

Proclaiming Peace to Far and Near

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Ephesians 2:14-22

¹⁴ **He himself is our peace**, who has **made both one** and **in his flesh** has **broken down the hostility**, the dividing wall of separation, ¹⁵ by rendering powerless the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, in order that he may **in himself create the two into one new human being** so **making peace**, ¹⁶ and may **reconcile us both to God in his one body through the cross**, since he has **in himself killed the hostility**.

¹⁷ And when **he came**, he **proclaimed good news of 'peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near'** [Isa 57:19], ¹⁸ because we both have access **through him by one Spirit to the Father**.

¹⁹ The result is that you are **no longer strangers and aliens**, but you are **fellow citizens** among God's holy people and members of **God's own household**. ²⁰ You're like a house built on the foundation of **the apostles and prophets**, with **Messiah Jesus** himself being '*the cornerstone*' [Isa 28:16].

²¹ **In him** a whole structure, fitted harmoniously together, will grow into a **holy temple** in the Lord. ²² That means that **in him you yourselves** are being built up together into **God's own dwelling place** in the **Spirit**.

Isaiah 9:6

⁶ For to us **a child is born**, to us **a son is given**; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*.

Luke 2:9-11

⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the **glory of the Lord** shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them,

"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Messiah LORD. ¹² And this will be the sign for you: you will find a baby swaddled and lying in a feed-trough."

¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

¹⁴ *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among people, the recipients of God's favor!"*

Isaiah 52:7

¹⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains | are the feet of one who **brings news | announcing peace** (*shalom*), bringing news of good things, | announcing **salvation**, | saying to Zion, "*Your God reigns!*"

Isaiah 53:4-5

⁴ Surely he has borne **our griefs** | and carried **our sorrows**; | yet we esteemed him stricken, | smitten by God, and afflicted. | ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; | he was crushed for our iniquities; | upon him was the chastisement that **brought us peace**, | and **with his wounds we are healed**.

Isaiah 57:18-19

¹⁸ "I have seen their behavior, but I will heal them | and give them rest, and I will once again console those who mourn. | ¹⁹ I am creating the reason to celebrate: | **Peace, peace** (*shalom*) **both to those who are far off and to those who are near**." | says the Lord, "and I will **heal them**."

Ephesians 1:8b-10

⁸ With all wisdom and thought God has made known to us the long-hidden reality of his purpose, just as he wanted it and as he set it forth in him ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of times, **to sum up together all reality in the Messiah, everything in heaven and everything on earth – in him!**

Ephesians 4:1-3

¹ I therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, appeal to you to walk in life in a manner that properly fits the calling by which you have been called, ² with all humility of thought and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the oneness that the Spirit gives, bound together in peace.

Ephesians 6:14-15

¹⁴ So stand firm, by buckling truth on as your belt, putting on the breastplate of God's faithful righteousness, ¹⁵ and putting as shoes on your feet a readiness to proclaim good news of peace.

Philippians 4:4-7

⁴ Celebrate with joy in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to all people. The Lord is nearby: ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Messiah Jesus.

Advent: He came with Good News of Peace

Isaiah looked with hope for God's intervention – a child, Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6). The angel at Jesus' birth echoed his words: to you is born a baby in a trough, Savior, Messiah, Lord.

What is a Prince of Peace? One who imposes peace – Augustus? Paul's Advent meditation points to Jesus coming to proclaim peace (Isa 52:7) to those far and near (Isa 57:19).

But Jesus is not just the messenger or a conquering power commanding peace. Paul says Jesus himself is our peace. He's writing to people in societies of intense conflict, with deep societal divisions and fears: Jew-Gentile, Roman-Greek-other ethnic groups, slave-free, male-female. Acts 19 show explosive fears, superstitions, and conflicts in Ephesus.

Paul had seen the how Jesus (as message and active presence) had brought together Jews, Romans, Greeks, the enslaved, the fearful into a new unity. It was who Jesus is – his life, message, cross, resurrection, Spirit – that embodied a new Adam, human being, the Suffering Servant of Isa 53, and that showed God's purpose to unite everything in him.

Breaking down the Hostility Itself

All this works in a way that Augustus would not grasp. Human brokenness is deep, and every line of fracture can be infected. Jesus took the old hostility on himself –“in his flesh”– all that separated Jew/Gentile, slave/free, etc., in his crucifixion. The “hostility” thought it was destroying him, but Jesus killed hostility and death itself with God's new life.

As the creator, he carried out a new creation within the old world, a new human being, reconciled to God, empowered by the Spirit. This is not an order to “stay in line.” It is a new reality into which every broken human is invited. We don't have to make peace; we enter the peace he made by giving every person access to God and the life of his Spirit.

This is what he has done, what he is doing now, and what he will bring to consummation.

How do I follow the Prince of Peace?

What happened in ancient Ephesus and modern NYC: People see Jesus, this amazing human, servant, God. We learn what he has done and we see our own selves, our hopes, delights, broken dreams, false gods, destructive practices, and alienation in light of him.

We don't want to be always “*aliens and strangers*.” We learn we are part of the family of the God who made this astonishing universe and ourselves. We open the door of his Peace.

We learn to practice the reality he gives us, not fight it. We watch his humility, gentleness, love. We want truth and right. We learn joy and release anxiety. He is/becomes our Peace!