

**Sermon for Lent Midweek 5**  
**March 14, 2018**

**“Peace With God Through Jesus”**

Grace, mercy, and peace are yours from God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear people who have been declared not guilty of your sin by faith, what is peace, exactly, and do you have it?

We beg for peace. Sometimes it’s a mother whose feet are demanding that she sit down who pleads with exasperation, “Can we just have five minutes of peace and quiet?”

We beg for peace. Sometimes the pleading is silent, like a farmer who’s got to be in the big busy city full of big busy people who couldn’t care less about who he is or what he does, but the thing he’s looking forward to most, and won’t be able to relax until it happens, is to be back in the field, back home, doing what God built him for, doing what he loves.

What is peace, exactly, then? Is it comfort? Is it being satisfied? Is it having a purpose?

It was a still night. The kind you would describe as peaceful. A deep breath pulled fresh, crisp, cool air into the shepherd’s lungs that helped keep the eyelids open during the night watch.

Suddenly, those eyelids burst open, because the night was ripped in half by the lightning-bright glory of God, and there in the middle of it a human figure – smooth, huge, beautiful. A deep breath of that cool night air got stuck halfway as the shepherd’s mouth fell wide open, matching his eyes. And his ears heard a message as beautiful as the light:

Do not be afraid! I bring you good news of great joy...today, in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you! He is Christ, the Lord.

And then the sky exploded. A whole legion of angels appeared and praised God with words still echoing today, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth **peace**, good will toward mankind.”

What is peace? Is it a calm, still night? Is it bright, blazing angels?

Poor parents walked into the temple, with bags under their eyes proud smiles on their faces. They had been parents for eight days, and it was time to have their son circumcised.

There was an old man there, Simeon. He was a fixture at the temple – some joked that he might actually be nailed to the pillar he was always seen leaning against. Whether it was a meditation or a nap, his head popped up when he saw the young couple and their little baby. And the old man started coming after them. In the cracks of his weathered face, it started small at first, but broke into the biggest smile he’d done in years. His eyes were full of wonder and amazement as they fixed on the baby.

He walked right up to them, took the baby out stunned Mary’s speechless arms, and Simeon praised God, “Lord, you now dismiss your servant in **peace**, according to your word, because my eyes have seen your salvation.”

What is peace? Is it being ready to die, like Simeon?

The wind poked Peter right in the eyes with a salty spray. “Brace yourselves, this is gonna get rough,” he advised the others. And rough it got, as the sailors among the dozen men tried with all their might and all their skill to steer the boat with no avail. Twelve men can do a lot, but they were helpless as their small boat was slapped around by the waves and twirled around by

the wind. They were shouting to each other, though no one could really hear over the wind, and they were panicking as the water piled up and the boat rode lower and lower in the water.

There was one more passenger in the boat. He was sleeping. In spite of it all, he was sleeping. With wild hair blowing in the shrieking wind, they shook him awake and pleaded, "Teacher, don't you care that we are about to drown?"

Then he got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" The wind stopped, and there was a great calm.

What is peace, exactly? How can we summarize it? How can we define it?

Where the angels, Simeon, and Jesus talking about the same thing?

As calm as the shepherds may have been that night, the world was still waiting for God's promise to be kept. The world was waiting for God to deal with sin.

Since the time of Adam and Eve's son Cain, people who knew and loved and trusted the living God, the Most High God had been building altars and offering sacrifices.

For 1500 years, animal after animal had its throat slit and blood drained out, and then it's body was burned, hair and all so that the your ears could hear the screams, your eyes could see the blood gushing, your nose even could smell the awful smell of burning hair and could add up the whole bloody, awful experience: the wages of sin is death. Horrible, screaming, stinking death. The punishment for sin. The result of God's anger and wrath.

But peace was coming. The final, the one truly effective sacrifice was born, whose blood would wash away sins, whose crying out was the punishment of sins taking place. Jesus was born. Jesus who would fix the relationship between you and God. Jesus who would turn God into your loving Father once again was born.

Peace is first and foremost about having a good relationship with God. A relationship of love and kindness and care and comfort.

Simeon knew he was going to die soon, but he had a promise from God – he would not die until he saw the Messiah that God had promised. Simeon said, "God, you can take my life now. I'm at peace. I have everything I could ever need. That's my Savior there, ready even at 8 days old to begin shedding blood for me with his circumcision."

Peace is knowing that God has secured your future. Heaven's gates are wide open for you. You're ready to die, like Simeon, because you look to Jesus and believe, "That's my Savior."

The disciples were panicked and hysterical during the storm. Jesus was asleep. Jesus was demonstrating peace for his disciples. God has secured your future in heaven. God has secured your present too. Just as Jesus knew that everything was under control of the Lord Almighty, the compassionate and gracious God, then and there in the storm on the boat, so the Lord Almighty, the compassionate and gracious God, here and now in this life on this planet has everything under control.

Peace is knowing that even the sleeping Jesus on the boat is your God, who has everything under control, who if needed can still say, "Peace! Be still!" to the wind or the snow or the pain or the anger or whatever other trouble has you convinced that it's too much.

We have peace with God. The peace that the angels talked about, the peace that Simeon died in, the peace that Jesus showed on the boat in the storm. Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

You are connected to God in a relationship of love. Your future is secured by Jesus. Your present is under the control of God who loved you when you were unlovable – when we were still sinners, Christ died for us. If God loved you that much then – when we were helpless and ungodly – how much more certain is it that God will save us now, now that he has brought us to peace with him, now that he has reconciled us to himself, now that Jesus lives, reigns, and is preparing our place in heaven?

Rejoice confidently. God loves you. You have been justified. You have been reconciled. You have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father and the holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Text:** *Romans 5:1-11*

*God's love is evident in Christ's death for ungodly sinners.*

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup> Through him we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice confidently on the basis of our hope for the glory of God.

<sup>3</sup> Not only this, but we also rejoice confidently in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces patient endurance, <sup>4</sup> and patient endurance produces tested character, and tested character produces hope. <sup>5</sup> And hope will not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who was given to us.

<sup>6</sup> For at the appointed time, while we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> It is rare indeed that someone will die for a righteous person. Perhaps someone might actually go so far as to die for a person who has been good to him. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore, since we have now been justified by his blood, it is even more certain that we will be saved from God's wrath through him. <sup>10</sup> For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, it is even more certain that, since we have been reconciled, we will be saved by his life. <sup>11</sup> And not only is this so, but we also go on rejoicing confidently in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received this reconciliation.