

## Enjoy God's Peace

✠ unexpected (vv.34-39)

✠ rewarding (vv.40-42)

Thanks to the Father<sup>1</sup> who gave us His Son and sends us His Spirit, 'til our work on earth is done:

Do you ever find yourself wishing for “the good old days”? Some might prefer the 1960's – Cold War with the Soviet Union, nuclear holocaust drills in school – as if hiding under your desk could protect you! Students were rioting on campuses – as if burning buildings would bring world peace. 1970's? Double digit interest rates, runaway inflation? 1980's? “Well, Pastor, at least I was almost born by then!” Good, but you probably don't remember the day our new President Ronald Reagan was shot. God spared him; the media did not. Families were breaking apart, churches struggling, immorality rampant. Every decade has been marked by distress, turmoil, medical disasters, miracles too. History proves God's proverb true: ***Do not say, “Why were the old days better than these?” For it is not wise to ask such questions.*** (Ecclesiastes 7:10 NIV84) God's people have always needed help to **Enjoy God's Peace.**

✠ unexpected (vv.34-39)

One shocking reason comes right from Jesus: ***“Do not think that I came to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”*** Does Jesus' explanation make you feel any better? ***“For I came to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies will be the members of his own household.”***

Whatever happened to ***“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward mankind”*** (Luke 2:14 EHV<sup>2</sup>) ? What about Jesus saying to His disciples after He rose from the dead: ***“Peace be with you”*** (John 20:19,21,26) ? Learn from Jesus as He explained to His disciples on the night He was betrayed: ***“Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, and do not let it be afraid.”*** (John 14:27)

Words can have different meanings in different contexts. Your “yard” is probably not a lumber yard...or a stick 3' long...or a 36x36-inch piece of cloth. The **Peace** God gives us to **Enjoy** through Jesus is totally different than what the sinful world calls, “Peace.” *Absence of war* used to be their definition. Now it's more like *always getting your way*, or *silencing your opponents in shame*. Was the world at “peace” before COVID-19? Or would you agree with one observer that warring nations have paused to avoid the pandemic? Would you say you've had more opportunities to **Enjoy God's Peace** these past few months? Sure the world's at war with itself; we can't help being affected by that. But the ***“peace of God which surpasses all understanding”*** (Philippians 4:7) comes softly to your heart and home before you realize it's there. **God's Peace** is so **unexpected** which only makes it more precious than ever.

Meanwhile, ***“Satan seeks by night and day to rob me of this treasure and take my hope of bliss away.”*** (CW 403:2) He hunts you the way the Inuit of Canada and Greenland hunt bear. They take a piece of wolf bone, sharpen both ends to a point...then freeze it in blubber. They place it on the path that bears walk, and then they wait....A bear waddles down the path, spots the blubber, and swallows it....He just killed himself. Every step, every movement, causes the sharpened bone to slash the bear's stomach. The Inuit follow the bear until he collapses from internal bleeding. Then they attack him.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Worship Supplement 747* – “There Is a Redeemer,” Melody Green, 1982, Birdwing Music.

<sup>2</sup> Unless noted otherwise, Scriptures: *Holy Bible: Evangelical Heritage Version*. (2019). Northwestern Publishing House.

<sup>3</sup> Dunn, Ronald. *Surviving Friendly Fire*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001, pp. 38f.

The enemy from hell wants to use God's good blessings to rob you of **God's Peace**. Jesus is so clear on this: *"Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."* Summary: Anyone who insists on his way or no way is destroying himself with every step he takes. God commands us, *"Love your enemies"* with that self-sacrificing, unconditional *agape*-love by which God loved us first, sending His own Son to be our Savior. But here Jesus uses a different word for "love" which means something more like *affection, companionship, liking* someone. To give your heart to anyone, even family, instead of God is to set up an idol in your heart. God wants to plant His **Peace** in Jesus for you to **Enjoy**. **God's Peace** is **unexpected** because by the forgiveness of all your sins the war with God is ended. **God's Peace** cost the blood Jesus shed for you, for me, for all. **Unexpected** and...

### † rewarding (vv.40-42)

At first these last verses might make you uncomfortable. Jesus says, *"Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward. Whoever receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. Whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink because he is my disciple—Amen I tell you—he will never lose his reward."*

Under the glaring heat lamp of God's Law, we must all admit we deserve nothing but eternal wrath and punishment from God. Worrying about COVID-19, disrespecting God's representative in government and church, failing to trust God's promises – all make us cry out with the Lord's Apostle Paul, *"What a miserable wretch I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"* (Romans 7:24f) God says that we are by nature *"dead in [our] trespasses and sins."* (Ephesians 2:1) So, no way can we earn any reward from God. Even when it comes to choosing, Jesus says, *"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will endure, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name."* (John 15:16)

God has chosen to proclaim His **Peace** through sinful pastors. *"We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."* (2 Corinthians 4:7 NIV84) Jesus says, *"Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of God."* (Matthew 18:3 NIV84) **Receive God's Peace** as simply as a child believing God's Word. **Receive God's Peace** as effortlessly as taking an infant in your arms. Nestle in the arms of your heavenly Father and there **Enjoy God's Peace**.

God's got a way of soothing your soul with spiritual sundae's like your favorite malt shop or custard stand. You'd be grateful for some ice cream. God adds chocolate syrup, whipped cream, a cherry on top. And who can resist those awesome pecans you can't get anywhere else?

Like a refreshing sundae, to *"receive a righteous man because he is a righteous man"* is like grabbing *"a righteous man's reward."* One of your *little ones* asks so politely, "May I have some water, please?" Remember Jesus' **rewarding** promise: *"Whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink because he is my disciple..."* "Ah, but Jesus, I don't deserve this kindness from you!" Jesus puts a cherry on top as He finishes, *"Amen I tell you—[you] will never lose [your] reward."*

Don't fall into the ruts of wishing for yesterday. Don't worry about tomorrow. Receive **God's Peace** through His preachers faithfully proclaiming God's Word by the last and greatest Prophet, God's Son Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 1:1-3) Grab *"a righteous man's reward"* by **receiving** your fellow Christians who also have received God's gift of righteousness by faith in Jesus. **God's Peace** – **Enjoy!** Amen.