

Peace be unto you

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[0 : 0 0] Together, the Gospel of John, chapter 20, and you shall read again verse 19. John 20 and verse 19.

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. Peace be unto you.

Peace be unto you. What better Christmas message could we give?

And especially when we consider the one that it comes from. You and I could say, peace be unto you. And we could wish that so and so would have peace. But it's just a wish. We have no power to bring about peace.

But Jesus, the Jesus who died on the cross and rose again, he said, all power in heaven and in earth is given unto me.

[1 : 2 6] I have all authority and all power. He is risen. He is Lord. He reigns in heaven. And the mighty one says, peace be unto you. He grants what he says. His peace is truly gifted to us.

When you receive Jesus Christ, you receive peace. You've perhaps given and received many lovely gifts at Christmas time.

Well, tonight I present to you the best gift of all. Do you know how Paul describes it in 2 Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 15?

He describes it as the unspeakable gift. The gift which we cannot properly speak about. We cannot describe it adequately.

It's so rich. It's so great. It's so glorious. It's so wonderful. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. And that unspeakable gift is his Son, Jesus Christ.

[2 : 4 8] And with Jesus Christ, you get peace. Other gifts that we get or that we give, they grow old.

They wear out. They rot. They perish. They're used up. Or they tarnish. Or they lose their interest and attraction for us.

But this gift, the gift of Christ and the gift of peace, is something which gets better and better and better all the days of your life and throughout the endless ages of eternity.

Take him and you've got something of eternal value. And if you've taken Jesus Christ before, take him again tonight.

Maybe there are some of you here and you're asking yourself, Am I really a Christian? Have I really taken Christ? Am I amongst his people?

[4 : 0 0] Well, take him again tonight. Take him and make sure. And keep on taking him. Maybe you've taken Christ many, many years ago. And you've been a Christian for many, many years.

Again tonight, take Christ. Take his peace into your heart. Let his assurance fill your experience.

His joy and his peace. First of all, tonight, we have here troubled hearts. Think of the disciples.

For three years they had been following Jesus. Up and down through the land. Galilee, Jordan, Jerusalem, Samaria. Back to Galilee.

Going round the country. Seeing his ministry, his teaching, his example. They were impressed when the crowds gathered.

[4 : 58] They were impressed with his preaching. He spoke not as the scribes and Pharisees, but he spoke with authority. He was different. Think too of the miracles that they saw.

How they loved to see Jesus giving sight to a blind man, giving hearing to a deaf person, making a dumb person speak, cleansing a leper from that horrid disease.

How they were amazed when they saw him controlling the winds and the waves. What manner of man is this?

They believed he was the Messiah. The promised one. They were so impressed. The promised one. The one sent by God. They were so impressed.

They were so dependent upon him. They were so enthralled by him. But then, he was condemned.

[5 : 59] And they saw him carrying the cross out of Jerusalem to the place of a skull. They saw him lie down upon that wooden cross.

They saw him. The Roman soldiers hammered the nails through his hand. They saw him wince with a pain. They saw him hanged.

They heard him cry, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? They heard him cry, in triumph, it is finished.

But did they understand? They heard him say, Father, into thine hands I commend my spirit. And they saw his lifeless form hang on the cross.

The Messiah. The great King. The one whose kingdom is everlasting. The miracle worker. The one who spoke as never man spoke.

[7 : 06] The one who attracted the crowds. The one who could control the wind and the waves. His lifeless body hanging on the tree.

They saw Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea come along. Take down that body and wrap it in a linen cloth and lay it in a tomb.

Just imagine the troubled hearts of the disciples. What's going on? What's happening? Why? And then to add to their confusion.

On the first day of the week, early in the morning, Mary Magdalene went to the sepulcher. It was empty and the stone rolled away. She came and told them, Peter and John went and saw for themselves, who's taken away his body.

And then even stranger, Mary came and told them that she had seen the Lord. She must be hallucinating. She must be just emotionally wrought.

[8 : 25] It's impossible. Maybe it was a ghost. You can imagine their confusion, their troubled hearts.

Perhaps things have happened over this past year that have troubled you. Maybe some big trouble that has come into your life. Something that has turned your life upside down.

Maybe others don't know about it. Perhaps it's private, but you know about it. Or maybe it's lots of little things. And they trouble you and they worry you.

And they perplex you and they get you down. You're full of questions. And you have no answers. And you read the Bible and you become more confused.

And the more you read, the more confused you become. Troubled hearts. The disciples were afraid.

[9 : 30] We're told here that they had locked the doors for fear of the Jews. You see, the Jews, they had taken Jesus, their leader, and executed him.

Where are they now going to proceed against the followers of Jesus? The disciples are hiding. They've locked and they've barred the door. They're frightened. I wonder, are you afraid of people?

Afraid of persecution? Afraid of being laughed at? Afraid of problems or difficulties arising between you and such and such a person?

And then there were all the questions with regard to the future. What are we going to do? The disciples, just imagine them. Jesus is dead.

What are we going to do now? What can we do? There's no way we can carry on this mission. He had special powers that we don't have.

[10 : 34] And he seemed to know all the answers and he could argue with anybody. We don't have the power. There's nothing we can do. In the next chapter, Peter says, I go a-fishing.

And the rest of them say, we're going with you. And they all go out fishing. Are they going to return to their old occupations? Are they going to try and somehow or other be missionaries?

What are they going to do? Perhaps at this point in your life, there's two roads in front of you. And it's very confusing. You don't know which way to turn.

One goes to the left. One goes to the right. Which way do you go? Perhaps there are several choices.

And you're confused and perplexed. You're troubled. You're worried about the future, the decisions you have to make, and the impact these decisions could have upon your life and the lives of others.

[11 : 41] Troubled heart. Just imagine the disciples there. Thinking. We said to Jesus, we'll never forsake you.

We'll stick by you even if we die. But they didn't. And they knew it. And their conscience was condemning them.

They had forsaken him and fled. They had deserted him and left him to die. The guilt. Think of Peter.

Though all forsake you, I will never forsake you. Though all forsake you, I will never forsake you. And he denied it, Lord, three times with oaths and curses.

The guilt. Is there a big sin in your life? And it covers you with guilt. You feel so ashamed of yourself. Troubled in your soul because of what you've done.

[12 : 42] Maybe it's not one sin but lots and lots of sin. That consciousness of your own guilt.

That shame in the presence of God. At the end of the day, this is the basic trouble with us all, isn't it? All have sinned and come short of the standard that God has set.

Every one of us has gone astray one way or another. We've done things we shouldn't have done. And we do things we shouldn't do. And we say things we shouldn't say.

And we think things we shouldn't think. And all the things we should be doing, we're not doing. And all the things we should be saying, we're not saying. And we're poor witnesses. And we're poor in every sense.

We feel, we feel, we feel guilt and shame. Troubled hearts. And of course, as sinners, sin demands punishment.

[13 : 56] sin. And God threatens to punish the sinner with a lost eternity. Troubled hearts.

But in the second place, Christ comes to bring peace. Christ brings peace to the troubled heart.

This morning, we were considering the message of the angels to the shepherds. I bring you good tidings, glad tidings of great joy that shall be to all people a saviour is born who is Christ the Lord.

And then, all the angels joining together in a tremendous chorus. Singing, glory to God in the highest.

And on earth, peace, good will toward men. Jesus is born. What does it mean? Peace.

[15 : 11] Glory to God. Yes, God will be glorified in revealing himself as a God of mercy and of salvation. God will be glorified in giving his son and in the death of his son on the cross.

God will be glorified in saving his people. Glory to God and on earth, peace, good will toward men.

Christ came to bring peace. It's a great purpose of his coming. John 3, 16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

God gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should have peace, should not perish, should not continue under the wrath and condemnation of God but should have peace.

The good shepherd John 10 He loves his sheep He knows them He calls them by name The hireling when he sees the wolf coming runs for his life He's a hireling He doesn't care for the sheep but the good shepherd He lays down his life for the sheep He sees the troubles coming and he takes the troubles on himself and the sheep go free Remember how Seppharia put it Away go sword against my shepherd against the man that is my fellow Smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered and I will turn my hand my merciful hand my peace-giving hand upon the little ones This peace first came into the world in the Garden of Eden

[17 : 27] There you remember when our first parents ate the forbidden fruit they felt naked they felt uneasy they were worried and troubled and ashamed tried to find a hiding place from God they were cast out of the garden cast out of God's presence dying perishing without God and without hope but God said to them the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head God gave them a message of salvation and spoke of one who would bring about peace and in due course Christ came and he wrestled with the serpent he fought with the devil and through his death he destroyed the devil who through death destroyed him that hath the power of death that is the devil and brought life and immortality to light in the gospel

Christ has through his sufferings through his life through his death through his overcoming the tempter Christ has worked out peace for his people he paid the ransom the ransom that was demanded not by the devil but the ransom that was demanded by divine justice the sinner shall not go unpunished a holy God demands that sin be punished and the only possible way whereby sinners could be forgiven is by the substitute Jesus paying the price suffering for our sins he's our ransom he's our peace he took the dis-peace upon himself he suffered the wrath the curse of God he suffered the hell of God so that he might give to us the heaven the peace of God and it wasn't just by his birth that he became our peace the birth was only the beginning many people fail to realise this yes it is wonderful that Jesus was born but if that's all that the gospel has then it's not a gospel suited to our needs and it's not a gospel that can atone for our sins yes it's good to have Christ as our example it's good to have Christ as our teacher but we need more than that we need Christ as our peace we need Christ to suffer for us and to die for us and so to bring us to life to bring us to eternal life not just by his birth especially by his death see in this passage here

Jesus showed to them verse 20 and when he had so said he showed unto them his hands and his side he showed them the print of the nails in his hands and he said peace be unto you he showed them his suffering his pain it wasn't pointless pain and pointless suffering it was for his people to give peace and now he offers it peace Christ comes to bring peace and he offers you that peace are you rejoicing in his peace but thirdly the kind of peace he gives the Hebrew word that Jesus would have used is the word shalom commonly used even still by the Jews in greeting shalom but it's a very rich word it's very full it speaks of wholeness completeness as well as peace

Jesus says I give you shalom I give you this full rich deep real lasting peace I give you peace first peace with God and that's the most basic peace it's because we're not at peace with God that every other this peace comes in and Christ gives us peace with God by becoming our sacrifice behold behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world because there's sin God is angry Jesus takes away the sin and divine wrath is appeased propitiated God is reconciled to man peace with God he atones through his work on the cross and he takes man once more into a state where he is right with God so that we are no longer children of wrath but we are children of peace children of mercy children of salvation children of God peace with God do you have that peace?

peace in the conscience peace in the conscience peace in the conscience is an outworking of peace with God those who don't have peace with God cannot have peace in their conscience they may have it for a little time through dulling and deadening their conscience but it won't last the conscience gets stirred up again and the conscience once more begins the work of convicting and condemning but when we have peace with God we can have peace in our conscience in this chapter in chapter 20 here three times Jesus says to his disciples peace be unto you verse 19 we have it first peace be unto you then again in verse 21 peace be unto you and then later in verse 26 peace be unto you why does Jesus keep saying peace be unto you to assure and to reassure to encourage and strengthen your peace peace with God is wonderful to be justified your sins forgiven but you also need to feel that peace to enjoy that peace to be assured of it to have assurance of your salvation there are some people and they have peace with God but they're still full of doubts and fears and worries and troubles they don't have peace in their conscience don't rest content until you know that you have peace until you're able to say

[26 : 02] I know him in whom I have believed and I'm persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against the great day don't rest content until you can say for me to live is Christ and to die is gain Christ gives peace in our conscience he gives peace from the Holy Spirit notice how he breathes from the disciples verse 22 and saith unto them receive ye the Holy Ghost and what is the Spirit's work Galatians 5 tells us that the fruit of the Spirit is love joy peace peace long suffering gentleness goodness faith temperance the fruit of the

Spirit is peace that's a vital part of the Spirit's work and indeed he is the one who assures us the Spirit is the one who witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God enabling us to cry Abba Father God as our Father the Spirit is our comforter he is the one who encourages us who comes down beside us the Spirit is our teacher he enlightens our minds in the knowledge of Christ he takes up the things of Christ and reveals them unto us the Spirit opens our hearts to God's word the Spirit is our guide when we're perplexed and we don't know which way to turn when we wonder which way which path we should take the Spirit guides so that we cannot go astray peace from conscience peace from the

Holy Spirit the peace of tranquility peace of serenity peace despite your circumstances tremendous the peace that a Christian can have in the most difficult of situations I remember a certain Christian I knew in Glasgow he was going through a very difficult time but he would always quote that verse in Romans 8 all things work together for good God's sovereignty was his great comfort tranquility assurance and serenity in the midst of difficulties problems opposition that's a Christian spirit is it not it shines out so clearly on the sickbed in the face of death itself no fear do you know that peace the peace of God in your heart whatever the outward circumstances are they don't worry you because your life is in

God's hands and you trust him you know he's good and he'll do what's right remember how the psalmist puts it in Psalm 23 yea though I walk through death dark fail yet will I fear no ill for thou art with me and thy rod and staff may comfort still do you know anything of that even when the dark shadows of death are over your life and there are various times in our lives when perhaps something happens maybe we've got some strange pain and we begin to think has the time come for me to die what happens then are we filled with fears or are we filled with confidence trusting in the Lord who has given us his peace in our hearts peace even in the prospect of persecution peace because

God doesn't matter what people do in us fear not them that can destroy the body but fear him who will cast body and soul into hell no fear in illness no fear in death no fear in persecution no fear in trouble because God reigns all things work together for good God knows what he's doing God loves me God's my father and God's working out everything for the best Jesus died for me and if God spared not his own son but delivered him up for us how shall he not with him having given us him freely give us all other things too are you troubled at the weakness of your own life the poverty of your own witness the scripture says you are the salt of the earth and you are the light of the world but you fear you've lost your saltiness you fear your light has gone out or is about to remember what

[32 : 09] Jesus says here verse 21 peace be unto you as my father has sent me even so send I you peace as my father has sent me so I send you I empower you I will be with you be faithful to me and I will guarantee you that you will succeed in the calling that I have given you the trouble with us so often is that we try to carry the whole world on our shoulders we think it all depends on us and we make out ourselves to be so important in our role and we are so busy because we are so full of our own importance that

Jesus says peace be unto you trust me leave it with me be faithful and you can leave the success in God's hands it's no excuse of course we must pray we must work we must witness but at the same time we must trust and we must let his peace of God flood our hearts flushing out the fears and the worries and the stresses and the strains rejoicing because God reigns Christ has died and the elect of God will all be saved and not one of them shall perish the kind of peace that Christ gives it's rich it's deep it's many sided and it lasts forever finally for whom is this peace

Jesus came to his disciples and said unto them peace be unto you it's for the disciples and yet it's not for all the disciples it's not for Judas and it's not just for the disciples it's for all those who receive Christ receive him and you receive peace take him as he has freely offered to you and you take peace into your heart peace peace with God because the moment you trust in Christ your sins are forgiven forgiven forever take Christ and take his assurance and reassurance into your heart take Christ and he gives you his holy spirit to comfort to assure to lead to guide to fill you with tranquility in the midst of all the problems and trials and troubles of life take

Christ and you need not fear no matter what goes wrong you can leave it all in him for he says be careful for nothing be anxious be worried about nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall fill your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ are you a worrier are you worried tonight worry is sin bring it to the Lord pray to him about it leave it with him he'll sort it out cast your cares and burdens on him and he says the peace of God which passeth all understanding cannot even be understood it's so deep so rich so full the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard shall surround and protect your heart through

Jesus Christ this peace is freely offered in the gospel it's for everyone who wants it's a peace with God it's a peace with self it's a peace with your fellow men and it's yours for the asking Christ died to give us peace that was the whole point and purpose of his coming into this world his birth his life his death to give us peace and he comes and there is a sound and note of victory in his voice peace when the risen Jesus appears to his disciples the days of his humiliation are over his sufferings are behind him the cup that the father hath given me shall I not drink it yes he did drink it and now he says peace be unto you my peace

[38 : 05] I give unto you not as the world giver give I unto you the world gives and takes away but Christ gives and gives forever there is no better gift that one could receive at Christmas than peace with God and peace with yourself and peace with your world do you have it or do you despise it or are you saying one day I'll I'll get it but meanwhile you leave it there you leave it as it were when God comes with his beautiful gift and he offers it to you and you take a look at it and you look at it from one side and the other and then you walk off and you leave it what an insult when somebody gives you a gift you show appreciation for it surely and here's the greatest gift that anyone could possibly give to you and that anyone could possibly receive the gift of Christ and his peace in your heart take it don't be guilty of despising

Christ he's freely offered to you in the gospel he says to you tonight here I am if any man thirst let him come unto me and drink he says to you come to me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest I will give you peace he says to you come to me believe in me trust me experience my peace in your life flee from the wrath to come repent of your sins put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and this will indeed be a Christmas that you will remember throughout the endless ages of eternity let us pray we thank thee oh

Lord God for the way of peace we thank thee for Jesus who carried our dis-peace upon himself who suffered in our room and in our place and we thank thee that he worked out peace for us and that today Jesus is offering to every one of us here from the youngest to the oldest we thank thee that Jesus is offering us peace and we pray that every one of us would take up the offer and take the gift that God gives and take Jesus Christ into our hearts and lives and rejoice in him Lord help us to come to thee tonight and to rejoice in thee as our saviour and to experience thy peace for Jesus sake amen ■ moment