

Ephesians 2:11-22 // The Peace-Making GOAT

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[0:00] So our second reading is in Ephesians chapter 2 and we're reading from verses 11 to 22 and that's on page 1174 in the Bible.

! Ephesians chapter 2 starting at verse 11. Therefore remember that formerly these who were gentiles by birth are called uncircumcised by those who call themselves for circumcision, which is done in the body of the human hands. Remember that at that time we were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise without hope and without God in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus, you who are once far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ, for he himself is our peace, who has made two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, birth-making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God from the cross, by which he put to death their facility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near, for through him you would both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

[1:29] Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens of God's people and also members of the household, built from the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

In him, the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him, we too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. This is the word of the Lord. Be to God. Well, good morning St Silas, great to see you this morning and let me add my welcome to Darren's. If we've not met before, my name's Andrew, I'm a leader in training here at the church.

Well, we've made it. I've made it. I know a few of you are wondering if I'd be here this morning. Baby Mackenzie isn't here. Josh phoned me up yesterday and went, I've beaten you to it. So that was fun. And it's great news for them.

And when you're at the point of not knowing when a baby might come, might come any day, and you're writing a sermon on peace, you often happen to be preaching to your own heart, especially this week.

[2:36] So do keep your Bibles open. We're at page 1174. And that will be a great help to us all as will the sermon outline you'll find on the back of your service sheet.

That will show you where we're going this morning. And let's come before the Lord in prayer. Heavenly Father, there are many things going on in our life that can distract, worry, and distract us during our time listening to your words this morning.

And so we pray that you would still our heart, inquire from our life, that we may be changed as your spirit applies your words through our hearts and minds.

Help us to bear more fruit of your spirit by the spirit of power. Amen. Will we ever have peace?

Proper peace, long lasting peace, durable peace?

Will we ever stop shooting at each other? Will we ever stop threatening to shoot at each other? As a country, will we ever agree on the way forward? Will the Union Bears ever sit down with the Green Brigade and enjoy a civilized fight?

[3:49] Will the denominations ever stop multiplying? Will church members ever stop falling out with each other? Will my family ever get along? Will my heart ever stop worrying about the things of which I cannot control whatsoever?

Will we ever have peace in a world so dividing? How on earth am I supposed to bear peace in life like we live today?

Will the air that we breathe is full of division and polarization and suspicion. When it comes to growing peace in our lives, it often feels like the air we breathe is more poison than the birth of our journey.

And I wonder if that means that this morning, the idea of living a life that bears peace feels more fanciful than a reality that we possibly have.

We're in our slightly different summer series looking at the fruit of the Spirit each week. And Paul lists them in Galatians 5, which we heard earlier, as he tells us we should expect the Spirit to be transforming our life.

[5:00] He should be helping us to bear these fruit in our lives and part. And this week we're looking at peace. We'll be in Ephesians 2, as Paul shows us, how Christ is the greatest ever peacemaker.

He is the goat. He gives us vertical peace with God and horizontal peace with each other. And he does it in our lives by the work of his Spirit, not by our own efforts.

And so firstly, then the greatest ever peacemaker gives reconciliation with our creation. It is through him alone that we can be a peace with God.

For both points this morning, Paul tells us, remember what you were. This is what Christ has done.

And so now you are. Remember what you were. This is what Christ has done.

And so now you are. And Paul writes to people who are Gentiles, those who are not Jewish. And that is most of us here today.

[6:04] And look at verse 12. He writes, remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners, the covenant of promise without hope and without God in the world.

Before we became Christians, before we accepted Christ's work on our behalf, we were utterly separate from Christ. We had no share in the work.

And that meant we were strangers to the covenant of promise. The promise that one day God would bring his people back into relationship with him. We were utterly part of him.

And reconciliation is really just a fancy word for making equal. It brings two parties that were at odds with each other and puts them back into relationship.

We were distant from God because of our sin. But, and we said, we reject his authority. We said, I will be in charge instead. I would rather live under my rule than your rule.

[7:11] I want nothing to do with him. Because we rejected him, we could not be in relationship with him. But we're cut off. We were under his judgment.

Paul tells us here that we were far off, unable to bring ourselves back. That is until we accept Christ's work. Because we had no way to be in relationship apart from Christ's work.

And to have peace in this life. It's partly to have the answer that some of life's biggest question. What is my purpose?

Am I of value? Am I enough? Am I love? How am I love? And before we had Christ, we were restless.

Living life, scrambling for answers. Desperately trying to find something that answers these big questions. But these questions can only truly be answered by the one who created them.

[8:14] The one who knows as best. The one who knows what we were made for. And so verse 13, Paul writes in Christ Jesus. You who were once far away have been brought to him by the blood of Christ.

And verse 16, he says his work was to reconcile both of them to God through the cross. Christ is the greatest ever peacemaker. Because he makes it possible for sinful Gentiles, sinful people like us, to be reconciled to God.

To be at peace with God. And verse 14, Paul writes, he is our people. Jesus is our people. Isn't that a profound statement to himself?

Is our people? What does it look like to have peace? It looks like to have Jesus. We have been brought near by his blood.

Because he took the judgment that he deserves. The distance is no longer there between us and our creator. He has reconciled us. And so we have to.

[9:26] Because of and in Christ. We are reconciled with our creator. Paul writes in verse 18. For true things. We both have access to the Father by one's name.

We have full and free access. To the creator of the world. To our Father. To the one who holds all things in his path. To the one who knows exactly what's going to happen in your life.

This afternoon, tomorrow, next week, next month, next year, next decade. He knows exactly what's going on. He's in control of it all. He knows it all.

He knows exactly when each one of us will die. He knows exactly what he's going to do with us in this world. How he's going to use it for his purpose. That means we can trust him and rest in him.

Our rest in heart. Find peace in you. We can answer the big questions. We can say I am loved. loved and will forever be loved into eternity by the one who knows me best, my creator.

[10:37] I am a human made in God's image, and I do not have to do that, because Christ's sacrifice is in mine. My life is going to the beautiful new creation, where peace will abide forever, and I will enjoy God forever.

My purpose is to join in God's work, to make any of your disciples in this world, that I await Jesus to pray. Our good God gives us the answers to our big questions of God.

We can have peace in him, try him. We have peace because Jesus was reconciled to our people.

The pressure is off. You do not have to try to answer the questions of God.

We do not have to try and prove ourselves. Our world is full of everybody trying to prove to everyone else that they are someone, that they are someone of nature.

But we don't need to. And many of the acts of the flesh that Paul Lick in Galatians 5 and contract the fruit of the earth come up from these efforts, these restless efforts, to try and make something of ourselves.

[11:52] Hatred, jealousy, envy, selfish ambition, bubble up as people try to fill the God-sized hole in their hearts with anything that could possibly be, hoping desperately that it will give them rest, that it will give them peace.

But peace is only found from being reconciled to your freedom by the Lord Jesus. As well as the same questions in life, being reconciled to God gives us peace in our daily thinking.

Now that we have access to the Father, we can bring everything before him and entrust them to our people's care. Some of those scientists are working harder than others for various reasons, for mental health, for our childhood and our background, our circumstances, among other things.

So we are all called to grow in peace by the power of the Spirit, to keep on embracing the Spirit of the One. And in Philippians 4, Paul Lick, do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts in life.

Bearing peace in our life looks like trusting God with our presence of himself, because we know that our Father has it all under control.

[13:27] It looks like peace, abiding trust in God. So when you don't know how you're going to make it through the next month, when you don't know how you're going to make it the next payday, well, you commit it into God's hands.

And you say, I don't know how we're going to get this. I'm worried about this, Lord. I'm anxious. I'm stressed about this, Lord. But I know that you are the creator. You are the creator. And you promise to provide everything with peace as one of your children.

And of course, peace doesn't mean sitting there and doing nothing about it, trusting that a thousand pounds will randomly fall into your lap. Although it may. But it means that we have a peace that whatever happens, God is in control.

He has a peace of God. And he will keep us safe eternally. The pressure, the worry, the stress is handed to God. And we can have peace with him.

And that's really hard to do. It's not easy to handle this thing off and choose not to worry about them. Trusting that God has it under control.

[14:33] It takes humility. It takes practice. And so we keep coming back to him. Keep friends saying, Lord, I find this really hard. And so I commit it back to you again. And say, I trust you.

I trust you to help me not to worry about them. Help me to have peace with the circumstances that you have given them. Knowing that you promise to provide all that.

Perhaps it's not so much money. Perhaps it's knowing how you're going to honor and care for your parents as they get older. How do you look after them as their minds begin to fade, as their bodies get older.

How on earth am I going to manage that with family life? And everything else. Or maybe you're at school. And you feel like no one ever wants to be your friend. You feel like you've got no one in your life.

And the thought of another year of going back to that school. Or changing school. Or moving to senior school. It's just still gone. You're worried, will I ever fit in?

[15:36] Will I ever be enough? Will I be seen to be cool? Because of Christ, we are able to pray to God. We can commit all these things to him.

Trusting that he fears us. And that he will watch over us. We tell him our worries, our strife. And we ask him to give us peace. And the spirit works in our hearts.

We produce the fruit of the spirit. And peace in our hearts. In all these things. The greatest ever peace may be. Is reconciliation with our spirit.

So we can instruct our life to him. And live. The spirit does the work we want. In the spirit. We do our best. And graduate.

We are transformed to better bear the fruit of the spirit. Peace in our hearts. From being a peace of God. But it's not just vertical.

[16:37] That Christ gives us. The greatest ever peacemaker gives us harmony. Within his new creation. New humanity. Our second. Christ gives us peace with one another.

Paul writes the letter. To Ephesians. For a church that is largely Gentile. In that. And for their whole life. These Gentile Christians.

Would have had nothing to do. With the Jewish Christians. It was the greatest. Dividing life. In humanity. In human history. Jewish people on one side.

And Gentiles on the other. They wanted nothing to do with each other. They hated each other. And yet. In Christ's work. Brings them together. And he makes them one meaning.

To know. They would speak in derogatory terms. About each other. They would be the uncircumcised. Versus the circumcised. They would hold each other in contempt.

[17:36] In disdain. They historically wanted nothing to do with each other. And now. Christ has united them together. In living women. You can imagine how awkward.

Those Sunday services were. For a bit. Imagine if they started with all the Gentiles on this side. And all the Jews on this side. And they would never mix. It's a long time. For the work of the spirit.

To get over. And still a thing. Like that. And this was the big fault line running down humanity. Generations of baggage and animosity.

And while what happens in the Middle East today. Has some crucial differences. You still see hatred running on both lines. That is deep written.

Across generations. How hard peace is. In that era. It's different to what we read about here. But you can see the similarities. And Jesus brings them both.

[18:32] Under the same roof. Doesn't just make peace with them. It's not great work. Peace. We'll do our thing over here. You do your thing over here. And we'll never meet. And that'll be okay. You unite them as one.

The answer to peace in the Middle East. Or anywhere else. Is only. For hearts to be transformed. By the work of the spirit. With people being reconciled to their creator.

And to peace with one another. And only his gift of peace will rise. Four times. Paul tells us. That Jesus has bridged the divide.

And made them one. Verse 14. He himself is our peace. Who has made the two groups. One. Verse 15. To create in himself. One new humanity.

Out of the two. Verse 16. In one body. To reconcile both of them. Verse 18. We both. Have access to the father.

[19:31] By one. The greatest. Division. Hostility. Differing. In humanity. He has made a way past. I think it's hard for us.

To really understand. Here. Heads around. The seismic nature. Of the divine. And to the seismic nature. Of Christ. Peace. It's much bigger.

Than a million bear. Having a pint. A green brigade member. Perhaps. It's more like. A hamat operative. Having a pint.

With an Israeli soldier. And being in the same church. Together. Both of them. Having turned to Christ. At peace. With one another. Perhaps. It's more like. A Russian. Partridge specialist.

Being made at peace. With a bereaved. Ukrainian grandmother. Both of them. Both of them. Having their hearts. Transformed. And brought. Together. It is radical. He has made a new humanity. [20:30] Where everyone is reconciled to God. Through the cross. And it is the only way. To come. Before. Christ's work. Jewish people.

Had special access. To God. In the temple. In a way. That Gentiles. Could not. They were kept far away. But now. Everyone comes. The same way. In Christ.

One body. In Christ. One work. On the cross. Shedding his blood. He has made a way. For everyone. To be reconciled. It is the only way. To come.

His new humanity. Changing. Everyone's fundamental identity. There is no longer Jew. And Gentile. But Christian. Part of God's new humanity.

We were separate. Christ. Found us together. By himself. And now. We are one. And we share the same. Holy Spirit. Verse 18.

[21:26] We both have access. To the Father. By one spirit. The peace that Jesus. That gives us. Overrides. All of our division. Whatever our background.

Whatever might. Divide us. We are now joined together. In Christ. New humanity. Coming the same way. With the same identity. A forgiven sinner. Only by the blood of Jesus.

Who is now reconciled. To your glory. And because of this. Verse 19. You are no longer foreigners. And strangers. But fellow citizens.

With God's kingdom. And also members. Of each household. We are all citizens. With one another. Same right. Same work. Same identity.

We are all forgiven sinners. Together. Verse 22. We are all part of God's dwelling. But. Much of the division. In our world.

[22:23] Is rooted in superiority. And inferiority. And inferiority. We are so much better than them. They think. They are so much better than us. We need what they have.

If it is ever going to be fair. We can't let them ever have. What we have. Or we will lose it. That attitude. Is from the flesh. Often. It seeks to destroy peace.

Pursue selfish ambition. And so. Peace. Everywhere. Whereas our identity. Peace. First and foremost. Is being a forgiven sinner.

The fruit of the spirit. Produces peace. That removes such action. We may have. Absolutely nothing. In common with each other. That may be true.

But each of us. Is a forgiven sinner. Living by the spirit. And God. Is the same. And this peace. Is intimately tied. To being at peace.

[23:18] With our creation. When we have. Peace in our hearts. About life. In question. When we have. Peace in our hearts. About our present. Circumstances. We rid ourselves.

Of the acts. Of the flesh. That sow division. And stand in opposition. And instead. Embrace our fellowship. That peace. With one another. Christ.

Has given. His church. Peace. He is our peace. And glance over. To chapter 4. Verse 3. This is. Paul turns to the. Outworking. Of this.

You have. Make every effort. To keep the unity. Of space. Through the bondage. Make every effort. To keep the unity. Of space.

Through the bondage. We live. In a world. That often. Treats. Differences. Of division. That loves. Division. We sit. In the comments. Of Facebook posts.

[24:14] Or Instagram posts. With popcorn. Just waiting. For things. To kick off. I wonder. How people. Will manage. To fall out. With each other. About this. In some ways. Become glorified.

A bit like. Some reality TV programs. Where you begin. To realize. That all they're actually.

Wanting. Is to make people. Fall out. With each other. That's what freedom. Can be. Is when people. Are at each other's.

Through. We want to. All. To talk. But Jesus. Says. To lecture. The peace. No. We must. Grasp. That the peace. That Christ. Has given us.

And reconciling us. To our creation. And making us. Part of the new. Humanity. It's peace. And we must. Strive. To protect. The peace.

Immunity. That we enjoy. As a church family. The fruit. Of the spirit. Bears peace. In our hearts. And peace. In our life. We have peace.

[25:07] Over the big questions. In life. As we're reconciled. To our creator. We have peace. Over our circumstances. We can commit them. To our father. And we know.

All that he has. In our hearts. And so we have peace. With one another. Each of us. Is a forgiven sinner. Brought in. By the work. Of Christ.

That is our core. Identity. That is the thing. That we should see. First most. In each other. Is we also are. Forgiven. Sinner. And that means.

That whether we're rich. Or poor. Working. Or middle class. Uni student. Or retired. If we're single. Or married. Young or old. British. Or not.

We are all at peace. With one another. If you are trusting. In the Lord Jesus. Because first and foremost. You are a forgiven sinner. Brought in the same way. Made a citizen of God.

[26:01] The new human. And so let me ask you. One. Is there places in your life. Where you still show. But still at peace.

To your brothers and sisters. In Christ. To your fellow. Forgiven sinners. Are there ways. That you let the division. Of the world. Love to be. Affect your peace.

With your brothers. And sisters. Do we let ourselves. Be divided. By age. Stage. Class. Race. Song preference.

Church background. Whatever you want. All right. These things. Can destroy our peace. Of the peace. And unity of the church. Being a peacemaker.

It's not about compromising proof. Of being passive. And choosing just to put your feet up. On yourself. Instead of doing anything. It's not about changing our doctrines.

[26:59] And pursue peace. At all times. But besides. To abandon the peace. All together. We cannot say that all religions. Lead to heaven.

And it doesn't matter. If you have a different view of scripture. From us. In the interest of church unity. Because that is to forego. Gospel peace. We cannot just. Sit back.

And say nothing. When someone errs. In a way. Like that. Keep the peace. Maintaining the peace. Is costly. And it's active. We have to give things up.

To making every effort. To keep the uniculity. Through the bondage. Often we have to. Swallow our pride. Sometimes we have to.

Choose to forgive. And move forward. When we could continue. To make that big issue. Being a church family. Is after all. Unmessing thing. If we are all.

[27:57] Forgiven sinners. We still sin. And we still get things wrong. Each of us. Do things. That threaten. The harmony. Of Christ. We have to know. But from being at peace.

With our creator. We are free. To forgive each other. And when we get it wrong. Turn humbly back. Going. I am a forgiven sinner. And accepting. People.

Ask for forgiveness. Going. I am a forgiven sinner. Let him. At peace. With one another. And so we lift up. The unity. Of our church.

To God as well. Asking for him. To protect it. Against the devil's. Desire. To forgive. Sometimes all he needs. Is one crack. In our peace. One crack. In our unity.

To bring it all. Tumbling back. And so knowing. That we are forgiven. Forgiven sinners. But that God is the creator. And sustainer of all things. We pray to him.

[28:52] For his help. We lift. Our church family up to him. We ask him to help us. We have peace with God.

Through Christ. And peace with one another. Thanks to Christ. And so together. We embrace this transformation. Of our life. By his spirit.

For God. And so. Thank you. Heavenly Father. We pray to you. This morning. For the great gift. Of peace. With me. Thanks to the work.

Of the Lord Jesus. Thank you. That we can entrust. All things. Knowing that you give us. All that we need. And that relationship. With you.

Is our greatness. Thank you. For the peace. And unity. We enjoy. As a church family. Here. And we pray now. That we would protect. Stop us from doing.

[29:48] Or saying things. That would cause. Prevision. But help us instead. To embrace the work. Of the experience. And see each other rightly. And forgiving sinners. Like our cross.

Thank you.