

Isaiah 9:6-7
The Peace Jesus Gives
WRCoB 12.10.23

There once was a King who offered a prize to one who could create the best painting depicting peace. Many artists tried. The King looked at all the paintings, but there were only two he liked and he would choose between them.



One painting was of a calm lake. The lake was a perfect mirror, for peaceful towering mountains were all around it. Overhead was a blue sky with fluffy white clouds. All who saw this painting thought that it was a perfect expression of peace.



The other picture had mountains, too. But these were rugged and bare. Above was an angry sky from which rain fell and in which lightning played. Down the side of the mountain tumbled a foaming waterfall. This did not look peaceful at all.



But when the King looked, he saw behind the waterfall a tiny bush growing in a crack in the rock. In the bush a mother bird had built her nest. There, in the midst of the rush of angry water, sat the mother bird on her nest in perfect peace.

People were stunned by the King's choice and asked why he would choose this painting over the other obvious choice. The king replied that peace can be found in the midst of chaos, storms, and trouble. Because peace is born within the heart.

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When you ask a member of the Church of the Brethren
About peace

You'll most likely hear something like this.

The Church of the Brethren
Is one of the historic peace churches

Along with the Mennonites, Quakers, and Amish.

The Church of the Brethren believes

"that war or any participation in war is wrong and incompatible with the spirit, example and teachings of Jesus Christ".

All really good stuff.

We talk of conscientious objector status
And alternative service
And we speak out against any violence
As contrary to the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

We speak of peace as an external reality.

A wonderful vision of the peaceable kingdom.

But seldom do we speak of peace as an inner reality.

A peace within giving us fortitude to face our troubles

To the Brethren's credit, we seek to do

What Jesus calls us to do when he says

Blessed are the peacemakers

We believe strongly in a nonviolent approach to world peace.

But what we don't talk much about

Is the peace of God within ourselves

So necessary in these turbulent times.

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Isaiah prophesizes the coming Messiah

A child would be born for us

A son would be given to us

Authority will rest upon his shoulders.

And he will be called

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace

When Isaiah prophesized the coming Messiah

He saw the Prince of Peace

As the restorer of peace

Because the Messiah will bring peace

Not only among the nations, tribes, and families

But that the Messiah will bring a personal, inner peace
That sees us through the darkest of times.

The Prince of Peace gifts us with a Holy Comforter.

John 14:27 NIV

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

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There are three levels of peace the Bible speaks of.

World peace

Relational peace

And inner. peace.

The peace the world offers

Relates to things like peaceful resolutions

Between warring nations or regional conflicts

All super important.

World peace is the peace MLK Jr spoke of when he said

True peace is not merely the absence of tension

It is the presence of justice.

This peace depends on just and equitable circumstances

For all people on earth

So needed in the violent world we live in.

It is the worth struggling for.

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But this is not the only peace the Bible speaks of.

Jesus taught relational peace.

He taught us to love one another.

He taught us to turn the other cheek

To go the extra mile

To love our enemy

And pray for those who persecute us.

He taught peaceful resolutions in relational conflicts.

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This peace Jesus offers

Is not just the absence of conflict

It is presence of peace in the midst of conflict.

This peace is not dependent on external conditions.

Jesus taught peace but Jesus offers something even more.

For the spiritual peace that Jesus offers is not the same

As world or relational peace.

The peace of Jesus is not dependent on world peace

Or the circumstances around us.

The peace that Jesus gives

Flows even in the midst of conflict, persecution

Disappointment, trouble and stress.

This peace does not guarantee removal or change

Of the current outward conditions

But helps us through them.

It's a peace that transcends even our own personal flaws

Because it doesn't come from us.

It comes from God.

Isaiah 26:3 CEV

**The Lord gives perfect peace
to those whose faith is firm.**

Jesus says, my peace I give you
Not as the world gives.

There's a difference, between world peace
The external absence of conflict
And the inner peace that Jesus offers.

Jesus offers a peace unique to any other.

Romans 5:1 CEV

**By faith we have been made acceptable to God. And
now, thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ, we have peace
with God.**

We cannot have the peace of God
Until we make peace with God.

It is through our faith as followers of Jesus
That we no longer are estranged from God

When we choose to confess our wrongdoings
Seek his forgiveness

And follow Jesus
We become a part of him.

And this restored relationship with Jesus brings peace
That the world cannot give nor take away.

It is with this peace that Jesus himself
Was able to endure the torture and punishment
He went through.

And it is this peace that gave compassion to Stephen
As he was being stoned to death
To say

“Forgive them father, for they know not what they do.”

It is this peace that multitudes of Christians
Face persecution, oppression and hardship with grace

This peace that gave strength to the captive Chibok girls
As they were forced to become wives and slaves
To Boko Haram terrorists.

It is this peace I first felt sitting in a church pew in the 80s
That led to my confession of faith in Jesus Christ

Jesus said

John 16:33 NLT

I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.

The peace Jesus offers us is an inner peace
A peace of mind, an inner calmness
A complete trust in God.

When the Prince of Peace came down from Heaven
He heralded in a new kingdom
Bringing peace on earth good will toward all.

But until that day when God consummates this kingdom
We will continue to face wars and rumors of wars.

We will continue to face hardships and troubling times.

But this peace that Jesus gives through his Spirit
That allows us to face any conflict
With a calm and quiet heart.

Philippians 4:6 CEB

Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks.

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There's a reason that Advent focuses on four aspects of faith

Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

These qualities are God-given
Made evident in the wondrous event Isaiah speaks of.

For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given.

Isaiah 9:7 NRSV

**⁷Great will be his authority,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.**

But until that day
We will continue the work of Jesus

Simply, Peacefully Together

To help herald in God's kingdom of peace
With the peace Jesus offers.

Philippians 4:7 CEB

**Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding
will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus.**

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Reinhold Niebuhr created what we know today
As the serenity prayer.

Many know it by heart.

His prayer helps us to discern
What we have control over and what we don't

But many don't know the full prayer.

So, in closing, let us pray this prayer in unison.

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot
change; Courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to
know the difference.*

*Living one day at a time; Enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardships as the pathway to peace; taking, as He
did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it;*

*Trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His
Will; So that I may be reasonably happy in this life and
supremely happy with Him forever and ever in the next.*

Amen.