

Clothed With Christ -- Peace

Intro: Perhaps no word is more misused today than the word “peace.” We understand the misuse of “love” but we often talk right past each other when we speak of peace. Peace is a complicated concept in scripture and in life. We all want peace, but our experience is rather different. We are far more closely acquainted with conflict.

*“There once were two cats of Kilkenny,
Each thought there was one cat too many;
So they fought and spit,
And they scratched and they bit,
Till, excepting their nails,
And the tips of their tails,
Instead of two cats there weren’t any,”*

1. THAT we understand. Peace... that’s a little harder. It is active and passive. It is inner and outer. It requires patience and it requires quick movement. It requires thought and it requires action. It brings praise and it brings howls of condemnation.
2. Mentioned so often, in so many contexts, it is plain that “peace” is a major theme of scripture. Why, then, is there so much blood and judgment? Could it be that peace, like love, is more and less than we assume it to be?
3. In some scriptures, peace is a combination of contentment, faith, and a long view. In that sense, it is rather like joy. And, like joy and contentment, it can cause us to opt out of some major themes in this world.
 - i. Consumerism – Faster phones, tools, toys, pretties.
 - ii. The rush to debt, buying, and the constant call to move upward in power and place. It is a powerful thing to walk through a store and say “no.”
 - iii. The sexualizing of children and everything else.
4. When the scripture speaks of peace, it calls us to be a people who are not constantly blown this way and that by the winds of this world. When the river of life gets swollen by cares and

events, sometimes we need to be the rock in the middle of the stream. (the old song “I Shall Not Be Moved”)

iv. Psalm 1 – like a tree planted by the water

v. Ephesians 4:11-15. Grown up into Christ.

5. Peace is not inactivity. Look at Ephesians 4:26,27. Anger is an energy given to us to move us to action. If it is allowed to simmer and if we do not move to action, it becomes a foothold for the devil in our lives (backpack – what needs to be removed?)
 - a. See injustice and evil? Speak up, protect the weak, lift up the fallen, feed the poor...get busy! Write a check, volunteer, go and sit with the person in pain.
 - b. “Marines run to the sound of the guns.” We move toward the thing that is destroying peace and engage it prayerfully and with wisdom.
6. Peace is a goal and sometimes the pathway to that goal is an extremely difficult – even deadly – path.
7. It proved to be deadly to Jesus (**Colossians 1:17-20**) No wonder he told us this was a different kind of peace. (**Jn. 14:27**) It is truly a peace that passes understanding.
8. Jesus called himself the Prince of Peace. On the night of His birth, the angels called out “Peace on earth, good will toward men.” And...yet...he warned us that his very existence would cause divisions. **Matthew 10:34-36**.
9. What about the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus said “Blessed are the Peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God?” Note: peacemakers, not peaceful. Sometimes peace is not a feeling, but the result of an action.
 - i. In most of our lives, that action is one of charity, sacrifice, or service.
 - ii. In some lives, evil intrudes and must be repelled. Revenge is never an option for the Christian, but driving back the darkness, even with violence, is.

- iii. To read strict pacifism into scripture is to misread scripture. (there are many forms of pacifism – “I am going to shoot where you are standing”)
- iv. We are never allowed to advance the gospel by means of the sword, but note that Jesus was asked by soldiers what they should do and he told them to behave honorably as soldiers. **Luke 3:14.**
- v. The first Gentile convert was a Roman infantry squad leader.
- vi. Jesus healed the servant of another infantry leader.
- vii. Paul called for an armed guard to protect him against a religious group who issued a death threat against him.
- viii. Must we toss out all of these and dozens more so that we will seem sweet, and pure, and nice? Jesus never called us to be nice. He called us to make peace...and to do it in love and with grace.
- ix. Sometimes the use of force is a righteous thing. It makes peace.

10. But do not go too far down that path and think that violence is usually, often or always the answer. In fact, it very rarely is the answer. The answer is Jesus – it sounds trite, I know, but think about it. Where Jesus goes (NOT the church), there is peace, the elevation of women, the end of slavery, the establishment of law and peace.

11. Protests outside abortion clinics or yelling at other people on the street won't bring people to Jesus. Loving everyone, even those you call your enemies, and doing good to them who are being horrible to you WILL be noticed. Maybe by that enemy, but certainly by others watching the exchange. **2 Cor. 5:16-21.**