



Face the Issue:

This week, we focused on finding peace in the midst of the season. Jesus spoke often of peace: “Blessed are the peacemakers,” “Peace to this house,” “Peace, be still.” Isaiah called the Messiah “the Prince of Peace.” Paul said Jesus Himself “is our peace.” Yet the Christian faith, which holds peace as an ideal, sometimes causes us to have the opposite of peace. We live in a very divided world. Many times the division seems to be centered around our belief in Christ. At this very moment war threatens the Middle East, the very land of Jesus’ birth, and the worldwide church itself shows more division than unity.

What current events or issues make you feel at odds with the rest of society?

In what ways was the earthly ministry of Jesus marked by conflict rather than peace?

Do you agree or disagree that the world is not a peaceful place and that Christians sometimes are not agents of peace? Defend your position.

What would you say to people who blame Christianity for conflict in the world?

Into the Word:

Read Matthew 10:34-36.

This time of year we love to sing Christmas carols about peace on earth but compare those carols to the very words of Christ Himself.

Jesus himself took up sword language to describe his mission on earth. The gospel unites believers; even believers from warring nations can find peace with each other through common faith in Jesus Christ. But the gospel divides believers from unbelievers.

Do you know someone who has experienced the dividing power of the gospel, perhaps in family relationships?

How do recent stories of the persecution and deaths of missionaries demonstrate this principle?

So where is this peace that we were promised at the coming of the Messiah?

As Jeremy pointed out, Paul described in Ephesians 2:14-16 how Jesus ended the enmity between the Jews and the Gentiles who came to faith in him. Jesus Himself became our peace and reconciled all believers into one body through His death on the Cross. It is important for us to recognize that while Christ has established peace among believers within the church, He has not sanctioned peace between believers and the world.

In other words, what's good news for some is bad news for others. For Christ followers and believers, we have peace in knowing the Father, salvation from sins, a source of hope in this world, and knowledge of a forever home with our God where we will experience His love and light. This is bad news for nonbelievers that will have the exact opposite.

Application

Read John 17:14-18

Despite this enmity with the world, Jesus chose to leave us here to fulfill His mission. He gave us marching orders. He prayed for our protection while we minister and witness here.

We don't have peace because we live in a war zone.

We don't have peace because our faith makes us the enemy.

We don't have peace when we're looking for it in the wrong realm. We have a peace that surpasses all understanding when we look at the Savior.

How was the world in Jesus' time like our own? Is our society any less violent or unsettled?

How are you a peacemaker in your family, church, community, and country? How can you be?