comfort...

You know the worst part of the holidays?

- You guessed it... People.... Especially family
- The ones who reopen old wounds, bring awkward silences, and spark arguments out of nowhere

Ever get those perfect family Christmas cards you get in the mail?

- Behind that peaceful, happy picture, there were at least six fights, two bribes, a meltdown or two, and about 100 retakes.
- That's why we don't do them... sorry.
- Favorite story: We were doing family photos, and Benji threw up on me at least 3 times... but the pics looked great.

And it's not just holidays...

- It's at school, work, with neighbors, those idiots driving in front of me, or those crazies on social media
- Sometimes it feels like life would be peaceful if it weren't for all the people.

Now the night Jesus was born, angels filled the sky and announced "peace on earth."

- Peace- God's shalom, wholeness, things as they ought to be, breaking into our world
- But where is this perfect peace? Because all these people are driving me crazy.

I mean, what if we could just go live in communes with the people we actually like...

- It would probably last a month or two before the drama started.
- Somebody would try to make it into a cult
- We'd start fighting each other
- Or start fighting other communes for better snacks and livestock.

Why? B/c the problem isn't just other people... It's YOU... annnnnnndddd it's me.

- Every one of us has, at some point, stolen someone's peace.

We can't find true peace/shalom through Isolation or avoidance

- Because we're built for community.
- To experience real Shalom, to live life the way it ought to be... we need each other.

Real peace comes from whole and healthy relationships.

So, if the angels really meant it, if Jesus really came to bring "peace on earth"...

- How do we actually find it, in the middle of all these messes?

Because if we can't, then the peace Jesus promised will just be some empty idea we long for once a year.

The Apostle Paul gives us the answer in his letter to Jesus Followers in the ancient city of Ephesus.

**GOD:** The tensions we feel with others aren't new... It's part of being human.

The Ephesian Church was facing some real relationship drama... Jews V. Gentiles

- After centuries of religious and racial separation, suspicion, and hostility, these people had to figure out something the world had never seen: a multi-ethnic community united, not by laws, but by their faith in and love for Jesus.

Paul steps in to show them not just *that* Jesus makes them one family... but *how*.

He reminds them... before Jesus, Gentiles were separated from the Jews, excluded by both religious laws and cultural barriers

- But then comes the good news...

**Eph. 2:13 (NLT)** *But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.*

### Jesus is the source of true peace

Although Jesus was Jewish, and all Jewish history pointed to him, he didn't come only for his own people...

- He came to save the entire world.

That means anyone can have peace with God

- Not because we tried hard enough, or cleaned ourselves up, or bribed him with good behavior.

Jesus' sacrifice on the cross has brought us near.

- Like a mother hen gathering all her chicks under her wings... God is gathering us in

No longer outsiders. Now we are cherished children.

- Who have been shown our infinite worth b/c the infinite God gave his life to bring us home

That baby born in Bethlehem was the bridge between God and us.

- We can now experience lasting peace and an eternal relationship of love, the moment we accept his invitation.

This peace with God is the foundation of every restored relationship

If we want real peace with people, we begin by receiving peace with God through Jesus.

- Everything flows from this.
- Peace with each other begins with peace with God.

And just like the walls that divided Jews and Gentiles, we still build walls... over race, background, politics, past mistakes.

- Paul shows us that Jesus tears those walls down.

**Eph. 2:14 (NLT)** *For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us.*

Jesus is the Prince of Peace

- He brings peace in every direction: peace with God (vertical), peace in our hearts and minds (inward), and peace with each other (horizontal).

In the Jewish temple, there was a literal wall.

If you were a Gentile, you could only go so far... get too close, and you'd be killed.

But when Jesus, God in a body, came to earth, he showed that his love and his death and resurrection were for everybody, male, female, jew, Gentile, rich, poor.

This isn't just theory. This is the answer to every division, every conflict, every 'us vs. them.'

- Jesus tears down every wall we build to keep ourselves apart... walls of suspicion, prejudice, history, shame, or fear.

He doesn't just offer private spirituality; he creates a whole new way to be human... together.

- Through the cross, he isn't just saving individuals... he's creating a new humanity

Paul says, Jesus creates "one new people" (literally: a new humanity), not defined by race, gender, or background, but by union with Jesus.

Through Jesus, we become who we were always meant to be: whole, living in true shalom with God and each other.

But how does Jesus actually destroy these barriers in real life?

- That's what Paul explains next...

**Eph 2:15-16 (NLT)** *He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.*

There are no more religious or racial tests for inclusion.

- No checklist for who's in and who's out
- Jesus fulfilled the law that kept the Gentiles out.

Now, he invites everyone to become a full member of God's family.

- When you follow Jesus, you get a new identity... son or daughter in his family.

We are loved and forgiven, and you know what... Loved and forgiven people love and forgive people.

- So if loving or forgiving seems impossible, maybe it's time to ask: have I really received and rested in God's forgiveness for me?

Then Paul says, "our hostility toward each other was put to death on the cross."

- All the hate, fear, judgment, bigotry, elitism... Jesus put to death on the cross.
- We don't have to be slaves to old prejudices and divisions.

When we're hurt or offended, we have a choice:

- We can try to resurrect hostility... nursing hate, bitterness, or judgment
- Or we can allow forgiveness, love, and patience to take their place.

It means, in Jesus, I refuse to let hostility rule anymore.

- It doesn't mean conflict disappears... I might need to have a hard conversation, confront a wound, set a boundary, or even forgive someone who never apologizes.
- But the "us vs. them" cycle stops at the cross.

And this is so much better and more powerful than... just trying to be nice to difficult people.

- That can only go so far until we're exhausted and fed up.
- Jesus didn't come to earth, die, and rise again just so we could be nice...
- He came to transform us and to use us as part of transforming the world.

How? Paul gives us the key next...

**Eph. 2:17-18 (NLT)** *He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.*

This peace with each other is not something we create or get by working really hard, or b/c we're such good people.

Learning to walk in peace *IS* a process, but the source isn't us... Peace is a gift.

- It is Jesus' peace given through the Holy Spirit.

As the Holy Spirit transforms us, we begin to live and think more like Jesus.

- Like a glove takes the shape and movement of the hand inside it
- The more we yield and listen to him, the more we experience Jesus' peace and become peacemakers, too.

The closer we get to Jesus, the closer we get to each other.

How do we actually live this out in real life, with real people, this week?

Paul's answer is to remember... "It's because of what Christ has done..."

- That's the good news of Peace... The foundation of true reality...

Jesus proved...

There is a God, and he made you on purpose.

He is not mad or disappointed. He is not distant or uninterested.

God loves you. Likes you. And is FOR you.

He wants you to know, trust, and be transformed by his love.

God became human- Jesus... to show us exactly what God is like through his life, death, and resurrection.

He offers forgiveness, love, peace, and real meaning

He invites everyone, no fences/barriers, into this relationship... now and forever.

As we explore and absorb the depth and richness of that truth...

- We discover not only God's love for you, but the inherent worth of every person around you.

When we accept what Jesus has done for us, it sets us free to accept others... faults and all

**YOU:** So let me ask you... Who is your "THEM?"

Who is that person, group, or face where you think, "My life, my job, my church, my family, my world would be so much easier without them..."?

Listen...

The life Jesus lived... he lived for you AND them

The death he died... he died for you and THEM

The victory, the resurrection he won, he offers to you and THEM.

As we remind ourselves of this truth. As we let the Holy Spirit transform us...

- We become Jesus' new people...
- And get to partner with God to bring his shalom to the rest of the world.

So here's my invitation...

Take a moment and Identify your THEM.

- Ask God to show you one thing he enjoys about THEM.
- Then thank him that he lived, died, and rose for THEM... and for YOU.

Real peace, real shalom, doesn't come from just getting along or being nice...

It comes from accepting the identity Jesus gives us... fully forgiven, deeply loved children of God

- Letting him transform us more and more into his image...
- And letting his peace and love flow through us to those around us.

If you have never accepted this peace with God through Jesus, you can do that today.

- Just tell him... Jesus, I accept your forgiveness and peace.
- Be the king of my life and make me more like you.

**WE:** Imagine if we approached even our hardest relationships... not as sources of pain and chaos, but as opportunities to experience and create real peace.

What if conflict wasn't about winning or destroying, but about grace, forgiveness, and peacemaking?

What would that show the world about the reality of God, and about the power of Jesus' love?

Imagine what it would mean for your marriage, your family, your friendships, your days at work or school.

It'd be better than starting a commune... and a lot better than starting a cult.

This is the life Jesus offers us.

This is the shalom the angels announced on that first Christmas.

We experience God's true peace when we offer it to each other.

So this Christmas, let's be peacemakers.

Let's give the gift of God's peace... not just to people we like, but to everyone Jesus lived, died, and rose again for.

This year, let's give the world not another picture-perfect photo, but a real glimpse of Jesus' peace.