

He Came & Preached Peace

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[0 : 00] Let's turn back now to Ephesians. Paul's editor of the Ephesians in chapter 2, and we're going to read that passage once again that we've been looking at over the past few weeks, that is at least before the communion.

Ephesians chapter 2, we're going to take up the reading at verse 11, but we're going to focus particularly on verse 17 this evening, which is going to stop at verse 17 and reflect on what Paul is saying in this verse.

We're going to take up the reading at verse 11, Ephesians chapter 2, verse 11, And therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hand.

Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two.

[1 : 24] So making peace and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Now verse 17, this is a verse I want us to think about this evening. Verse 17, and he came, he came, that's Jesus came. He is Jesus.

He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those. He came and preached peace to you who were near.

Every so often we have a guest preacher. And the advantage, of course, in having a guest preacher in any congregation is that the congregation get the opportunity to hear someone different.

And that is an important thing. It's important because just human nature itself, I suppose, becomes accustomed to the same voice and the same person in the pulpit. And it's always a good thing to hear someone fresh, to hear someone new.

[2 : 44] And there's always that advantage in hearing someone, the gospel being put across in a way that's perhaps slightly different. And is likely to perhaps capture your attention in a way that may not happen normally.

I want to begin this evening by imagining, and I'm not being flippant, I'm not being irreverent in any way. This is what Paul is saying.

Verse 17, he came, Jesus came, and preached peace. I want us to imagine this evening that our guest preacher is none other than Jesus himself.

I know that's not going to happen. Jesus is in glory. He's in heaven. But nevertheless, this is what Paul is saying. He came, and he preached.

And when we think about it in those terms, it kind of brings the whole verse home to you when I put it like that. Imagine that the guest preacher was to be Jesus.

[3 : 58] What would you expect of him as a preacher? That's the theme in this verse. Jesus, the preacher. That's exactly, let me say it once again, this is exactly what Paul is telling us.

He preached. Jesus preached to those who were afar off and those who were near. What kind of preacher is the Lord Jesus Christ?

What kind of manner does he have in the pulpit, if you like, if you want to bring it right home to where we're at this evening?

Well, there are many things that we could only speculate about. I can't say, for example, how he would preach.

I can't say how loud his voice was. I suspect that he was quieter rather than louder. It's amazing how in some generations the loud preacher was the popular preacher.

[5 : 01] I remember when I was growing up, the preachers I listened to tended to be those who raised their voice, captured your attention. Maybe it's still the case today.

Maybe that's what you're looking for in the preacher, someone who raises his voice and almost frightens you into listening to the gospel. I suspect that Jesus was not like that.

I could be wrong, but I suspect he wasn't. The reason I say that is because the Bible tells me that he did not cry aloud or lift up his voice or make it heard in the street.

Gee, the attention which Jesus commanded was one which he just naturally attracted by way of his extraordinary person and his extraordinary gift.

I leave it with you. You may disagree with me on that. As I say, there is much we can speculate about. Well, he may stand in the pulpit, but then again, if his preaching on earth was anything to go by, he may as easily sit.

[6 : 20] On the mount of the sermon on the mount in Matthew chapter 5, he sat to talk to his disciples and those who were listening to him.

And when, you remember, he had to sit in a boat and he had to let the boat out a little bit from the shore and there he preached to the big crowd of people that were listening to him.

It was by way of sitting. I suppose that was necessity. He sat in the boat and he preached to them.

All I'm doing is trying to stimulate our minds into trying to picture the person of Jesus Christ.

What better thing could we do tonight but to focus on the person of Jesus Christ? Even if we're simply asking questions. We'll get to the point in a few moments, but I just want to give some background.

I don't know what his delivery would be like. Some preachers use their hands a lot to be demonstrative and to try and get the point across. I suppose I do that a little bit myself.

[7 : 26] That's just, everyone has a different style of speaking in public. I'm not sure whether he would have done that or not. I'm not sure how long he would preach for.

But I can say that when he was in the earth, when he was on the earth, nothing could be too long. Because the crowds of people were willing to sit and listen to him for hours and hours and hours on end.

Because they were so fascinated by what he had to say. And however long a sermon would take, I can guarantee you that if he was to preach to us this evening, that we wouldn't feel the time going. It would be like a moment in time. We would be riveted to the spot. I know also that the Lord Jesus would preach to the common person.

He would never use large, academic words which meant very little to everyone except 2 or 3% of those who happened to know what he was talking about.

[8 : 37] And yet, even by the use of these simple, plain, ordinary words, the most profound, deep depths of truth would be communicated and we would all go away having learned more from half an hour sitting under the Lord Jesus Christ than ever before.

Furthermore, we would be refreshed and edified. That's the way the people were when they went away from the Sermon on the Mount. They heard him gladly. There was something completely different about this man.

There was just something magnetic about his knowledge and his way of putting it across and something that stimulated them as never before.

I could certainly say, and this is no speculation, that if he was to preach here this evening, his sermon would be full of illustrations. You know, that's the hardest thing if you ask any preacher.

You ask them how difficult it is, it's difficult enough to prepare a sermon, I can tell you. You know what the hardest thing in preparing a sermon is? Once you've got what you want to say, you've got your passage, you've got your text, and you're trying to set out your points on a piece of paper in front of you, and you're thinking, right, it's all structured and ready to preach, now what do I need?

[9 : 55] And you know what the answer is? The answer is always the same, I need illustrations. I need a story, I need two stories or three stories. And you ask any preacher, that's the most difficult thing that there is to find.

Jesus was always full of stories. That's why people understood him. The lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son, the prodigal son, you name it.

Jesus was full of stories about sheep and ordinary everyday events from day to day, so that the people knew exactly what he was talking about.

The contemporary stories, people that, stories which everyone knew about. And I can also tell you that he would speak with perfect knowledge, and he would always say the right thing.

So then, it's interesting, isn't it, to think of what this verse here brings up for us. He came and preached.

[10 : 58] He came and preached. That's what it says. He came and preached. And I can tell you also what Jesus' theme would be.

You know, when we preach, when preachers, when ministers preach a sermon, they preach on a text, but sometimes there is a theme to it. If you ever listen to our sermons on the internet, then those who put the sermons on the internet always give it a theme, just a little title.

And that's a good thing. Just a little title. Sometimes it's only one word. I wonder what that word would be if Jesus was to preach to us this evening. I know what it would be.

I know what it could be. You can imagine what Jesus could bring to us this evening. He could give us the perfect lecture on the origin of the universe.

Because he was there. Because it was him that originated the universe. He could tell us every single minute detail of how the universe and when the universe and in what scientific manner.

[12 : 17] The Bible doesn't tell us anything about the science of the creation of the universe and how the word of God was translated into physics and molecules and atoms and energy.

That's what had to happen. But we don't know anything about that. Jesus does. And he could answer the most profound question. There isn't anything. There isn't even the most clever scientist in the world would be baffled by what he'd be able to tell them.

But I tell you tonight, that's not the theme of his message. The theme of his message is here in front of us in that text.

He came and preached peace. That's his message. Now you say, well of course.

How do you know that? Because peace is the theme that runs all the way through the Bible. That's what the Bible is all about. A world that has gone hopelessly and terribly wrong.

[13 : 22] And a God who has put into effect the way and opened up the way so that that world could be reconciled to God and so discover peace. Peace with God.

Of course the world is a very favorite one. It's one which I'm sure everyone takes an interest. Any sensible, mature person would want to have a peaceful world.

And we're so aware tonight of the turmoil and the cruelty and the inhumanity that there is in wars and in hatred and in violence between one person and another.

Wherever you look and in whatever age you live, the world has always been a place of turmoil, a place of hatred and suffering. And bloodshed and cruelty. And all we long, we know within ourselves that something's gone terribly wrong and we long for that peace.

And yet we see within ourselves the potential to be just as violent as anyone else. It's people like us who are violent and who perpetrate violence.

[14 : 23] People, ordinary people like us who have been brought up perhaps in different circumstances and yet there's nothing mentally wrong with them. There is nothing psychiatrically wrong with them.

They're ordinary people. They don't have some kind of genetic defect. They're ordinary people who have somehow the conditions are such that they have been brought up in an environment of hatred or they've become involved in an environment of hatred and they are capable of doing the most incredibly cruel things.

So am I and so are you. And there's this unrest, isn't there, within us all that longs at the same time for a peace, to rule in the world, to have a world of peace.

And yet we know that it's people like ourselves who are the very reason why the world doesn't know peace. But we're not talking about world peace. I'm not saying that that isn't a concern.

Of course it is a concern. It's a concern to God. God's ultimate purpose is to bring about a peace, a complete global peace in the world. But yet it's going to be through one way and one way alone.

[15 : 36] And that is through the gospel. And the gospel is all about the particular peace that Jesus came to bring to each one of us.

And it's not surprising that if anyone who's familiar with the Bible at all will know that the word peace, the theme of peace, runs all the way through. In the Old Testament, when Isaiah was predicting and prophesying the coming of Jesus, he said, For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, the government shall be upon his shoulders, name shall be called Wonderful Counselor,

Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

At the time of Jesus' birth, when the angels came to the shepherds, this is how they glorified God in the birth of Jesus. Glory to God in the highest.

And on earth, peace amongst those with whom he is pleased. And when you come to Gethsemane, or rather the upper room in John chapter 14, just before he was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane, what did he say to his disciples?

In what way did he comfort his disciples? Well, this is how. He said, Peace, I leave with you. My peace, I give to you.

[16:50] Not as the world gives it to you. I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled. Neither let them be afraid. And then, after his resurrection, on the first day of the week, the disciples were met in a room for fear of the Jews, for fear of being caught.

Jesus came through the locked doors, stood amongst them, and he said, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.

And then as the gospel progresses, one of the titles for the gospel is the gospel of peace. And one of the ways in which Christians would greet one another, as they wrote to one another, and as they interacted with each other, they would say, Peace be to you.

Grace and peace from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. How many times do you find that in Paul's letters, as he addresses in love and in concern and compassion, his fellow believers. Grace, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and peace from God the Father. It is a major theme. It is the major theme that runs through the gospel.

[17:57] What did Paul, how did Paul introduce it in Romans chapter 5? He said, Therefore, he said, Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

So the peace is a particular one. It's not some kind of general wish for the world. It's not some kind of romantic notion and high aim that every one of us needs to live up to.

It's a reality that Jesus came to bring to us and to bring about in our lives. Three things before we close this evening.

Why is it that we need this peace? Why is it that we need his peace?

And then what did God do specifically to bring this peace to us? And then lastly, how can we have this particular peace in our own hearts?

[19:03] That's what the theme of Jesus' preaching is. Three questions. Why is it that we specifically need his peace?

Well, in order to answer that question, I want to go back to our imaginary guest preacher. I want to go back to what I said at the very beginning of imagine that we were listening to the Lord himself. I wonder how willing you would be to come and listen to him.

I wonder. Now remember what I said before, that the great advantage of having a different voice and a different person in the pulpit is the novelty. There's a certain novelty, and I don't mean that in any derogatory way at all, that we're all humans, and we like to hear a fresh and a different voice and a different face.

Of course we do. Everyone's like that. And I guess that our first reaction, if we knew that the preacher would be the Lord Jesus Christ, our first reaction would be to say, well, this is our chance in a lifetime.

[20:13] This is an opportunity. I'll never get this opportunity before. But again, of course I would go and hear him just the same way, as if you get a particularly notable preacher in chemistry, say on the Sunday night of a communion, you'll get a great crowd.

Of course you will, because people want to hear. People want to hear this, a different preacher, a person who's perhaps, and even better, if it's someone who's well known for his preaching gifts, if someone who's notable and who's a famous preacher.

And I suppose that would be your first reaction as well. Of course I'm going to go early. An hour, two hours beforehand, because I won't get a seat. But then, you think about it.

And you say, hold on a moment. It's bad enough when there's an ordinary preacher there. Because that ordinary preacher very often gets to me by something that he says.

He strikes home in a way that makes me feel uncomfortable. That's what preaching is all about, by the way. But this man, he knows everything about me.

[21:27] And I won't be able to be, to hide behind a pillar, or hide behind a taller person in front of me. I won't be able to hide somewhere at the back and hopefully slip out, and nobody will know that

I was there.

Because he knows everything. He will know that I was there. And he knows what I've been doing throughout the last week. He knows my deepest, darkest thoughts.

My dirtiest, most shameful thoughts. Not just the thoughts that I've allowed to momentarily slip through my mind, but the thoughts I've enjoyed and I've given entertainment to, and the thoughts that I've gone back to.

He knows what I've done in private. He knows what nobody else has done. How can I sit in front of him and look him in the eye and listen to him telling me, knowing that who knows what he might say?

He knows there's nothing about me that he doesn't know. And he's bound to speak to me. He doesn't ignore anyone. He's God. He knows every single individual.

[22 : 37] Not just as faces, but he knows everything of their past, their history, their birth, their upbringing, everything. The things that I would so love not to have done.

The things that I'm so ashamed of. He knows them all. How can I? God, you imagine tonight. You imagine tonight. That if you were listening to a preacher who knows everything about you, don't tell me that you would be rushing in that door an hour ahead of time to get a seat at the front.

You would not. Nor would I. So perhaps we wouldn't be as willing to come and hear him after all because of what he could say to any one of us and to every one of us.

Are you still so sure that you want to come and hear him? You know that your whole life is wrong, don't you? If you're not Christian tonight, you know that your whole life is upside down.

And you know that there is a turmoil going on in you because on the one hand, you would want to hear the Son of God because you would be fascinated by what he might have to say as your creator and as the one that you're accountable to.

[24 : 05] On the other hand, you couldn't bring yourself to go and hear him because of what he might say to you and the embarrassment and the shame that it might cause. And that's why we need peace with God tonight.

Because when you think about God, there's turmoil, isn't there? I see it all the time. I've lived long enough in the world now as a Christian to know that when I come, when you're in conversation with a person and as soon as the conversation turns towards the Bible and the Gospel, the whole tone changes.

Very often, if you're on a plane, for example, it still happens to me. You sit beside someone on a plane and they start talking and talk about everything under the sun and then eventually, I know, I always know it's going to happen.

They eventually turn around and say, what do you do? I say, I'm a minister. I say, silence. And then they might bring themselves as if they're brave enough, they might say, well, what church do you belong to?

So I tell them what church I belong to. What do you believe? It might even get to, if you're really doing well, it will get as far as, what do you believe? I rejoice when somebody tells me, when somebody asks me, what do you believe?

[25 : 14] What a great opportunity there is to just say, to just say the Gospel. Who knows how the Lord's going to use that in some way, but it never gets that far. It never gets that far.

You know why? Because as soon as people think of you, of themselves being right next to someone who's a minister and who believes the Bible, they feel completely at sea. They're uncomfortable.

There's a huge sense of unrest. And you know, it's nothing to do with me. It's to do with them and God. And that's the basic problem, isn't it? That you're not right with God.

And you can blame everyone and anything and anyone, but the problem is with you. That you are out of step with God. There's a breach. There's a separation. Our sins and our iniquities have separated us from God.

And that's really about God. Oh, you can talk about evolution and you can talk about different religions in the world and surely if you're a sincere Muslim or a sincere Hindu, surely everybody's going to be all right.

[26 : 19] That's a nice thought. But everyone knows that that can't be the case. Because every religion is so radically different from the other one, it cannot possibly be the case that they're all the same.

They're not all the same. But it's a nice excuse, isn't it? Because you think, it's one more way of saying everything's going to be okay. But it's not. Because you know that at the root of the problem lies your relationship with God which doesn't exist.

And one day we're going to have to give an account. And that's what it is about God. That we can't stomach. We're going to have to give an account to God one day and he's going to ask us and he's going to ask knowing everything about us.

We need peace with God. Because we're condemned if we do not have that peace. You see it in a world. The way that the world lives. It's amazing tonight, isn't it?

How you can have the greatest success in the world. You can be a celebrity, a footballer, a film star, a singer and yet their lives are in turmoil tonight because they're chasing after the wrong things.

[27 : 26] Because the more they have, the more they want. The more beautiful their first wife is, it doesn't satisfy they have to have an affair with someone else because they've looked to all the wrong things.

the more money they have, the more they want because it doesn't satisfy. Many of the most successful people tonight have become addicts to drink and drugs and you read about them in the papers and you think, well, why are the papers taking such an interest?

Why do they not have pity on poor people who are just the same as the rest of us? And if I'm capable of developing a habit or developing an addiction, why is it that we're so interested in the most successful people when they fall into the same traps?

Because the world is a turmoil. You could be the most successful person tonight and if you haven't got peace with God, you don't have anything. You have nothing at all.

Second question. What did God do to bring about the peace that he preaches as Jesus came to preach? well, the most amazing historical fact in the world and once again I bring it to you and I hope that having heard it perhaps hundreds of times in the past that we never lose that sense of wonder at God becoming a man and that man Jesus Christ dying at Calvary as the sacrifice for our shame and our guilt and our sin.

[29 : 18] I don't know how to put it differently. I don't know how to put it any more simply than that. I don't know how to convey that tremendous message of the gospel that God took the initiative he so loved the world a world that was in turmoil in darkness a world in which people were dead that's what the chapter tells us you were dead in trespasses and sins and out of his extraordinary love for the unlovely and for the unlovable and for the rebellious in this world God came and he suffered Jesus suffered the death on the cross in order to pay our sins in order to pay for I should have said our sins and to rise again on the third day.

In the Old Testament there was a peace offering and the peace offering came at the very end that was a sacrifice you could actually eat you could only eat that sacrifice after having sacrificed the other offerings the burnt offerings and the sin offerings and what that meant was meant to show was that we could have fellowship with God we could be one with God only after the lamb was slain and tonight the message of the gospel is the same as it always was that Christ came into the world to reconcile us to God and to bring peace with God by offering himself and laying down his life on the cross.

The third question is the last one how then can we have this peace? how can I know this peace in my own life and I hope that there's someone here tonight and that's precisely the question that you're asking well let's once again go back to our imaginary preacher one thing I know about the Lord Jesus is that he would preach and he would not lecture you know there's a difference between lecturing and preaching something that's very important when people are training for the ministry to understand the distinction between lecturing and preaching a lecture is if I was to stand here tonight and to tell you about something to give a lecture about something and lectures can be the most amazing experiences they can be absolutely fascinating I remember once visiting a zoo down south we were on holiday one time we went to this zoo

I think it was in Cumbria and the fellow who owned the zoo was an expert in tigers and there must have been I don't know about 500 people in 90 degree heat and this man gave a lecture probably half an hour a lecture for half an hour on tigers he was absolutely fascinating everyone was riveted to him fascinated by what he had to say and I'm sure you've also seen lectures on TV very unremembered quite recently James Dyson the man who invented the Dyson vacuum clean he gave a lecture on I think engineering it was absolutely fascinating I could have listened to him all night lectures can be fascinating but there's a big difference between lecturing and preaching the

difference is this a person who preaches brings God's message from God to you and the fact that Christ preaches is indicative that God has a message for you do you understand that? Jesus is not just telling us about something he's speaking to people and he's bringing this message to them he's telling them first of all they don't have any peace with God but he's telling them that they can have peace with God if they come to him and if they trust in faith in him in what he did on the cross alone it's a message that he wants them to believe it's a message that God wants them to believe it's a message that they absolutely have to believe if they're going to be saved there would not be any insincerity in Jesus it wouldn't as if he was just casually bringing God's word to them and then going away again as if he had never said a word and shrugging his shoulders as if it didn't matter whether they believed or not that's not the way that Jesus would preach at all Jesus would preach with passion and with concern and with sincerity and he would truly want everyone listening to him to come to him and to enjoy and to discover the peace that he offered and the salvation that he offered that's the way that Jesus would preach so much then for our imaginary sermon the thing is it's not imaginary at all it's real what does

[35 : 04] Paul say he came and preached it's something that has happened and something that continues to happen when do you listen to Jesus preaching let me tell you every time you hear the message of the gospel Jesus himself is bringing that message to you it may be an imperfect message an imperfect man the preacher is full of holes full of imperfections and yet despite all that if you hear the gospel tonight it's not the message it's not coming from the preacher it's coming from God it's coming from the Lord Jesus Christ in other words God is announcing to you that there is a way in which you can be right with him and he himself is openly and freely inviting you urging you to come to him so that you'll be saved the gospel is not about

God simply telling us something and well it's up to you I'll go away and you think about it God comes to us this evening and he invites us with all his heart and he comes to us with all the sincerity and the concern and the love with which he loved the world in the first place and sent his son into the world so that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life are you listening to Jesus preaching this evening have you been touched by his voice and are you ready to do what he is asking you to do and to simply trust in what he has done for your forgiveness and for your salvation let's pray father once again we ask that you will bless that you will accompany your word so that as we listen to these great truths that we might recognize the voice of the lord the voice of the shepherd so that the sheep will hear the shepherd's voice and follow him we ask lord that you will apply this great truth to the hearts of every one of us this evening and draw us in your own love and into your kingdom into your family and so that we will discover the true peace of god that passes all understanding and that will dwell in our hearts and minds forever and ever amen

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