

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JANUARY 25 - 29, 2021

SHATTERED MIRRORS

SERMON SERIES

Jan 3 - Feb 14

MONDAY

Ephesians 2:14-18; Exodus 20:8-11; Hebrews 4:1-11

“He Himself is our peace ... [having] broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility ... [to] reconcile us ... to God ... thereby killing the hostility.” (Ephesians 2:14, 16 ESV)

If you asked the average person, “Are you God’s enemy? Are you antagonistic toward Him?” none would likely answer, “Absolutely!” However, the Bible teaches that each of us, in our fallenness, was born an enemy to the Almighty (Romans 5:10, 8:7). C. S. Lewis said, “Fallen man is not an imperfect creature who needs improvement; he is a rebel who must lay down his arms.”

Longing for peace is a popular, contemporary news, musical, and literary theme. John Lennon wrote and longingly sang “Imagine” and “Give Peace a Chance.” George Harrison, likewise, wrote “Give Me Love (Give Me Peace on Earth),” etc. A favorite Christmas carol, “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” features these lyrics: “Peace on earth and mercy mild.” Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* remains a best-selling novel.

Yet reports on war and strife dominate the media. We feel unrest as individuals, as groups, as a country, and even worldwide. “Since the beginning of recorded history, the entire world has been at peace less than eight percent of the time. ... Of 3,530 years of recorded history, only 286 years saw peace, and over 8000 peace treaties were made and broken.” (Moody Bible Institute)

Apart from God there is no peace. The Bible warns accordingly, using unfaithful Israelites trekking toward the Promised Land as an omen: “I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest’” (Psalm 95:11). The Creator instituted the Sabbath—which most disregard—as a commanded “day of rest,” Himself modeling “resting” (ceasing from creating) upon Creation’s “seventh day.”

As the One who created humankind for loving relationship, God desires peace with us—so much so that He provided for it via Jesus Christ’s saving, reconciling 1st century mission. The Savior Himself promised, “Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Do you experience God’s peace—His *Shalom*—knowing its Source? Have you met any who do not? How are you revealing the *Prince of Peace* (Isaiah 9:6) in 2021?

QUESTIONS

How was each of us “God’s enemy” even as newborns? Why does the Bible call Jesus of Nazareth “*the Prince of Peace*” (Isaiah 9:6)? What is the “rest” that God promises believers?

GTI HOPE IN INDIA

Pray for our partner’s Scripture distribution levels to return to normal levels. The ability to distribute Scripture, as well as the demand for Scripture, has decreased due to COVID restrictions and the resulting poor economy. Our partner trains and equips the indigenous church, and Scripture distribution plays a huge role.

TUESDAY

Ephesians 2:14-16; Matthew 27:50-54; Exodus 26:30-34

Jesus' last recorded words from the cross were "*It is finished!*" (John 19:30) The Greek expression used here, *tetelestai*, "was also written on (ancient) business documents ... indicating that a bill had been paid in full." (Bible.org) The Lord's completed, peacemaking sacrifice was confirmed as "*the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.*" (Matthew 27:51) God further ratified this three days later in Christ's resurrection.

"The curtain symbolized the separation of God and man. Only the (Levitical) high priest ... could walk through the curtain on the Day of Atonement to sprinkle the blood of the atoning sacrifice. Because of our sin, man is not worthy to stand in the presence of our Holy God. ... [However,] God made a way for us through Jesus, and so He tore the veil that separated us from Him. ...

"The veil of sin in our lives, and the deception of our enemy, does not have to keep us from living a full life anymore. God made a way, through Jesus' atoning sacrifice, for us to come to Him ... as children adopted through Christ. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. ... '*God took our rebellion and he nailed it to the cross,*' said John Piper. And as a result, the curtain tore in two. The veil has been removed. We can now live fully free in Christ. But we have to choose to walk with Him." (Meg Butcher)

"*He Himself is our peace ...*" (Ephesians 2:14). "Jesus. ... hasn't simply made peace between God and man and Jew and Gentile; He is our

peace.” (David Guzik) “*And He will be our peace ...*” (Micah 5:5, NIV). “*Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you ...*” (John 14:27). “*For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given ... And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*” (Isaiah 9:6, NKJV).

Christmas passed about a month ago. But the *Shalom* of the Savior’s atoning sacrifice remains available to all who come to Him. Such news is too good to hold onto. Where will you share the Gospel this week?

QUESTIONS

What did Jesus mean in declaring “*tetelestai*” (“*It is finished!*”— John 19:30) from the cross? What signs did God use to reinforce the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice? What does “Jesus hasn’t simply *made* peace between God and man and Jew and Gentile; He *is* our peace” mean?

GTI HOPE IN INDIA

Pray for the teachers and students in ongoing literacy classes. Pray for church leaders who are being trained to effectively share God’s love and the message of peace. Pray for training for literacy project officers and teachers who will be trained in February and March. (Romans 10:13-15)

WEDNESDAY

Ephesians 2:14-15; Romans 6:1-2, 12-17; Colossians 2:16-23

As God's image-bearers, believers' differences should reflect the mosaic of His glory. God's image does not require uniformity or elimination of differences. Rather, variety among Christians should be complementary, presenting a fuller portrait of Christ. Such distinctions include the continuum of believers from "extreme rules-followers" through those who "do whatever I want—God's grace grants such freedom."

"[Some hold a] position emphasizing a system of rules and regulations for ... salvation and spiritual growth ... [emphasizing] a strict literal adherence. Doctrinally, it is a position essentially opposed to grace." (GotQuestions.org) Legalistic ancient scribes and Pharisees, for whom Jesus reserved His harshest rebukes, exemplified such an orientation.

"[Others embrace] the belief that there are no moral laws that God expects Christians to obey ... [which] misapplies the meaning of God's gracious favor. ... [These might hold that] as long as one makes a profession of faith in Christ, he or she is saved (Romans 10:9), even if there is no immediate obedience to the commands of Jesus ... [and] a life of holiness. It is the idea that we can have Jesus as Savior, but not necessarily as Lord." (GotQuestions.org) They amplify and misapply Paul's "abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances" (Ephesians 2:15 ESV).

All of us lean one way or another here. Apart from the Spirit's counsel, I tend toward legalism, which can prompt harshness and judgmentalism. Others I love default to feelings-based attitudes and actions, sometimes sacrificing integrity and faithfulness. But God provides a better way: the way of Christ. "God's grace covers all our sins ... a wonderful truth! [However] there is a moral law [we are] to obey ... the law of Christ—'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ... [And] love your neighbor as yourself' (Matthew 22:37-40). ... We are not under the Old Testament Law ... [but] we are under the law of Christ ... [enabling] a life of morality, integrity, and love." (GotQuestions.org)

The Bible does not call for "cookie-cutter Christians"; however, we all do follow Jesus. Where are you inclined—toward legalism or, conversely, toward "cheap grace"? Ask God for a right balance so that you can experience His best and better reflect Christ.

QUESTIONS

If Jesus freed us from the bondage and consequences of the Law, does that mean that the Ten Commandments no longer apply? What is legalism and how is it opposed to grace? Are we, as Christians, called to sameness?

GTI HOPE IN INDIA

Pray for GTi HOPE leadership in the US. Prayer for health, wisdom, well-developed and executed strategies, and effective communications. Pray for open doors and hearts with existing and new partners creating more opportunities to bring hope and the message of peace to people in need of both.

THURSDAY

Ephesians 2:14-18; Revelation 7:9; Galatians 5:16-17

“For He ... has made us both one and has broken down ... the dividing wall of hostility ... [so] that He might create in Himself one new [person] in place of the two ... [and] reconcile us both to God in one body. And He came ... to you who were far off and ... to those who were near ... [so that] we both have access ... to the Father.” (Ephesians 2:14-18)

The Savior came in an earthly mission of peacemaking to provide the Way for fallen humankind’s reconciliation with God. But who are the “us both,” “two,” and “far off and ... near” of this passage?

Ancient Hebrews generally expected their Messiah to be a military liberator. Jesus led an insurrection—but of the human heart, not one politically motivated. Most 1st century Jews also saw God’s kingdom as a “closed system”—they couldn’t imagine God’s salvation available to Gentiles despite abundant Scripture indicating this. *“Behold, a great multitude ... from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands ...”* (Revelation 7:9) The “far off and ... near” from Ephesians 2:14-18 includes non-Jews following Christ and Israel’s faithful remnant.

Perhaps the “two” from above also applies to the contention within believers between our old (fallen) and new natures (Romans 7:21-24). Becoming increasingly Christ-like is an ongoing process (sanctification)

wherein God presents growth-promoting trials and opportunities. Our related choices draw us either closer to or further from Him.

Reconciliation in Christ likewise applies “horizontally” to our interpersonal relationships. Only by learning to love unconditionally and serve for God’s glory can we know sustainable peace with others—even those antagonistically inclined. *“Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you”* (2 Corinthians 13:11). The Bible promotes loving community and our people-oriented relationships.

Are you a peacemaker? I’m not naturally inclined here, but the Lord faithfully perseveres—“God is not finished with me yet” indeed! Do you celebrate variety among people—each created in God’s image—or can our differences bother you?

QUESTIONS

How was Jesus different from the Messiah whom most ancient Jews expected? What are some examples of “the two” reconciled by God in Christ? How will you be a God-glorifying reconciler in this new year? Is there someone today I need to seek forgiveness from whom I have treated badly? Is there something in my life I need to change to be more loving and respectful of others?

GTI HOPE IN INDIA

Pray for the Bauri people whom Glenkirk is supporting through literacy courses and the efforts of church leaders. Twelve church leaders are currently being trained in a one-year program involving classroom and field work. Pray for ears that hear, hearts that are open, and an abundant harvest of spiritual fruit.

FRIDAY

Ephesians 3:18; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; Colossians 3:12-15

Over 20 years ago I joined a large Christian conference, one including denominations spanning the globe. The featured speaker walked out, surveyed the crowd, and then asked: “How many different churches do you think are represented here?” Some answered, “Over 1000,” others, “2000!” He replied, “Wrong—there is only one church here: the church of Jesus Christ.”

The Bible has promoted community since the creation. “God often dealt with nations as a whole and blessed them when the people, in togetherness, honored Him (Psalm 33:12; etc.). Togetherness is [also] one of the most important themes in the New Testament. ... The opposite of togetherness is dissension and strife, which the Bible strongly condemns. ... Divisions within the body of Christ halt God’s work through us and turn our focus inward rather than outward. ... When we work together, rather than each one seeking [his or her] own agenda, we accomplish more for God’s kingdom. Togetherness ... is God’s ideal for His family.” (GotQuestions.org)

The Apostle Paul dealt extensively with disharmony within the churches he nurtured throughout the Mediterranean region; today’s 1 Corinthians passage provides one example. The Corinthians were caught up in church leader hero worship, exhibiting early warning signs of denominationalism. Paul admonished them accordingly, “*I ... could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it ... [as] you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?*” (1 Corinthians 3:1-3).

Paul reminded them, as Scripture does us: we follow Christ alone—not any mere human—in unity and surrender. The Corinthians’ issue feels contemporary—it’s so easy to concern ourselves with nonessentials, “majoring in the minors.” The enemy loves this, as it distracts from the Savior’s ways and God’s best.

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when [believers] dwell in unity! ... For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.”
(Psalm 133)

Father God, please use us—discordant and broken instruments—and make a glorious symphony in 2021!

QUESTIONS

How many churches are there throughout Christendom? Why does the Bible emphasize community? What was a key problem Paul addressed within the 1st century church at Corinth?

GTI HOPE IN INDIA

Pray for our brothers and sisters in India who are facing increased persecution and harassment. More states are passing anti-conversion laws and nationalistic Hindus are becoming bolder. Our friends are dedicated and committed to their work. Please pray for wisdom, grace, and protection. (Matthew 10:16)

Sources

- C. S. Lewis' quote is from his book, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 1952/2001), 56.
- "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" was written by Charles Wesley as part of *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (London: William Strahan, 1739).
- The Moody Bible Institute quote is from its devotional *Today in the Word* (June, 1988, p. 33; ©2020 Moody Publishers & Moody Bible Institute).
- The Bible.org quote is from <https://bible.org/question/what-does-greek-word-tetelestai-mean>
- Meg Butcher's quote can be found at <https://www.crosswalk.com/special-coverage/easter/why-was-the-veil-torn-at-jesus-death.html>
- David Guzik's quote is from https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Eph/Eph-2.cfm
- GotQuestions.org quotes can be found at <https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-Christian-legalism.html>, <https://www.gotquestions.org/antinomianism.html>, <https://www.gotquestions.org/cheap-grace.html> and <https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-togetherness.html>

