

LHCF Sermon Discussion Guide

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The Purpose of Christmas **A Time for Reconciliation – Luke 2:14**

Third Purpose of Christmas is reconciliation.

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

Reconciliation defined: The restoration of peace. It is the powerful miracle cure for broken lives and broken relationships.

Reconciliation defuses conflict and turns chaos into calmness. It quiets quarrels. It swaps your stress for God’s serenity, turns tension into tranquility, and produces peace of mind instead of panic or pressure.

The starting point to peace in your life is to understand the causes of conflict. Many reasons but here are 2 of the big reasons.

1. Root causes of conflict

- Natural self-centeredness

“Only by pride cometh contention.” Pro. 13:10

- Played out in relationships everyday, 2 people have differences and if neither is willing to compromise, sparks fly.
- Remember God is looking for unity, not the “best” answer.

- Expecting others to do what only God can do

“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God” James 4:1-2

Paul has a better solution in Phil 4:6-7 *“Do not worry about anything, but pray and ask God for everything you need, always giving thanks. And God's peace, which is so great we cannot understand it, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”*

2. Jesus offers three kinds of peace

- **Peace with God** – spiritual peace

“God was in Christ, making peace between the world and himself. In Christ, God did not hold the world guilty of its sins...” 2 Cor. 5:19 (NCV)

Jesus death was the penalty for my sins and yours, Jesus took our guilt so we could be declared not guilty...inviting Jesus to be Lord ends our guilt and we have peace with God.

“Even when we were God's enemies, he made peace with us, because his Son died for us. Yet something even greater than friendship is ours. Now that we are at peace with God, we will be saved by his Son's life.” Rom. 5:10 (CEV)

When we chose to do our own thing, live in rebellion toward God's will, we chose, not God, to be an enemy of God. God has always wanted friendship, but in our rebellion we chose to be at war with Him.

Gal. 5:19-21 *“It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness...cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives...the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions.”*

In contrast, the effects of being reconciled to God are found in Gal 5:22-23 *“When the Holy Spirit controls our lives he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”*

How can an imperfect person be reconciled to a perfect God? Not by bargaining, compromising or negotiating with God!

Peace with God comes from surrender... total, unconditional surrender.

- **Peace of God** – emotional peace

“You, Lord, give true peace to those who depend on you, because they trust you.” Isa. 26:3 (NCV)

“Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.” Matt. 11:28-30 (NLT)

- Many are struggling to trust, but remember as you accumulate experiences with God coming through, it gets easier!
- What robs you of your peace? Culprits typically fall into 3 categories:
 - ✓ Uncontrollable circumstances (illness, deaths, lay-offs)
 - ✓ Unchangeable people (who refuse to cooperate with your plans to change them)
 - ✓ Unexplainable problems (when life seems unfair)
- We tend to respond in one of 3 ways to the above:
 - ✓ We try harder to control everything
 - ✓ We give up with a fatalistic attitude, feeling controlled by our circumstances
 - ✓ We respond to situations the way Jesus did and depend on His Holy Spirit to empower us

- **Peace with others**

“All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other.” 2 Cor. 5:18-19 (MSG)

“And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.” James 3:18 (NLT)

- Once you’ve experienced peace with God and begin to have the peace of God in your heart, God wants you to have the joy of being at peace with all the other people in your life.
- What does it mean to be a peacemaker?
 - ✓ NOT avoiding conflict
 - ✓ NOT delaying dealing with a conflict
 - ✓ NOT appeasement, giving in or passivity

- Being a peacemaker, is actively seeking to end conflict, extending grace as God extends grace to you, it is forgiving, burying the hatchet, but not the problem...it's saying "I don't want to fight with you any longer"
- Many are reluctant...why?
 - ✓ Confusion between forgiveness and trust
 - ✓ Confusion between reconciliation and resolution
- The fear is that if I reconcile or forgive, I'll be returning to a hurtful or dysfunctional relationship without any change taking place.
- Remember reconciliation is not the same as resolution...
- Reconciliation ends the hostility but doesn't mean you've resolved all the issues:
 - ✓ You continue to work on the issues, but you do so now with respect and love instead of sarcasm and anger
 - ✓ You disagree agreeably
- Remember reconciliation focuses on the relationship, resolution focuses on the problems.

LET ME GIVE YOU SOME APPLICATION FOR YOUR LIFE:

1. If you haven't made peace with God, I pray you will today, right now. God has given you a precious gift in Jesus. Invite Jesus to sit in the pilot's seat of your life, give up your self-sufficiency in exchange for God-sufficiency. Open the gift this Christmas.
2. If you need more of the peace of God, redefine your view of peace. Recognize that peace within is not defined by the absence of problems. Rather it is trusting Him in the midst of problems, trusting His nature to see you through. Don't give up, He will be faithful and with these experiences you'll mature in your trust/peace
3. Evaluate your relationships. You've already been given the ministry of reconciliation...now function in it. Become a peace maker. Bury your hatchet, let go of your anger, forgive those who have wronged you and end the feuding, relate to others with respect and love those you have conflicts with.