

Will Jesus Be Your Peace?

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Good Morning LakeRidge Praise! Good Morning LakeRidge Sanctuary. I am glad that we are worshipping Jesus together. The sermon today is about Jesus. In fact the next three sermons are about Jesus.

To help us think about Jesus this morning let me ask you a question. If you closed your eyes and imagined a picture of Jesus what Jesus would you see? Would you see a smiling man with a happy face? Would you see a droop-shouldered, tired man with a beaten bloody face? Would you see a smooth-skinned, quiet, scholarly man? Would you see a tiny baby wrapped in a downy white blanket?

This morning I hope you and I will see from the Bible a picture of Jesus that normally does not come to our minds. This image is in the Old Testament Book of Micah. This is an odd passage to use in the spring of the year because this is typically a Christmas passage. These are the words the religious leaders turned to when they helped the Wise men. The Wise men followed the Christmas star to Jerusalem believing a new king had been born. They could not find him in Jerusalem so they asked the religious leaders, “Where has the king of the Jews been born?” The leaders were puzzled at first but then they found direction in their own Bible. So let’s hear the Bible’s answer for these men searching for Jesus. As we read, I want us to pay particular attention to the type of person described in this prophecy we know is about Jesus.

Micah 5:1 - 5 (NIV) ¹ Marshal your troops, O city of troops, for a siege is laid against us. They will strike Israel’s ruler on the cheek with a rod. ² “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” ³ Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. ⁴ He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. ⁵ And he will be their peace.

What is the image in this passage? The overarching portrait is that of a warrior. Jesus is the one from of old who comes in the strength of the Lord. Jesus is the one who is majestic in power. Jesus is the one who captures territory and defeats enemies so His

people can be secure. Jesus is the warrior who engages in battle. Jesus ends the war because He wins peace. Do you normally think of Jesus as a warrior?

This weekend our nation and culture is thinking about warriors. We honor the warriors who gave their life in battle so we can live in peace. We also remember that even as we worship this morning men and women from this nation and other nations are in battle because parts of our world are at war.

I think it is important to remember warriors who give their lives because their existence teaches us that the absence of peace is costly. War is not cheap.

Do you know how many soldiers lost their lives in the Civil War? A total of 625,000 men and women died in combat, in prison, or due to disease and other war related circumstances. Some estimate an additional 50,000 civilians lost their lives during the Civil War

Do you know how many persons died in World War I and World War II? A total of 116,700 USA soldiers and 757 civilians died. In the world 9.7 million soldiers and 6.8 million civilians died in World War I? A total of 417,000 USA soldiers and 1,700 civilians died in WWII. In the world, an incredible 25.2 million soldiers and 47.4 million civilians died all around the world during World War II.

War costs the destruction of beautiful valleys and bustling cities. War costs the health of nations and communities. War costs the breakup of families and friends. War costs the uncountable value of an overwhelming number of human lives. In face of the cost of war, people cry out for peace.

The cost of a lack of peace is not only seen in the result of national and world wars. The absence of peace is costly to families and relationships. In 2007 in the United States, there were just under 2.2 million marriages. Do you know how many divorces? 856,000 divorces. War in marriages cost the destruction of covenant commitment. Battles between spouses damage hearts and tear down the spirit.

The Bible is very aware of the reality and cost of the absence of peace in marriages and family. Two times in the Book of Proverbs you can find this word of wisdom, ⁹ **Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.**” A third time Proverb 21:19 says, ¹⁹ **Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and ill-tempered wife.**” Now guys before you

elbow your wife or girlfriend, remember that she may just have that corner picked out or be ready to hand you the keys to that desert.

The Bible doesn't let men off when it comes to the lack of peace in marriage and in family life. 1st Peter commands husbands to be considerate and to treat their wives with respect. What is the price of being inconsiderate and disrespectful to your wife? God will turn a deaf ear to your prayers. Men, we pay a steep price for not living as a peacemaker in our families.

The Bible also tells fathers there can be a heavy price to pay for a lack of peace with our children. Colossians 3:21 asks fathers not to **embitter your children**. Ephesians 6:4 commands us to **not exasperate** our kids. What price is paid when fathers war with their kids? Children many times lose their faith in Jesus, and their spirit for life is crushed. The lack of peace in families carries a terrible cost. Children, divorcees, wives, mothers, husbands, and fathers all cry out for peace.

The people of Israel and Jerusalem who first heard the words of Micah were also crying for peace. War had come first from the Assyrian army coming south to destroy and capture most of the land of Israel in the north. Now a new war was approaching from the hands of the Babylonian army who would come into the very gates of Jerusalem, destroy the city and capture its king. Micah even tells the people that the commander of the Babylonian army will disgrace the king of Jerusalem by striking him on the face.

However, Micah's word is not all gloom and doom. He looks into the future that God will bring about to foretell of a day when a new king and leader will be born. This leader will come not from Jerusalem, the place of power, but from a little unimportant village called Bethlehem. Micah contrasts the powerlessness of the current king and leadership to the power that the new king.

This new king will stand against his enemies and care for people like a good shepherd cares for His flock. Instead of hiding from enemies, He will stand in majesty and possess the glory and tangible power of God. Instead of being powerless to stop the destruction and the heavy cost of war, He will bring and be their peace.

When the God's people cry for peace, Micah's answer is Jesus. When countries battling each other cry for peace, Micah cries out Jesus. When husbands and wives cry

for peace, Micah turns the heart to Jesus. When children and parents hope for even a day of peace, Micah says look to Jesus.

The claim that Jesus is the answer for and the source of peace permeates the whole message of the New Testament. Do we remember what the angels sang to the shepherds the night Jesus was born? ¹⁴ **“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”** Luke 2:14 (NIV) Jesus told his disciples that as they travelled through Israel preparing the way for Jesus to come into towns and villages, they were to look for **men and women of peace** who would receive them and the message of Jesus. In the upper room right before Jesus initially surrendered to death on the cross, Jesus said to the disciples, “²⁷**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 (NIV)

Peace also permeates the teaching books of the New Testament. Eight times God is called the God of peace. Thirty five times we are told the Father, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit fills the heart and life of the followers of Jesus with peace. We are told that when we cast our anxieties upon Jesus His peace will come like a soldier and guard our hearts and minds. We are told that when we turn our minds over to the influence and control of the Holy Spirit we are receive back life and peace.

Because Jesus is the Prince of Peace, we are called to pursue peace, sow seeds of peace, seek peace, make every effort to live in peace, pray for peace, and even greet each other with the kiss of peace. Do you have peace in your life? Are you a person of peace?

One of the strongest words about peace comes when the Bible speaks about having peace with God. The Bible is clear that the great need any one person can have met in their life is to be at peace with God.

Romans 5:1 describes the depth and the quality of a relationship with God through Jesus Christ with these words, **“¹Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.”** Here is the picture of what I see in these words:

Jesus, the strong and mighty Son of God, gave up His majesty and power, came to earth to willingly give his life on the cross. His death first looked like the defeat of

goodness, love, and God. However, God surprised the world and evil by resurrecting Jesus from the dead. Jesus now stands alive as the resurrected Lord and King of Life. As one who has all the power and majesty of God, Jesus looks around at all humanity and sees two realities.

The first reality is that He loves and values everyone. He died and was resurrected to show the world that the Father has chosen to be at peace with the world and people.

The second reality Jesus sees is that the world and people are at war with God, each other, and sometimes even themselves. Jesus says to all the warriors fighting God, “You don’t have to be an enemy of God. You can quit fighting. Take my hand. Come stand in grace next to me. Come walk into peace. Do you fight against God or are you at peace with God? Are you filled with peace or are you drowning in anxiety?”

Lea Dear had and has every right to be drowning in anxiety. Several months ago, Lea had a massive heart attack. She actually died for about 15 minutes. But she was resuscitated. She was in the hospital for 11 days. She, however, cannot remember the details of the first eight days. However, she is not without memory of who she was and where she was during those eight days. I want you to listen to Lea tell how in the middle of a battle for her very physical life, Jesus was a strong and powerful warrior of peace.

Clip of Lea Dear

All that matters is Jesus. Why? Because Jesus is our peace with God. Jesus is our peace with life. Jesus is our peace with death.

Today we complete worship with communion. At this time we celebrate the gift of being at peace with God. Communion reminds us that God has already proved to us that He is not at war with us. If you are at war with God, will you lay down your weapons and come to the peace table? Perhaps you are not at war with God, but you struggle in your relationships with your spouse, your kids, your parents, your family, your neighbors, your co-workers. Jesus invites you to be filled with peace so you can live in peace with everyone. What kind of peace do you need this morning?