

<b>Series:</b> Humble King	<b>Reference:</b> Philippians 2:1-11	<b>Title:</b> Peace	<b>Date:</b> 12.9.18
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Website Writeup:</b></p> <p>We've talked about Humility leading to Hope, and we cannot talk about Hope without Peace - what does it mean to live in it, and practice it in light of the Gospel?</p>			

### **Color changes in text indicate slide changes**

This Christmas series is centered around Philippians 2:1-11 which we will not read again, but a passage which is a wonderful image of Jesus urging us emulate his humility. However, in your own quiet time over the coming weeks focus here, incorporating the other passages we touch on in these sermons. Last week we saw how the Humility of Christ led into Hope for you, me & the world, if his life & message is to be embraced. What follows closely on the heels of Hope is Peace - and isn't it Peace that for which we all Hope?

Hope calms the silt of our soul, allowing anxiety & worry to settle to the bottom. Hope extracts fear & anxiety as peace settles over us. Many of us live our lives like a snow globe shaken up with a storm inside us. Anxiety & worry are like infected wounds which need to be healed. If not addressed, we live our lives always protecting ourselves from bumping the wounded limb. Always on guard, instead of feeling settled & okay; the storm rages on, and witness is hindered. Peace is the end result of trust & faith in a gracious god who has all the best for his Creation in mind. Peace is the thick quilt which Jesus wraps around us of being 'okay' in an otherwise cold & competitive world.

As we find Humility & Hope in Jesus, we find Peace. God's kingdom is presented to us as a kingdom of peace, the Shalom of God - one in which death, sin & evil are conquered, the clamoring & one-upmanship of pride, a forgotten thing of the past as Creation's reconciled to Creator with goodness & justice reigning forever. But Peace, like Hope, must be cognitively engaged & practiced, it must be developed alongside that muscle of hope.

1 Peter 5:7 states, *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.* We have some control over whether we will be peaceful people or not. Whether we want to live in anxiety or not. Do we take our anxieties to God in prayer allowing him to crucify that old self which keeps us in bondage? Since, like wanting to be a people of hope, we want also to be a people of peace. Peace is one of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5, a result of walking hand-in-hand with the third person of the Trinity. Allowing him to lead & speak into our hearts, reassuring us of the power & far-reaching effects of grace on our lives. The Wonderful Counselor left to us, God's own Spirit. Being a peaceful people is a part of our active spiritual formation process.

But we don't want to communicate that a pursuit of peace is just self serving - just so that I feel better, not living in an anxious state, although God does care for us in this

way. God calls us to practice peace in relationship with others as well, and reveals the benefit of it - if we are not living in peace with Jesus, we will not be able to do it with others. Colossians 3:15 states, *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.* Romans 12:18, *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.* And 14:19, *Let us therefore make every effort to do what lead to peace and to mutual edification.* Hebrews 12:14 says, *Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.* Our pursuit of peace in relationship with others is intimately tied to our reflection of God in holiness. James 3:18 says, *Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.*

I could go on & on quoting verses pregnant with active verbs calling us to practice a lifestyle of peace.

Many people yo-yo diet, losing weight then gaining back more than we lost - in the end dieting is actually more damaging to our health! It's not dieting we need - it's lifestyle change. Which is what God calls us to in the area of peace, a lifestyle change from anxiety, anger, fear & worry into a settled overall sense of peace in the goodness of God in the present & future, which are both in his hands.

Peace was a common term for New Testament peoples living under the Pax Romana (the Peace of Rome). People very familiar with the theory, rather than true practice of it. Since, Peace under Rome came at a cost - that cost was not under the parameters of love relationship, but rather out of subjugation, control & coercion. Jesus is a quiet humble hopeful challenge to the perceived divine rule of Caesar who sought to bring peace with sword & show of might. Jesus takes the opposite route to Peace, by actually being peaceful - not by lording over people authoritatively, rather he provides peace for us. It's not hammered out in great halls, terms negotiated between warring factions by politicians behind closed doors, enforced by powerful generals commanding vast armies. Rather Gospel Peace is found in a child growing into a man, the cost of peace paid for by Jesus sacrificing himself for our pride & sin paving the way for peace. We don't pay the cost, He does!

We must remember though, in the call to live in that peaceful state of the Gospel & with others, division will come by the exclusive nature of the Gospel we spoke of last week. In Matthew 10:34-36 Jesus pulled no punches in revealing that our choice in following him will bring about a not so peaceful reaction from others: *"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup>For I have come to turn " 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law - <sup>36</sup>a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'*

Sounds contradictory, but the mature believer will see that it is not. In the midst of others not reacting well, we're still called to live in & act peacefully - the end result being

the establishment of everlasting peace in Christ. Yet, the reality we live in is, peace will be challenged at almost every turn in a world which doesn't think to practice it naturally, nor have the true power to do so.

We see the quiet inauguration of our Humble King in Mark 1:9-11 where Jesus submits himself to John the Baptist to be baptized & upon coming out of the water is anointed with the Holy Spirit & verbally confirmed by the Father as His Son with whom He's well pleased - then, immediately Jesus is led into the desert for 40 days to be tempted toward evil; a temptation, to which, he never succumbs. Fully God, Fully Man, Perfect Sacrifice, King of Kings, Lord of Lords - inaugurated quietly, submissively, very little fanfare, if any at all.

*Humility & Hope, walking the way of Peace, poured into the world through an infant; peace often comes in small packages. Philippians 2:7 reveals it...Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

*Isaiah 9:6, For to us a child is born, to us a son is given & the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

For peace to come onto a scene where turbulence & disruption rule, there's always some power which must be confronted. Why does God choose the sledgehammer of humility to defeat foes which power & might cannot?

Philippians 2:7 tells us that Jesus "made himself *nothing*." In other words, Jesus made Himself so small, so *not* the center of attention, He virtually disappeared.

Natural Pearls form when an irritant works its way into an oyster, mussel, or clam. As a defense mechanism, a fluid is used to coat that foreign object. Layer upon layer of this coating, called 'nacre', is deposited until a pearl's formed. Cultured pearls are formed the same way, the only difference being, the irritant is intentionally introduced. Jesus is like a quiet irritant intentionally injected into the world by the Father. His teaching & suffering are like layers forming a pearl of peace in the world - often the smallest things bring about the most beautiful results.

**Little Things Mean A Lot:** *Small* is one of the hardest things many of us will ever do. Our culture virtually shames us if we don't think big, work to become known, make a splash, or leave our mark. Some famous personalities have made it their singular goal to become memorable, talked about, and present on the lips of everyone in a household. Kanye West has his song titled, *I Am A God*, and is quoted as saying something to the effect of, "If the Bible were written now, I'd be in it. I'm *that* important." He feels he's the most prominent voice in the Music world. The only one with a thought. Kanye does a pretty good job talking himself up, but he's got strong competition in Connor McGregor, just watch this...<https://youtu.be/oSzj21arytU> - thank goodness for the beep sensor!

**And what about Charlie Sheen?** <https://youtu.be/pipTwjwrQYQ>. He plans on winning by zeal & violent hatred - the way of the world, although we admit these are extremes.

This even happens in church life - some regard small churches as unsuccessful. It must not be blessed by the Lord, otherwise why wouldn't it grow into a megachurch? But we know that's not true at Six:Eight - we're blessed & favored, are we not! Small churches pastor thousands a hundred at a time, oftentimes in an atmosphere more reflective of true spiritual community. I like that! Most churches in America are at 150 or less, pastored & led by passionate people loving Jesus & seeing lives changed. Small things making a big impact. It's not about the size & worldly power, it's about the heart within, the message of the Gospel embodied.

Rome didn't see Jesus as a threat. In Luke 23 we see Jesus passed back & forth between Pilate & Herod, neither seeing a basis for charge against him. He was small, insignificant in their large powerful political world. Jesus was ridiculed, shamed & taunted, but made no defense; he simply stood peacefully taking what was to come for you & me.

We're surrounded by people who think very highly of themselves, be the best. Conquer your foes. Claw your way to the top. Be big! Those are the messages we live with. And although we laugh & think ourselves to be different...are we really? If we are honest, aren't our concerns more self-driven?

Jesus modeled another way to greatness. A quiet way. A peaceful way. Thérèse of Lisieux (Little Thérèse) was a Carmelite nun who died at the age of 24 in 1897 after modeling what she called "the little way" of loving & following Jesus. "What matters in life," she said, "are not great deeds, but great love." For Thérèse, it was through doing small things, motivated by great love, the world would be changed for good. Her singular life's goal was, her death would begin the fulfillment of her mission to "make God loved" by His little ones. Her small mission took root & in the early 1900s, a young Albanian nun named Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu chose to take the name of Little Thérèse as she followed this same little way of love. In doing so, she ministered peace & reconciliation to tens of thousands of the world's poor. We call her "Mother Teresa."

The sledgehammer of peaceful humility can defeat powerful foes. Like waves against rocky cliffs wearing them down to sandy beach over time. That's Jesus' way, whereas the world calls us to wield power, a strong voice, a stern position, wealth & subjugation. To win! But in Christ we find the way up is down, he overturns our wrong virtues & rights them in his upside down kingdom - and eventually we come to see that his kingdom is actually right-side up, and we've been living with the blood rushing to our heads our whole lives! A lifestyle change, a matter of spiritual perspective. And a matter of spiritual power as Christ enables us to live such sacrificial peace-filled lives of hope & joy.

**Little Things Change A Story:** If you are a lover of books, you'll know that one little plot twist can bring about an ending you'd never have seen coming.

*Choose Your Own Adventure* was a series of children's game books popular in the 1980s & 90s in the US. What made the books so popular is that the reader could choose which direction the story would take. The protagonist would have 2-3 options available at one point in the book, which the young reader would choose for the character. That choice led to more choices, and in some cases, to more than 40 possible endings!

Small changes, like a choice to lay down our self-reliance & surrender ourselves to Christ-reliance, can shift a life trajectory from being on a path of greater turbulence to being one of greater peace. Jesus was a plot twist in the Jewish story, as well as Humanities story. Peace follows in the wake of the new plot line that Jesus is writing in your life & mine.

**Little Things Move Big Things:** In the story of *The Hobbit*, the little, humble hero Frodo is spoken of before a counsel of great leaders: "This is the hour of the Shire-folk, when they arise from their quiet fields to shake the towers & counsels of the Great. Who of all the Wise could have foreseen it?" In *The Fellowship of the Ring*, where they're all fighting over the evil ring of power. Who will take it to Mordor to destroy it? And at least one wants to keep it & use it for power, which they could not. As they all scream & fight, Frodo sits quietly to the side, the small Hobbit, among giants & leaders, says quietly, "I'll take it." The smallest most humble of creatures changes history.

The story goes on to form a metaphor for how a person who has "made himself nothing" (Phil. 2:7) can end up saving the many. At Christmas, we celebrate that humility can bring peace, even when facing mighty enemies, where power, might & stature can't. The Christmas story is the story of the humble King, who made Himself nothing, becoming the Peacemaker for us all. A life worth emulating.

What small acts by another have changed your entire life for good? Who's injected hope into your soul by the peaceful model of Jesus? Consider writing or calling that person with a word of thanks. Since we typically honor the charismatic loudmouth - but what about the quiet ones, the peaceful ones, the introverted ones. The ones who don't press their agenda, but rather work towards unity & think of others? Peaceful people don't complain. They're restful. Smile a lot. They don't threaten, or grumble. MLK was a peaceful man seeing his goal as liberating the Oppressed & Oppressor. As a result he instructed his demonstrators to sit & not fight. Waves of love & peace to break apart the walls of racism into soft sand. Some are saying it, "Obviously did no good, racism is still alive & well!" But that would be to discount the great work MLK's peaceful work accomplished & is still accomplishing - it is the way to follow. Great strides were made in peace between races, and he may be the very reason the conversation still goes on at all!

Peacemaking is the humble effort at reconciliation, not division - it's the one who reconciles another to God the Father, and therefore, with others under the umbrella of

God's grace. Peace is an inner thing, not dependent on outward circumstances. Peace is the sacrifice of the desire to get revenge. The hope of unity & reign of love.

Here's my challenge, outside of meditating on Philippians 2:1-11, and recognizing peaceful Christ-like people in your life, take a few of the verses on Peace this Christmas season & memorize them. See what God will do with them, how he will change you through the intentional act of hiding his word in your heart on this matter. Verses like 1 Peter 5:7, *Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you*. I guarantee that when you feel anxious, that will make a difference.