

The Sermon - In 10 Sentences Or Less

Advent 2022 - The Candle of Peace:



- 1) When we encounter "peace" in the Advent and Christmas stories (like when Zechariah and the angelic host proclaim it in Luke 1.78-79 and 2.14-15 respectively, we need to look backward to the Old Testament to understand that term in its fullness.
- 2) "Shalom" is one the most important, unifying ideas in the Old Testament, used over 450 times, meaning peace, goodness, justice, wholeness, healing, and wellbeing, and not just for one person but for all.
- 3) So shalom/peace is both a gift and a goal; it is both received from God and pursued by His people for His sake.
- 4) So Someone (Jesus) coming into the world to offer God's promised "shalom" should be lauded and embraced, right?...Well, no, this is where the story takes an unanticipated turn...
- 5) Simeon the prophet declares on the 8th day of Jesus' life that while many will rise because of this child, many would also fall because of Him (Luke 2.34-35), a sentiment Jesus Himself repeats and even amps up during His public ministry (Luke 12.51-53).
- 6) PCUSA pastor Tracy Daub, in her Advent devotional entitled Holy Disruption, writes this about the connection between conflict and peace/shalom in the gospels: "The conflict we find in the gospels arises from Jesus' unwavering commitment to the peace God intends for all humanity and Jesus' opposition to all the forces that threaten such peace – whether those forces within us individually or communally."
- 7) According to Simeon, Jesus shines like a great light revealing what we don't want to see or admit: "the inner thoughts of many will be revealed," he says (see too John 3.20 and Ephesians 5.12-13).
- 8) So Jesus' kind of peace (shalom) comes at a cost – the cost of the lies we tell ourselves about ourselves, the false self we present to others, the excuses we make for our indifference, and the apathy or exhaustion we have in the face of social injustice.
- 9) Fundamentally, what you find over the course the gospels is that peace/shalom is a choice each person must make: we either embrace and then embody it, or, if not, fight against it (you can read some examples of this in section C. below).

Exploring More This Week

1) Want to learn more about "shalom"?

- This is a great 3+ minute video describing the wide range of meanings of "shalom" and its core definition, spanning across the whole of scripture: [Shalom - Peace](#)
- An interview with one of America's great Old Testament scholars on the meaning and practice of "shalom": [Shalom: Conversation with Dr. Walter Brueggemann](#)
- A series of reflections, for use in your prayer or devotional time, on shalom: [Steps-toward-Shalom.pdf](#)
- One pastor's reflection on trying to live and practice "shalom": [Learning to Live Shalom](#)
- A great, easily-readable book on "shalom" that connects it directly to the gospel/good news of Jesus is "The Very Good Gospel" (by Lisa Sharon Harper): [The Very Good Gospel: How Everything Wrong Can Be Made Right: Harper, Lisa Sharon, Brueggemann, Walter](#)

2) Want to read a few stories in the gospels when Jesus offered shalom/peace to someone or a group, and then they had to choose how to proceed forward from that encounter?

In each episode below in which "peace" appears, ask yourself: what is the peace/shalom that Jesus gives or offers, and what is the choice about peace/shalom that the person/group has to make?

[Luke 7.36-50 NRSVA](#)

[Luke 8.40-48 NRSVA](#)

[Luke 10.1-12 NRSVA](#)

[Luke 24.36-43 NRSVA](#)

3) Want to read or hear Martin Luther King Jr.'s last Christmas sermon in full, its subject matter being peace on earth? (One note of correction from yesterday's sermon, incidentally - this was preached on Christmas Eve, 1967, not Christmas Day, 1967):

[Martin Luther King Jr – A Christmas Sermon on Peace – 1967](#)

[Martin Luther King, Jr., Christmas Sermon](#)