

Carol Service Talk
17th December 2023
The Prince of Peace!

I don't know if you have heard the beautiful Christmas song by David Foster, called "My Grown up Christmas List"? Anyone? Amy Grant, Kelly Clarkson and even Donny Osmond have all done covers. The author is talking to Santa Claus:

*Do you remember me
 I sat upon your knee
 I wrote to you with childhood fantasies
 Well I'm all grown up now
 And still need help somehow
 I'm not a child but my heart still can dream
 So here's my lifelong wish
 My grown up Christmas list
 Not for myself but for a world in need
 (here's the list)*

*No more lives torn apart
 That wars would never start
 And time would heal all hearts
 And everyone would have a friend
 And right would always win
 And love would never end, no
 This is my grown up Christmas list*

It's a wish for peaceful hearts and a peaceful world. But if we're honest, that's not the world we find ourselves in, is it? On the personal level, the world is filled with many troubled hearts. And out there across the globe, numerous conflicts rage as we meet.

And, how do we square our troubled world with the claim by Christians that Jesus is the Prince of Peace? And the message of the angels to the shepherds, "Peace on earth?" How exactly, does Jesus bring us peace?

(1) Jesus came to make peace between us and God

Well we need to start with a kind of peace you won't hear mentioned on Social Media or on the Telly this Christmas! Jesus came into this world to make peace between us and a holy God.

You see we all know that there is a God. Deep down. The universe around us is too amazing we are too wonderful to have arisen without a Designer. But although we all know there is a God, we've all walked out on him, we don't thank him for his daily gifts to us and we don't obey his commands which we find within our consciences.

We entertain wrong thoughts which God knows, we speak bad words which God hears and we do wrong deeds which God sees. "We are alienated from God and enemies because of our evil behaviour" is how one Bible writer puts it. Basically, we're out of sorts with God!

But God, who is rich in mercy, sent Jesus Christ into the world to pay for all the wrong things we have done so that we can have peace with God once more: "we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son.." (Romans 5:10) When Jesus was crucified he became a substitute, he was punished for our wrongdoing, so that we can be completely forgiven and be restored to God once more.

This is the main kind of peace Jesus came into this world to bring, peace between us and God. And there are many people in this room who have experienced this peace, and you too can know it if you turn to God and believe that Jesus is the Son of God who was sent into the world to take away your sins.

(2) Jesus came to bring peace in our hearts

But there's a second kind of peace Jesus came to bring— peace in our hearts. "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." (John 14:27) This heart-peace is a supernatural thing that comes directly from God. It comes from knowing that we have a Father in heaven watching over us no matter what troubles may come our way. It comes from belonging to a community of people called the church who love us, pray

for us and encourage us whenever our hearts are troubled . A number of years ago I interviewed lots of people who had become Christians in Wolverhampton and one of the biggest common themes that emerged from their stories was the discovery of a peace of mind and heart they had never known before. And again, in this room, lots of Christians will testify to experiencing this supernatural peace in the midst of deep trials and troubles.

(3) Jesus will one day bring in a new world of Peace

As much as I would wish otherwise, I do not believe there will ever be peace in this world. (That doesn't mean we shouldn't do everything in our powers to work for peace, we should.) But everywhere we look, whether its in families, in sport, in governments or between nations we find conflict, conflict and more conflict.

Last year Russia invaded Ukraine, this year, Hamas attacked Israel, and there are dozens more conflicts raging around the world as we speak.

But the Bible talks again and again about a future glorious world, ruled by Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.” (Isaiah 9:6-7) All conflict will be put to an end:

*“They will beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.*

*Nation will not take up sword against nation,
nor will they train for war anymore.*

*(Isaiah 2:4) The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.*

Conclusion

Jesus came into this world not only to make peace between us and God, not only to give us peaceful hearts in a troubled world, but - since this life is ever so short - to give us the hope of a new world of eternal peace and joy beyond the grave. And we can know all three peaces if we come to God humbly and sincerely.