

He Is Our Peace
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March 28, 2021 - Palm Sunday

Lazarus¹ was raised from the dead six days before the crucifixion, which makes this miracle the opening event of Passion Week. I can imagine that the news of this astonishing event, an initial victorious strike (a beachhead, filled with foreshadowing of Jesus' imminent death) by Jesus on the dominion of death, really ramped up the passions of the people and triggered the resolve of Caiaphas, the high priest, and the Jewish leadership to have Jesus executed. Last week, with the healing of Bartimaeus, we were in the vicinity of new Jericho and Jesus is making his way towards Jerusalem. His stop in Bethany, four days after Lazarus had been interred, precedes Good Friday. The impact of this miracle is enormous—dramatic—there is a huge groundswell of people converting to Christ, embracing him as **the consolation of Israel, the Messiah, or the Promised One (Son of David, Seed of Abraham, King of Israel)**. The charge of sedition was rooted in this last title—as king he would be in conflict with Caesar. The miracle is only recorded in John and as that is the case, one might wonder why it wasn't mentioned in Matthew, Mark and Luke/Acts. And one explanation for that omission, that rings true, is not that it didn't happen, but rather the significance of the event was undervalued at the time, being overshadowed by the sequence of events that followed it—namely Christ's passion.

As Jesus Christ approached the city, about to make his triumphal entry—triumphal because of his coronation and due to the popular response to his divine power (mighty works, healing the blind, raising a man four days dead), Jesus said, **Would that you, even now, had known this day the things that make for peace!** By which I suggest he was referencing himself, and the peace that emits from being **in Christ** (from knowing him!). **But now they are hidden from your eyes.** (Some of those things would include his atoning death and vindication by resurrection and they would come into view within days . . . and subsequently, due to their rejection of him, after the siege and sacking of Jerusalem, would come into view later. Sooner or later you are going to know who I am—

¹ Lazarus' later life (thirty years or so) is celebrated in early church tradition (mostly Eastern Orthodox) by which, it is reputed, that he and his sisters, due to death threats, fled Palestine for Cyprus. This must have been quite early which complicates the tradition that Lazarus was appointed Bishop of Kition (Larnaka) by the Apostle Paul (45 AD)—some ten years after the resurrection! However, if true, this explains the presence of a Christian witness in Cyprus as early as 33 AD—allowing time for the church plant in Antioch to have been accomplished by Gentile prophets and teachers. In 890 a tomb was discovered in Larnaka, with the inscription, "Lazarus, friend of Jesus, and the remains were removed (898) to Constantinople. Some of the relics were later taken (1204AD) to Marseille (in France) where Lazarus is reputed to have preached to the Gauls—and he was bishop there. However in 1972, during renovations to the church in Larnaka, a marble sarcophagus was discovered under the altar and those remains were ascribed to Lazarus

eventually, you will bow your knees and declare my worship!—and that will make all the difference. ***I will be your peace!***

Jesus' lament here **If only you had known even today, the things that make for peace** (Luke 19:42) is linked to Isaiah 40:1-2, 9b-11:

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

Verse 5: **And the glory of God shall be revealed** (which is precisely the promise Jesus made to Martha in John 11:40: **Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?**) . . . and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Verses 9b-11: **O Jerusalem, herald of good news, lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!"** (That would be **Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!** That would be Jesus, who has done **mighty works(!)** in the name of the Lord: **Father, I thank you that you have heard me . . . I said this on behalf of the people standing around** who were unbelieving Jews who had come to console Mary and Martha over the death of their brother! Some of whom were deeply suspicious of Jesus and misled about his identity and person.) v.10 **Behold, the Lord Good comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.** v. 11 **He will tend his sheep like a shepherd, he will carry the lambs in his arms** (the children saluting his entry(?!) for whom he will shortly lay down his life), **he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those what are with young.**

And Isaiah 42:1-4:

Behold, my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights (Jesus!); **I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.** v. 2 **He will not cry aloud, or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street;** v. 3 **a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.** (If you believe . . . you will see, Martha.) v.4 **He will not grow faint or discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.** The justice that Jesus brings forth by faith will issue in peace!

This truth comports with Exodus 18. Perhaps you will recall the administration of justice described in that context: v. 15 **Because the people come to me**

to inquire of God, v. 16 when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide (execute justice) . . . I make them know the statutes of God and his laws.

Justice comes by the application of the Word of God
to our circumstances.

Jethro advised the appointment of moral, able, and un-bribe-able men to serve under him in this work. V. 23 **If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people will go to their place in peace.**

Let's explore Isaiah 42:1 a little further. **He will bring forth justice to the nations.** How does this fit with: **He is our peace?** Or, for that matter, with **Christ in you, the hope of Glory?**

First, we begin with the peace established between Jew and Gentile. That's the end of racism piece I brought up two Sundays ago. **For He Himself is our Peace Who has made us (all the races) one And has broken down in his flesh, the diving wall of hostility . . . that He might create in Himself, one new man instead of two! And might reconcile us both to God . . . and to one another . . . now we are become fellow citizens with the saints, members of the household of God.** Since then I have been confirmed in my understanding of Ephesians 2:13-22 because the same doctrine also appears in Galatians 3:26-29: **for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek(Gentile), there is neither slave or free, there is neither male, or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's , then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.** And this doctrine also undergirds the cosmic vision in Colossians 1:19: **For in Him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether in earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who were once alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him (God the Father) if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the Gospel that you heard . . .**

It is incumbent upon me to remind us: the real motivation behind the anger and violence of our day is human wickedness. That is the cause of the enmity and the hostility—and that is what Christ has come to remove. It is a mark of the truly converted that you possess the Spirit, and that you avoid behaving angrily, violently, murdering one another—as if Christ has not come and removed the enmity! Do not hesitate to live according to the truth: **the dividing wall of hostility is down . . . all who are in Christ are new creatures, yes, one new race, sons of Abraham, co-heirs with Christ.** A hearty love of others has displaced the hatred and the reason for strife. Brothers, love one another!

Secondly, after inter-racial peace, international peace is launched. Wars are rooted in **the lusts of the flesh** and ***embedded in desperately wicked hearts*** not in anything Christ taught, or said! Where Christians are true to their faith, the frequency of war is reduced by the prevalence of peace. *Sin slaying and lusts subdued! He is our peace.* He does make our peace; or bring our peace . . . **he is our peace!**

- Our good works are not our peace.
- We cannot be peace unto ourselves.
- Our repentance, tears and prayers cannot bring us peace.

None of these things can be the basis of our
consolation, comfort, or peace.

- Not our communion with God.
- Not our high and holy experiences.
- Not our exceptional ability, or glorious service.
- Not our works, our doings, *howsoever godly and dedicated.*

“Put all such things you have done and can do, into the scale, Believer, and when you they are all there—kick them out again—they are not worthy a single ounce of weight in your soul’s salvation” Tie up all the bad works and all the good works in one bundle—“they are wonderfully alike—and throw them all overboard, every one of them, and floating to Glory on the plane of Free Grace in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, for **He is our peace.**” (CHS)

“Remember this and you will be less frequently
depressed and distressed! . . .

Do you trust in Christ? . . . Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his promise cannot!” God cannot lie and his word is pledged to bring you safely home at last. . . If, in the teeth of all your sins, you still believe in Christ—believe over the head of all your shortcomings and your negligence—then your belief will breed love and admiration! . . . Love is the mainspring of the gracious life . . . **he is our peace.** Keep to it—he is my peace—not myself, nor anything that is in me, but Christ Jesus alone!” (Sermon #3386, CHS, 1868, pp. 6-7)

Thirdly, I have peace by virtue of His Person. He is God. He is Almighty. As Man he sympathizes with me, as God he atones for me.

On 295 headed into Portland, we drive past some salt flats. Huge expanses of salt grass and silty sand, creased by streamlets and rivulets. Imagine these muddy creeks to be all our sins of unbelief, neglect, lack of love and so forth wherein we have failed. ***Yet Christ has not failed.*** He has succeeded and fulfilled. He has countered, nullified, neutralized, detoxified, cleansed, absolved them all in the flood, the overwhelming tide of his forgiving love. The whole topography of our sin is covered, leaving none of it in view! All our mud, bones and debris(!) covered by the glorious merit of our Savior—a shining sea!

Fourthly, we have peace by his blood, his precious cleansing, atoning blood. Fix your eyes upon the cross, upon the immense sacrifice offered there. Then

ponder two things: where would there be *sinner great enough* to demand such an act? And then wonder where could there be *merit great enough* to remove all this sin? Whether you look at sinners, or at the Savior, you arrive at the same glorious conclusion: how splendid, how wonderful, how marvelous! He is ever loving us, ever pleading for us within the veil, ever running to our defense . . . the fullness of his love never abating. So we have peace by everything acquired by him through the shedding of this blood! Our purchase price, his sacrifice.

He is our peace. Our present peace and our forever peace. The more we learn of his character, and the deeper we study his “work,” the fuller, vaster and deeper will be our present peace. Those who learn they cannot obtain peace anywhere else come to Him . . . He is our safe port, our destination. Drop anchor in him! As our salvation is present, as the riches we enjoy in Him are present, let the peace which surpasses understanding presently be ours to have and to hold from this day forward and even forever more.

Amen