

C. The importance of definitions to our mission.

D. Our responsibility to be shalom-makers is not peripheral to the Gospel.

“It seems impossible to maintain that peace is a *marginal concern* in the Bible, and ridiculous to say that the church—an entity tasked with the proclamation of hope in a world of violence—need not be an outspoken advocate of peace.” (Laura Brenneman, *Struggles for Shalom: Peace and Violence across the Testaments*, 30)

LIVE THE STORY

In the month of December, our community groups take a break. However, the following questions are great to discuss with someone you know.

- Why might defining peace as the absence of things (war, hostility, conflict, bitterness) be insufficient?
- If we think of peace in the sense of the Hebrew *shalom*, how might we describe it?
- Discuss why the calling to be image-bearers is a call to be shalom-makers?
- Did the prominence of peace in Peter’s description of the ministry of Jesus (Acts 10:36) or in Isaiah (52:7) surprise you? If so, how might this adjust your thinking about the Gospel and the church’s mission?
- In what ways do we see shalom-making in the ministry of Jesus?
- What does it mean for disciples to be called to be shalom-makers (Matt. 5:9)? Why might defining peace as the absence of things (war, hostility, etc.) derail us from the mission?
- Why should we spend time imagining a world in which flourishing is the norm? Imagining ways to bring wholeness to those who mourn?

Advent: Peace and the Peacemaking Mission of Jesus

Jerry Cisar — December 4, 2022

Text: Isaiah 52:7; Acts 10:36; Matthew 5:4, 9

Introduction: What is peace?

Neil Plantinga: “The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call *shalom*. We call it peace, but it means far more than mere peace of mind or a cease-fire between enemies. In the Bible, *shalom* means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight — a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights. *Shalom, in other words, is the way things ought to be.*”

Jesus Christ is the ultimate peacemaker and calls us to join in His peacemaking mission.

I. Why do we need the Gospel of Peace?

A. Because of sin.

Cornelius Plantinga: “God is, after all, not arbitrarily offended. God hates sin not just because it violates his law but, more substantively, because it violates *shalom*, because it breaks the peace, *because it interferes with the way things are supposed to be.... God is for shalom and therefore against sin. ... In short, sin is culpable shalom-breaking.*” (*Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*).

B. Because we are shalom-breakers?

- i. Adam and Eve as image bearers

- ii. This created a need for a unique shalom-maker.

II. Jesus the Shalom-maker (Acts 10:36)

In what sense did Jesus bring peace?

- A. He came announcing peace, a real announcement about real peace... restoring people to shalom.
 - i. Matthew 5-7 The Sermon on the Moungt

 - ii. Matthew 8

 - iii. Luke 1:78-79
- B. He brought peace by reconciling us to God.
 - i. Rom. 5:1, 6-8: Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the means of peace with God.

 - ii. 2 Cor. 5:19

 - iii. This reconciliation with God is essential if we are to be made peacemakers.

III. Our calling to join in Jesus' shalom-making mission (Matt. 5:4, 9)

- A. Disciples are called to see those who mourn and seek to make them whole.
 - i. The shalom-making ministry of Jesus' disciples is put right up front in the Gospel, in the Beatitudes.

“When ‘shalom-makers’ act as the Father, whose children they are, and bring restoration to those who *mourn what is missing in their lives*, those who mourn will be comforted and there is the kingdom of heaven.... They become agents of a kingdom in which they bring comfort by doing the will of God on earth as it is in heaven.” (*The Beatitudes and the Life of the Church*, CTJ, Vol. 57, No. 1; 59)

- ii. The instructions regarding how to be peacemakers is part of fulfilling the Great Commission.

- B. Peacemaking always includes the message of reconciliation.
 - i. The credibility of our message about forgiveness of sins, involves helping people get up and walk—restoring them to wholeness. That is how the world will know Christ has authority to forgive sins with the word of the Gospel. (Luke 5:17-26)

 - ii. The validity of the Gospel's power to forgive will be demonstrated by the shalom-making community, the church.