



## **A Time for Reconciliation**

During the past 6,000 years or so there have been nearly 15,000 wars that we know about. At this very moment there are 32 large and small wars going on in the world.

We human beings don't seem to be very good at living in peace with one another. We're much better at disagreeing, fighting, and feuding. A hundred years ago, popular sentiment believed that if we could just get the world educated, all the wars would vanish. But after two world wars occurred among the most educated nations on the planet, that naïve optimism has vanished. Without a transformation of the heart, education simply allows us to think up more sophisticated ways to kill one another. There are many brilliant people in prison. An educated mind does not automatically produce a peaceful heart. What the world desperately needs is reconciliation.

Reconciliation is the restoration of peace. Peace with God, peace with others, and peace in your own heart. It is the powerful miracle cure for broken lives and 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. But the spirit of reconciliation seems to be in short supply today.

To the shepherds of Bethlehem, the third announcement of the angel concerned the arrival of the "Prince of Peace." Jesus would not only teach the way to peace but would empower us to live lives of peace if we would trust him.

***Luke 2:14 – "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, good will toward men."***

Sometimes I wonder where the peace is on earth. As I watch the evening news this week I've seen multiple carjacking's where kids have been in the cars, a Cartersville woman attacks a police officer with a hammer and is shot and killed, in Japan a 27 year old stabbed 13 junior and high school students on a city bus, we all watched in horror this week as an armed man held the Panama City School Board hostage and shot at its members before turning the gun on himself. And that's just what's on the news. We all if we admit it have lost our cool sometime this holiday season maybe not to these extremes but maybe mad that someone got the last Tickle Me Elmo doll at Wal-Mart, or just as you get ready to wrap gifts you realize that your husband used the last of the tape fixing the washing machine (you might want to check the washing machine) or countless other reasons.

Peace on Earth and good will toward men sometimes seems to elude us this time of year.

I guess we have to ask ourselves is Peace on Earth really possible, or is this an unattainable fantasy? Is "good will toward men" possible when current culture conditions us to be cynical and sarcastic, to use put-downs and name calling, to demean and demonize those who believe differently?

The starting point to peace in your life is understanding the causes of conflict. There are many reasons, but here are two big ones.

The first is our natural self-centeredness. When I want everything my way, and you want it your way, then my agenda clashes with yours. If neither of us is willing to compromise out of love, sparks fly. This scenario plays out millions of times a day in relationships. Even when you love someone, it doesn't mean you're going to agree on everything.

A second common, but less understood, cause of conflict is expecting others to meet needs in our lives that only God can meet. We make demands of others instead of looking to God. So many people get married with unrealistic expectations and then divorce. No human being can fully meet all your needs. That's a job for God.

Instead of complaining and blaming others for your unmet needs, the Bible recommends asking God instead. It says:

***“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***

If we prayed as much as we complain and quarrel, we'd have a lot less to argue about and much more peace of mind.

The apostle Paul said:

***“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7***

The reality is that there will never be peace in the world until there's peace within nations. And there will never be peace in our nation until there's peace in our communities. There won't be peace in our communities until there's peace in our families. And there won't be peace in our families until there's peace in our individual lives. That won't happen until the Prince of Peace reigns in our hearts

I wanted to touch on the starting point to this peace. And of course that is Jesus

## **Jesus offers You Peace with God**

You may have never realized that if you're trying to live your way instead of God's way, you're in conflict with God. He created you to live for his purposes, but many live in rebellion against God. The Bible says this is a universal problem:

***"We're all like sheep who've wandered off and gotten lost. We've all done our own thing, gone our own way. And God has piled all our sins, everything we've done wrong, on him, on him (Jesus)." Isaiah 53:6***

It is this unspoken war with God-where each of us chooses to disobey what God has told us to do-that causes tension in your mind and fatigue in your body.

The symptoms of being at war with God are easy to spot: irritability, a quick temper, insecurity, impatience, manipulation, arrogance and boasting, holding grudges, and many other attitudes and habits that the Bible calls the "works of the flesh."

I usually don't quote "The Message" translation but I think this translation of **Galatians 5: 19-21** describes this the best.

***"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...uncontrollable addictions."***

In contrast the effects of being reconciled to God-being at peace with him- are all the qualities you'd like to have in your life. The Bible calls these the "fruit of the Spirit" **Galatians 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."***

The good news of Christmas is that Jesus came to make this change in our lives-He came to be the bridge of reconciliation between us and God.

***2 Corinthians 5:19 says:***

***"Namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation."***

How can we, an imperfect people, be reconciled to a perfect God? Well, it's not a matter of compromise or bargaining or negotiating with God. Peace comes from surrender-total, unconditional surrender to God. You admit that God is God and you are not! You give up the ridiculous notion that you know more about what's best for you and what will make you happy than your Creator does. You give up the rebellious attitude that you can pick and choose which of God's rules you'll follow and which ones you'll ignore.

Why should you surrender to God? Well, one fact is certain: there's no way you can win a war against God.

One of Job's friends said in the book of Job:

***“Stop quarreling with God! If you agree with him, you will have peace at last, and things will go well for you.”***

If we truly want Peace on Earth and Good will toward Men this Christmas it all starts with Jesus by totally surrendering our lives to Him.

***I want to end with this passage from Romans 5: 10***

***“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”***

Christmas is a time of reconciliation with God and it all begins with Jesus!