

Voices: Tell Syria there's still peace on the earth

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"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."—Luke 2:14



Eric Black Every family has a peacemaker.

You know the one—the person who can't stand any tension in the family, the person who at the first sign of trouble does whatever it takes to smooth everything over.

When Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers," he wasn't talking about family peacemakers. He was talking about so much more.

The family peacemaker deals in temporary fixes like a cook trying to keep a pot from boiling over. The family peacemaker tries to keep everything at a slow simmer.

Jesus came with the promise of so much more.

Jesus came into the world with the angelic promise of peace on earth. Later, when Jesus left the world, he left his peace that overcomes the troubles of the world. Jesus came in peace and left in peace, and neither without trouble.

What is this peace?



Our Christmas songs mislead us. They teach of peace like a calm winter snow, a beautifully lighted Christmas scene or the sentimental warm feeling of the season. This kind of peace is temporary and dependent upon our emotions and outward circumstances. This isn't the peace of the angels' song.

The peace about which the angels sang is the deep *shalom* of God. *Shalom* is an ancient word meaning wholeness, completion, perfection and welfare. *Shalom* is grounded in the solid rock who is God and does not need us to feel any particular way about it or our circumstances.

When the angels proclaimed peace, they proclaimed the birth of the One who would bring *shalom*. They sang of the calm in the raging storm and the unshaken ground in the earthquake. They sang of Jesus, who saves us and makes us whole.

Jesus is our peace.

Jesus and his disciples ran into rough water out on a big lake one night. Jesus was asleep in the front of the boat while his disciples frantically tried to stay afloat. Finally, they woke him, shouting: "We're going to drown! Don't you care?"

Jesus woke up and said to the wind and the water: "Peace! Be still!" And all the world was calm. (Mark 4:35-41)

After Jesus calmed the storm, he asked his disciples where their faith was. He wondered why they were afraid when the God of the universe was

inside the boat with them, but the disciples didn't know who Jesus was, and they were afraid. Jesus' words—Peace! Be still!—were as much for them as for the wind and the water.

We, however, do know who Jesus is. He is Mighty God, Creator, Deliverer, Rock, Prince of Peace.

Jesus is our peace, and his peace is for the world.

As the body of Christ, part of our role in the world is to be agents of Christ's peace. To be agents of Christ's peace means we must do more than keep things at a slow simmer. We must actively make peace in this world.

Before we can make peace out there in the world, we first must make peace in here. Robert Morgan shares a war story illustrating what I mean.

During World War II, ships carrying weapons to Europe ran into rough seas. One ship carrying Sherman tanks fell into desperate trouble. The tanks broke their moorings and began sliding back and forth inside the ship's hold, slamming into the bulkhead. Their 20- and 30-ton weight was causing so much damage, the ship had to pull out of the convoy. Crew members had to go down into the hold, somehow get on the moving tanks, and fasten them down again before the ship could safely continue eastward.

Despite the raging storm all around the ship, the most pressing danger was inside. Once things were secure inside, the ship could face the onslaught of the waves.

Before we can face the troubles of the world, we must face the troubles of our own soul. This is an important work of Christ's Spirit in us, as well as an important work of the church as we help one another find peace in Christ.

Yes, Jesus is our peace, and his peace is for the world.

The winds are howling, and the waves are rolling. The storm is raging, and the earth is quaking. Donald Trump is president-elect. Russia and China are beating their chests. Syria and the Sudan are imploding. ISIS and Boko Haram are rallying troops. The ship is taking on water. The pot is about to boil over.

How the world needs daring people who will go down into the ship's hold to tie the tanks down again. How the world needs peacemakers!

Let us find peace in Christ so we may bear what the world so desperately needs, remembering the same Lord who is *shalom* for the world also is our *shalom*, our peace. May we remember he who said he will always be with us is still in the front of the boat.

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