

Welcome and notices

Call to worship

27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14: 27 NIV)

Opening prayer

Lord, I come before you ready to pour out my worries, anxieties, and fears at Your feet. I am claiming and declaring Your promises for blessings of peace and strength over my life. Bring peace into my soul that passes all worldly understanding and make me a light for others to see Your strength. Amen

Opening song: No longer slave/I am a child of God

<https://youtu.be/PQqkXg-C9jo>

You unravel me
With a melody
You surround me with a song
Of deliverance
From my enemies
'Til all my fears are gone

I'm no longer a slave to fear
I am a child of God
I'm no longer a slave to fear
I am a child of God

From my mother's womb
You have chosen me
Love has called my name
I've been born again
Into Your family
Your blood flows through my veins

I'm no longer a slave to fear
I am a child of God

I'm no longer a slave to fear
I am a child of God

I'm no longer a slave to fear
I am a child of God
I'm no longer a slave to fear
I am a child of God

I am surrounded
By the arms of the Father

I am surrounded
By songs of deliverance

We've been liberated
From our bondage

We're the sons and the daughters
Let us sing our freedom

Ooh, ooh
Ooh, ooh

You split the sea
So, I could walk right through it
My fears are drowned in perfect love
You rescued me
So, I could stand and say
I am a child of God

You split the sea
So, I could walk right through it
My fears are drowned in perfect love
You rescued me
So, I could stand and say
I am a child of God
I am a child of God
Yes, I am a child of God

Confession

Christ himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds we

have been healed. So let us acknowledge our failure and disobedience and return to the Lord with penitence and faith.

Shall we say together:

**Heavenly Father,
we praise you for adopting us as your
children and making us heirs of eternal
life.**

**In your mercy you have washed us from
our sins and made us clean in your sight.
Yet we still fail to love you as we should
and serve you as we ought.**

**Forgive us our sins and renew us by your
grace, that we may continue to grow as
members of Christ, in whom alone is our
salvation. Amen.**

Those who are in Christ are a new creation:
everything old has passed away, see,
everything has become new!
All this is from God with whom we have
been reconciled through Christ. (2 Cor.
5:17-18)

Thanks be to God!

Offertory prayer

**Generous God,
creator, redeemer, sustainer,
at your table we present this money,
symbol of the work you have given us to
do, use it, use us, in the service of your
world to the glory of your name.
Amen.**

Reading: Matthew 5: 9

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. (NIV)

“You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you

discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family. (The Message)

“Blessed [spiritually calm with life-joy in God’s favour] are the makers and maintainers of peace, for they will [express His character and] be called the sons of God. (AMP)

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Reflection

Those three versions I hope give you a feel for where this reflection is going. There are two concepts I want us to look at this morning, firstly peace makers and secondly children of God. Let me repeat something people criticised me for when I was writing guidance and training material and that was to start by saying what it is not as this most quickly delineates the boundaries. Peace makers does not imply an absence of conflict, it is not pacifism or inactivity, it is not appeasement it is not peace at any price you simply cannot please all of the people all of the time and remain true to Christ’s teachings. Think of Christ overturning the tables in the temple in Jerusalem. It is not an avoidance of strife, just think about Jonah when he tried to avoid the strife of telling the people of Nineveh that God wasn’t pleased with them. Nor is it an accommodation simply glossing over things and pretending everything is all right and taking the easy way out.

If it is none of those things, what is it? Clearly there are two parts to the word peace and maker. Middle eastern greetings are often in the form of Shalom in much the same way we might say hello

to people. Sometimes when we say hello it just means just hello, hi other times it conveys much more hello – I'm pleased to see you, it's a been while, how are you, what's been happening in your life. Shalom, perhaps even more so than hello, goes further than the simple word or just being peace or peace be with you. What it comes down to is that they are blessing you saying I wish for you the full presence, blessing, prosperity, and peace of the Lord. Which resonates with the blessing that Moses was given by God in Numbers 6: 24 – 26, 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' Which we occasionally use to this day. Shalom has a sense of completeness, harmony, soundness, and welfare. To achieve that there is also a sense of making amends where necessary. If you look in Exodus you will see many proscribed acts of restitution. At the heart of peace is a sense of justice, perhaps not too surprising as the bible has at its heart justice and righteousness. Where those two virtues are found there too will we also find peace and harmony. Therefore, peacemakers will strive for justice and righteousness for in doing so they will achieve peace.

Does this mean we all need to be peace makers? Yes, but not perhaps in the sense of say the UN peace keeping forces that have operated in various trouble spots around the world. Nor are we all called to become special envoys like Terry Waite in seeking to negotiate the just release of hostages in Lebanon which cost him nearly 5 years (1736 days) of his life held in captivity. So, peace making may not be cost free but it is something we are all

called to. The good news not all are called to don the blue helmet or jeopardise their own freedom.

Christ came so that there might be peace between man and God that the right relationship could be restored since Christ made the necessary restitution through his sacrifice on the cross on our behalf. Strange to think that the central act in Christ's mission was one of extreme barbarism and brutality that of crucifixion yet also at the heart of his mission was peace and reconciliation through that act of violence.

The second part is make this is an action word it requires doing something. Christ did not say blessed are those who long for peace, hope for peace, wish for peace but rather blessed are those who make peace they actively seek to make peace. Our salvation did not come about by accident but through the action of God doing something. So, what do we need to do in any situation is to take action not leave it to happenstance, if we are in dispute with someone, we can be a peace maker by firstly talking to God about the situation, talking to the person as we told in Matthew 18: 15, and not mouthing-off about the other person? However, we cannot make peace in our relationships if we have not received God's grace and have peace in him.

William Barclay put it this way, They (the peacemakers) are the people who produce right relationships in every sphere of life. Right being shorthand for just, righteous, etc as we discussed earlier. What are these relationships and spheres of life?

1. Peace with God

Because of sin, because of our self-centred life there is no amount of good works that can restore our relationship with God. But the separation we see in Ephesians 2: 13 has been bridged by Christ's sacrifice on the cross bringing us close to and reconciling us with God.

2. Peace with others

We are called to be united in one accord through the bonds of peace, through the reconciliation that Christ brought us. We need to be less focussed on our own needs and desires and more united behind doing what God wants us to do for his kingdom's sake. After Pentecost, the gift of the Holy Spirit should bear fruits of love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. As we read in Galatians 5: 22-23, so we are not alone or just reliant on our own strength in seeking peace with others.

We are required to be active in seeking peace. Later in Matthew 5: 23 – 24, we can see that we need to be reconciled with our brother or sister before we approach God. God does not want our gift if we are not first reconciled with our brother or sister. Peace-making is not easy in his letter to the Romans Paul recognises this when he says in 12: 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Recognising that there are limits which might bring us into conflict. Some people prefer to pick fights, find faults but these are not the defining characteristics of a Christian.

One thing we can do to not cause strife is not to gossip about each other. Mark mentioned it last week when looking at

the pure in heart and being consistent, does our outward behaviour match what we profess. And I need to return to again in relation to peace makers to ask the question is gossiping consistent with being a peace maker? I did like an old Spanish saying I came across, Whoever gossips to you will gossip about or of you. Proverbs 16:28 says a dishonest man spreads strife and whisper separates close friends. This is the exact opposite of being a peacemaker this is being a mischief-maker. Gossiping is not consistent with being a peace maker it is malicious, usually dishonest and is the cause of strife between people and hence something to be avoided.

There may be occasion when as peace makers we make trouble to achieve justice and hence peace. I am sure the slave owners thought that William Wilberforce was a troublemaker when he was campaigning for justice and an end to slavery. This is not saying he was a troublemaker he undoubtedly cause disruption but did so to achieve justice and peace. Unlike some out and out troublemakers who cause trouble purely for troubles sake.

We read of cyber bullying or bullying in the workplace or at school and only have to recall the hate directed at three England players who failed to score in the Euro penalty shoot out to see it runs deep in society. So much so that the home secretary found guilty of bullying her staff gets to keep her job because she apologised so nicely to the prime minister. What example does that set? Do we bully people or are we just being assertive? Our behaviour is important it affects others.

Do we side with the bullies for a quiet life or do we seek peace and justice? And churches are not immune to strife and conflict. But that is not what we are called to. Take for example this from 1 Peter 3: 8 – 12 and I am using The Message here, Summing up: Be agreeable, be sympathetic, be loving, be compassionate, be humble. That goes for all of you, no exceptions. No retaliation. No sharp-tongued sarcasm. Instead, bless—that's your job, to bless. You'll be a blessing and also get a blessing. A peacemaker is the one who works for reconciliation and harmony between fellow believers.

3. Peace within ourselves

There is a lot of talk nowadays about work life balance. That in this high-pressure world we need time to de-compress. Right from the get-go God's plan for us was a work life balance, Christ's plan for us is a work life balance. That after all is why we are instructed to rest, to be at peace on the sabbath, if at no other time. We are a new creation made whole and complete through Christ when trials come our way, as they most certainly will, he is our rock and our foundation, we are not alone. Christ reminded the disciples that thought they might desert him, God the father would not. In John 16: 32 - 33 we read, A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. Words to hold on to as we come out of the pandemic.

The second phrase is son or children of God. which made me recall the clauses often added to legal documents which says, "Words in singular mean and include the plural and vice versa. Words in the masculine mean and include the feminine and vice versa." Hence sons being translated as children and that naturally includes us all. Families often share obvious visible characteristics such as pattern baldness, large noses or a Mallen streak in the Catherine Cookson story about a family having hereditary "white forelock" or Poliosis. So, if we share Christ's name, and his mission then we should exhibit the same family characteristics he does. Reconciliation is at the heart of Christ's mission, so peace and harmony is at the heart of his mission, hard I know when you have or have had teenage children. But it is the family characteristic that is recognisable and shows membership of God's family just as the white forelock does in The Mallen Streak.

Why do I say peace is a family trait? Well because

- The messianic prediction of Isaiah in say ch9 v 6 that he would be called the Prince of Peace which we looked at when we studied the names of Jesus, mighty counsellor, etc the last but not the least was Prince of Peace
- At his birth, the angels announced his birth saying, Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.
- After forgiving peoples sins Jesus often said go in peace and sin no more

- After washing the disciples' feet in the upper room and telling them what is about to happen Jesus comforts them saying, Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14: 27)
- And of course, we share the peace with each other as we will be doing in a few minutes time.

That's why I see peace, that is those right relationships that William Barclay talked about, as being, like the letters running through a stick of seaside rock, something that runs all the way through Jesus' mission, a mission given to him by the father and now passed on to us his followers. Jesus' life was saturated with his mission that is the model we have been set to follow. To be recognised as his followers our lives need to express this hallmark of being a member of Christ's family, to be a peacemaker. Our behaviour at work, rest or play is how the world sees us and judges us. We need to ask ourselves, "Does our behaviour reflect the love, grace, and care that Jesus showed us? In our relationships with others do we show this characteristic of Christ's teaching and mission. Jesus came to wash away our sin, wash away our fears of death and give us the promise of life eternal. To follow him means we need to seek those right relationships in all aspects of our lives. To demonstrate we are peace makers in a world of turmoil. Perhaps it is not for each one of us to be peacemakers on the world stage, very few are called to be that, but we are all called to have those right relationships with God, with others and with ourselves.

Christ left us his peace let us take his peace and share it with those we meet, those we love, those we pray for and even our enemies. Let us glimpse his model and follow it so that we might live at peace and glimpse heaven here on earth.

Lord help us to share your peace with others. Help us to be peacemakers seeking justice and right relationships rather than being troublemakers and the cause of strife. May we live out the blessing and instruction as we say at the end of the service to go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen

Prayers of intercession

Lord we pray for the pandemic situation that as we lift restrictions, we will maintain good hygiene to prevent another wave, not be anxious about mixing with people but welcome one another back.

Loving Lord

Give us your peace.

Lord, we thank you for the great strides made through science and medicine to combat covid. May we share vaccines among all the nations. May we find ways to catch up on treatments postponed because of covid.

Loving Lord

Give us your peace

As we open up and get back to a sense of normality may we not forget those who have been under greater pressure during the pandemic. For health workers looking after our physical and mental health, for teachers keeping schools functioning, for shop workers, for delivery drivers for all those we have relied upon.

Loving Lord

Give us your peace

We pray for all political leaders, and ours in particular, that they work to establish justice and right relationships and home and abroad. May they grasp the environmental problems we face and work together to alleviate and prevent them.

Loving Lord

Give us your peace

Lord we pray for ourselves that we might grasp your word and seek as William Barclay said to establish right relationships with God, with others and within ourselves to find peace and see heaven here on earth.

Loving Lord

Give us your peace

We pray for those in community who are ill in mind, body or soul. We particularly pray for the two Rogers for their conditions and treatment we ask for you healing.

Loving Lord

Give us your peace

All these things we pray in your name and for your glory. **Amen.**

Song: Peace be still Hope Darst

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsIpGiz3SfQ>

I don't wanna be afraid
Every time I face the waves
I don't wanna be afraid
I don't wanna be afraid
And I don't wanna fear the storm
Just because I hear it roar
I don't wanna fear the storm
I don't wanna fear the storm

Peace be still
Say the word and I will
Set my feet upon the sea
'Til I'm dancing in the deep
Peace be still
You are here so it is well
Even when my eyes can't see
I will trust the voice that speaks

I'm not gonna be afraid
'Cause these waves are only waves
I'm not gonna be afraid
No, I'm not gonna be afraid
And I'm not gonna fear the storm
You are greater than its roar
Oh, I'm not gonna fear the storm
No, I'm not gonna fear at all

Peace be still
Say the word and I will
Set my feet upon the sea
'Til I'm dancing in the deep
Peace be still
You are here so it is well
Even when my eyes can't see
I will trust the voice that speaks
Peace, peace over me

You speak peace

Let faith rise up
Oh, heart believe
Let faith rise up in me
And let faith rise up
Oh, heart believe
Let faith rise up in me

Let faith rise up
Oh, heart believe
Let faith rise up in me
Let faith rise up
Oh, heart believe
Let faith rise up in me

Peace be still
Say the word and I will
Set my feet upon the sea
'Til I'm dancing in the deep
Oh, peace be still
You are here so it is well
Even when my eyes can't see
I will trust the voice that speaks

Peace, peace over me
I hear You speaking
Peace, peace over me

Oh, peace
Over me
You speak peace
You speak peace
Over me
You speak peace
You speak peace
You speak peace

The Peace

'Where two or three are gathered together in my name,' says the Lord, 'there am I in the midst of them.'

The peace of the Lord be always with you
and also, with you.

Let us offer one another a sign of peace, virtually or otherwise but in a covid safe respectful manner.

The Act of Breaking Of Bread

When we share the cup of the Lord and break bread together, we express our common participation in the benefits of Jesus' death for us. Thus, we should examine ourselves before we eat the bread and drink the cup, confessing our sins to God, acknowledging the need to care for one another, and renewing our trust in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. As we prepare to gather around the Lords

table let us take a few moments of silence to clear our hearts and our minds and remember why we do this.

We come to this table not because we must, but because we may.
We come not because we are strong, but because we are weak.
We come not because we have perfect faith, but because we have questions and even doubts.
But we come nonetheless because Jesus invites us to come
and we will never be turned away.

The apostle Paul tells us of the institution of the Lord's Supper:

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you:

The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed, took bread,
and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.'

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

(1 Corinthians 11: 23–26)

Prayer before communion

Lord as we take this bread, we remember that you are the bread of life. You feed and nourish us, mind, body and soul. As we break bread may we feel your love enfold us. May the rising of the bread recall to mind your resurrection and the grace you brought us from the father. As we pour out the cup may we remember you are the giver of life. We give thanks that you came and poured out

your life on the cross that we might be
live. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your
name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver
us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the
glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

Distribution of the Bread and Wine

Again, we are only sharing the bread at
communion in line with guidance which
may or may not be updated anytime soon
and do please retain the bread so that we
may all eat together.

The body and blood of Christ, keep you in
eternal life.

Prayer After Communion

**Gracious God, we praise you for what
you have given and for what you have
promised us here.
You have made us one with all your
people in heaven and on earth.
You have fed us with the bread of life,
and renewed us for your service.
Now we give ourselves to you,
and ask that our daily living may be part
of the life of your kingdom,
and that our love may be your love
reaching out into the life of the world,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Song: In Christ alone/Cornerstone

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvLxZEU02uI>

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest friend
But wholly trust in Jesus' name

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest friend
But wholly trust in Jesus' name

Christ alone
Cornerstone
Weak made strong
In the Saviour's love
Through the storm
He is Lord
Lord of all

When darkness seems to hide His face
I rest on His unchanging grace
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil
My anchor holds within the veil (Oh)

Christ alone
Cornerstone
Weak made strong
In the Saviour's love
Through the storm
He is Lord
Lord of all
He is Lord
Lord of all

Christ alone
Cornerstone
Weak made strong
In the Saviour's love
Through the storm
He is Lord
Lord of all

Christ alone

Cornerstone
Weak made strong
In the Saviour's love
Through the storm
He is Lord
Lord of all

When He shall come with trumpet sound
Oh, may I then in Him be found (Oh, yeah)
Dressed in His righteousness alone
Faultless stand before the throne

Christ alone
Cornerstone
Weak made strong
In the Saviour's love
Through the storm
He is Lord
Lord of all

Christ alone
Cornerstone (Cornerstone)
Weak made strong (Oh, yeah)
In the Saviour's love (In the Saviour's love)
Through the storm
He is Lord
Lord of all (Yeah)

Christ alone
Cornerstone
Weak made strong
In the Saviour's love
Through the storm
He is Lord
Lord of all

You will always be, Lord, oh, yeah

Closing prayer and blessing

To him who loves us
and has freed us from our sins by his
blood,
and has made us to be a kingdom
and priests to serve his God and Father,
to him be glory and power for ever and
ever! **Amen.**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the
love of God and the fellowship of the Holy
Spirit be with us all.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ Amen.