

The Prince of Peace: “Trust Me”

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[0 : 0 0] So Merry Christmas, everyone. It's great to see you here today. Oh, thank you. Yes. It's great to see all of you here today. If you've been with us the past few weeks, you'll know that this is the verse that we've been talking through, looking at the different names of Jesus, the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and today we're on to Prince of Peace. And if you have looked at the news this week, this might seem like a weird topic to talk about. Because the news headlines in the world this week include terror attacks in Berlin, Russian ambassador murdered in Turkey, complaints about China militarizing the South China Sea, Donald Trump putting tension on US-China relations before he even takes office, more violence in Aleppo. The list could go on and on and on. I even saw an article this week about a man who murdered his stepmother because she was cheering for a sports team and he felt like she was rubbing it into his father. He got very angry and killed her. We live in a world that is full of violence, that is full of discord, and where peace seems to be the furthest thing from reality for so many of us. And it's not just something on the world scale. It's something on an individual level too. I've talked to numerous friends this week who are like, well, I was planning to have a little bit of a vacation, a holiday, a break, and then work. And I have to work through the holiday. I have to,

I'm just overwhelmed with work. I can't, I can't do it all and have a break right now. I have other friends who are getting hard times from their family because of where they're choosing to spend Christmas, not with that part of the family. And then I'm sure there are probably people in here, hopefully not, but possibly some children or spouses or friends in here who are a little bit upset at each other because of certain gifts that weren't included under the tree this morning.

Or maybe even a spouse who's upset because of the amount of money that was spent on the gifts that were under the tree this morning. We live in a world full of tension, full of strife. And we come here to talk about Jesus and about peace. And it can feel like, is this just a sick joke? Is peace possible? But I'm here today to tell you, yes. Yes, peace is possible because Jesus came as our Prince of Peace. And he offers each and every one of us a peace that cannot be found anywhere else. And the reason that he's able to be our ultimate hope for peace is because our problems go way deeper than we realize. So I have a question. I'm going to throw it out there. And I think if we took a poll of everyone in here, we'd get at least dozens of different answers. But I want you to think about how you would answer this question. What is the biggest problem in the world right now? And how do we solve it?

Good job. You're way ahead of the game. So I think if we were to go around, there are lots of different answers that we could get. But there are probably a few that would be a little bit more prevalent. Maybe some people would say it's education.

That we need more schools. We need better schools. If we could just educate the world, then everything would be okay. Other people might say the biggest problem is war. If we could just get rid of the weapons, stop the fighting, bring peace, we'd be good. Other people might say it's overpopulation.

[3 : 51] There's just not enough resources to go around. We need to either increase our resources or lower the population and everything's going to be okay. But I think our problems run deeper than this.

I think our problems go deeper than simply education, war, overpopulation. These things, maybe they see parts of the problem and address it, but they miss the heart of the problem.

See, I'm going to throw out there for your consideration that the biggest problem in the world today, the cause of all of these problems is selfishness.

And here's where I'm coming from. If you think that education is the biggest need in the world today, I agree with you. Education can fix a lot of things. But the 2008 financial crisis was not caused by a lack of education. It was caused by a bunch of very highly educated people manipulating a system for their own gain at the expense of the rest of the system.

Education would not have fixed the 2008 financial crisis. There's something deeper going on in the world. If you think that the problem is war, what causes war? At the core, it's that they have something that I don't have and I want it from them. And they're not going to give it to me, so I'm going to go take it by force. It could be land, it could be resources, it could be basic human rights.

[5 : 21] But at the core of war is someone has something that someone else doesn't have, and we're going to take it by force because we want it. Or if you say overpopulation, we need either less people or more resources, think about this.

The world produces enough food to feed 10 billion people, which is far more people than we have on the planet. In fact, the world produces enough food that we could feed every person on the planet a 2,800 calorie diet every day.

And yet there are still billions of people starving on the planet. Because what happens is food gets wasted.

The UN says that if one quarter of the food lost or wasted on Earth each year was saved, we could feed 870 million people with that food.

Which means that if we took all the food thrown out in the world every year, we could feed 3 billion people with it. There's not a lack of resources.

[6 : 30] The problem is people like me, who go to the grocery store on the weekend and stock up their fridge with food for the coming week and then go eat out multiple times during the week and get to the end of the week and realize, oh, all the food I put in my fridge at the start of the week has gone bad, it needs to go in the trash.

Can anyone relate to that? The problem is people like me who stockpile resources until they rot and then throw them out rather than being generous.

The problem is selfishness. And as we go throughout each different topic, we can see how our selfishness brings these problems into the world.

And the problem with selfishness is it's not an easy fix. Because if I go to try and fix your selfishness, any attempts at me fixing your selfishness are going to be shaped by my selfishness.

And any of your attempts to fix my selfishness are going to be shaped by your selfishness. We can't have a simple, easy, band-aid solution to the problem of selfishness.

[7 : 36] No, we need someone from outside the situation to step in to bring us our solution. And that is why Jesus is, as one of the very brilliant kids pointed out earlier, the solution to this problem.

See, the Bible tells us that each of us was created for a relationship with God. And that in this relationship with God, we were supposed to find perfect joy, perfect peace and contentment, perfect love.

And each of us has a longing in our hearts for these things that we were created to experience. And yet, as the Bible story continues, we see that each of us rebels against God.

Each of us forfeits our opportunity to have this relationship. And as a result, we forfeit the benefits that come out of this relationship. We forfeit perfect peace.

We forfeit perfect love. We forfeit perfect joy and contentment. But each of us still has a craving and a longing inside our hearts for all of these things.

[8 : 51] And because we've severed ourselves from the true source of them, we grasp for other things that we believe can give us hope, joy, peace, love.

We say, I think that money is going to buy me happiness. And so we stockpile all the money that we can, even if it comes at the expense of others, because we want it.

We want to get back to what we were created for. We think that power will bring us this peace and contentment. So we work our way up the corporate ladder and we trample other people under our feet if they get in our way, because we're craving the security that we're supposed to find only in a relationship with God.

And no matter how hard we try, no matter how much we grasp, we always come up empty. And when Jesus came to the earth, when Jesus was born in a manger, he came as God in human form, which is mind-boggling if you think about it, that the creator of the universe who spoke the universe into existence would step into the creation that he had made as one of the creatures to live a life among them.

But he did it because of his love for us. He came down, and the Bible tells us that Jesus was the only one ever to live the perfect life that we were supposed to live, to live in this perfect relationship with God.

[10 : 33] And at the end of his life, they killed him. And the Bible says that when they killed him, that the penalty that we owe for our rebellion against God was paid by him on our behalf, which makes a new relationship with God possible for each and every one of us.

And this is very good news for us because this is the only way that this problem of selfishness in our hearts can be healed, the only way that we can have a path towards true peace.

Because as long as my deepest need for this relationship with God and for the peace and love and security and joy and hope that come from it, as long as this need is not met, I'm going to grasp for it in anything that I think can possibly sustain me.

But once this need is met, then I have the ability and freedom to respond with love and patience to others when they bother me.

I have the responsibility, or I have, yes, the responsibility, but also the ability to forego my rights for the sake of other people. Peace with God that we get through Jesus leads to peace with others, and it's the only true path to peace.

[11 : 58] Which brings us to one of the most important things that I want to talk about today about Jesus coming, the fact, as we discussed with the kids, that Jesus came for us.

Jesus wasn't just born in a manger. Jesus was born in a manger for us. You know, I think it's easy sometimes in the world today to talk about peace because it's such a big, broad topic that it's easy to talk about it at arm's length and not have to get involved in anything because there's such a big problem, there's nothing we could ever do about it.

But Jesus coming as the prince of peace for us tells us that what he did and what he calls us to in the cause of peace does involve us, and we can't talk about it at arm's length anymore.

We have to respond. You know, this, the past couple days, my wife and I have had gifts under the tree for each other, and as long as the gift was wrapped up underneath the tree, it didn't require any type of response.

We just look at it and remain neutral because it could be something awesome and it could not be. But this morning, we went and we opened those gifts. And the moment that the gift is opened, you can't remain neutral to it anymore.

[13 : 11] If you just look at the gift that your wife gives you and you're like, oh, I'm remaining neutral. That's rejecting the gift. That's saying, I don't appreciate your gift.

I cannot respond with a smile or a thank you. I'm rejecting it. As soon as a gift is given, we have to respond to it. Not responding is no longer an option.

And what we see when it comes to Jesus is that he has been given to us. That's what Christmas is about. Jesus has been given to us as this perfect prince of peace.

And we now need to respond. Every single one of us, whether you're a Christian or not, we need to respond to this gift. Neutrality is no longer an option.

Neutrality is a form of rejection. So if you're here today and you have never trusted in Jesus before to be your prince of peace, to give you this relationship with God, my question for you is, will you trust him today?

[14 : 21] Will you receive this gift? Will you have this new relationship with God? And if you are here and you're like, I don't know what this guy is talking about, please come find me or Chris or Jeremy or someone around you after the service and ask us more about it because we would love to talk to you.

But what we see from the fact that Jesus is the prince of peace is that rejecting him is choosing to hold on to our strife, to our selfishness, to the things inside our hearts that lead to these bigger problems in the world.

And trusting in Jesus, accepting this gift of him as the prince of peace is taking a step towards contributing to peace in the world.

If you're here today and you are a Christian, if you have trusted in Jesus before, you also have a choice. Are you going to take Jesus and just sort of put him on a shelf that you can look at but not really have to have it interact with your life?

Or are you going to take this message and this truth about Jesus and let it shape the way that you live? Because Jesus came to bring peace on earth.

[15 : 43] If you look at the life that he lived, he was concerned about our relationship with God and peace in that relationship. He was also very concerned about peace among people on the earth.

He came healing. He came restoring relationships and people. And he came to bring peace on the earth.

And he said, blessed are the peacemakers because he expects that if we trust in him, if we are following him, we will be people contributing to the peace of our world. So if you are a Christian here today, how will you respond to this prince of peace?

Are you going to still feel the need to hold on to what you think can get you satisfaction apart from him? Or are you going to place your hope in him and respond with selflessness?

Because each of us comes into conflict every single day. Each of us has an opportunity to respond with selfishness and grasping for control, for power, for money, for whatever it is that we want.

[16 : 54] Or to respond with love, with patience, with joy. But we're only going to respond with love, patience, and joy if we know the prince of peace and have a relationship with him.

So how will you respond to this gift today? I encourage you to accept this gift that God is offering to you and to trust in Jesus as your prince of peace.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for Christmas. We thank you for this amazing gift that you have given to us for the fact that your son came as one of us to rescue us, to set us free from our selfishness, to set us free from the things that cause so many problems in the world.

We thank you that you have given us this prince of peace who is the path to true peace with you and with each other. We pray that today that we would accept this gift, that we would trust in him, that we would, through him, be able to love and serve one another.

In Jesus' name, amen.