

MAKING PEACE

AN ADVENT TEACHING SERIES . 2009



questions for reflection

series: "Making Peace"

Peace is a word thrown around casually and without much understanding. It is simultaneously a cause, the absence of conflict, a desired state of mind, and the hopeful resting place of those deceased. But the advent (arrival) of Jesus offers us peace in place of enmity – peace with God, peace with each other, and peace within our self. Therefore as Christ followers, what does it look like to follow Jesus by making peace in our daily rhythms, lives, and world?

part 3:

"Making Peace on Earth"

by Ben Peters on Tuesday December 15, 2009

"The church is Peacemaking."

The season of Advent is expressed in terms of expectation and anticipation. However, the anticipation of the Messiah throughout the Old Testament was not in connection with the remembrance of sins. Rather, it was in the context of oppression and injustice, the longing for redemption, from the systemic evil of the world.

- How does this affect how you will celebrate both Advent and Christmas?
- How is this related to Peacemaking?

God seeks to reconcile people, communities, and systems back to him. The church then, seeks to partner with God in his redemptive movements throughout the cosmos. It's not just about you or TNL, it is also about the cries of the oppressed, the marginalized, the exploited; and God, through the church, reconciling back to him the systems that allow these depravities to happen.

- Does this change your understanding of salvation and relationship?
If so, how?
If not, why not?
- What are ways that you can partner with God in righting systemic injustice?

Romans 12:14-21

v.14: How can we honestly seek to bless those who are literally doing us harm?

v.15: The idea here is believers should affirm the image of God (the Imago Dei) in the "other." Essentially, we should enter into the suffering of the "other" via honest relationship.

- What does it mean to affirm the image of God in your enemy, someone who hates you?

v.16: To associate with the lowly is to be with the poor. This speaks to being intentional in where we live—purposefully living among and blessing the poor, the orphan, and the widow.

- Do you see yourself associating with the poor in your life?
- In what ways are removing ourselves from the poor?

vv.17-20: "As far as it depends on you...!" This means no matter what someone else is doing to you, you will do everything in your power to live at peace with them. It means you provide for them in their hate and violence, always seeking redemption and reconciliation.

- What are redemptive actions?
- Are there any redemptive actions that you need to make in your community?
How?

v.21: The culminating command is to repay evil with acts of good. This means actively making peace in your community and the world, which stems from a new reality, from both embodying and recognizing the Imago Dei.

- Where have you failed in making new realities?
- Where have you forgotten to recognize the image of God in the "other?"
- What steps can you take to breath new realities into our world?

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part 2:

"Making Peace in Life"

by Brian Gray on Tuesday December 9, 2009

"Who is the WE?"

- What is your governing identity?
Is your governing identity the image of God in you or is it being an American, father, wife, student, consumer, single, academic, artist, etc.?
- What happens when your governing identity, and ours as a community, is seen in terms of Imago Dei?
- What happens when your governing identity, and ours as a community, is seen in terms of being Americans?
In each case, how will we respond to systemic evil?

Ben suggested a few ways in which we can begin to be the social ethic needed to achieve peace making in our world:

- **Seek Transformation:** Where does your life need to be transformed so that you can embody the image of God in you, and partner with God in his transformation of the world?
- **Become Aware:** How are you becoming increasingly aware of the suffering that is going on around you? What are you doing to meet the needs of those who suffer?
- **Evaluate How You Live:** In the midst of another consumer filled Christmas season, what can you do to live more modestly? How is this directly tied to peacemaking?
- **Vocational Peacemaking:** In your vocation how can you embody the peace of God? How can you actively pursue peace in your community? How can you meet the needs of the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed in your career?
- **Partner with TNL:** Are you active in the peacemaking ways of TNL? If not, why? How can you get more actively involved with what TNL is doing across the globe to bring peace to millions of people?

Further resources:

- Rob Bell's, Jesus Came to Save Christians
- Claiborne, Shane and Chris Haw. Jesus for President: Politics for Ordinary Radicals.
- McLaren, Brian D. Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope.
- Sider, Ronald J. Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger.

Advanced resources:

- Brimlow, Robert W. What About Hitler?: Wrestling With Jesus' Call to Nonviolence in an Evil World.
- Clough, David and Brian Stiltner. Faith and Force: A Christian Debate About War.
- Yoder, John Howard. The Politics of Jesus, 2nd ed.

