

Summary

This sermon explores the deep human longing for peace, particularly during the Christmas season. Pastor Jason contrasts the temporary, circumstantial peace we often seek with the lasting, soul-deep peace that comes through Jesus Christ. Using Ephesians 2 as the primary text, the message emphasizes that true peace begins with being reconciled to God vertically before we can experience peace horizontally with others. The sermon explains that Jesus didn't just bring peace - He IS our peace, and this peace comes through trusting God rather than trying to control our circumstances.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we gather together today, we ask that You would open our hearts and minds to receive what You have for us. Help us to set aside the distractions and anxieties of this week and focus on Your truth. Lord, we pray that You would speak to each person here in the way they need to hear from You today. Give us ears to hear, hearts to receive, and the courage to apply what You teach us. We invite Your Holy Spirit to guide our discussion and draw us closer to You and to one another. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Ice Breaker

What's one item that's been on your Christmas wish list for multiple years but you've never actually received?

Key Verses

1. Micah 5:2-4
2. Ephesians 2:1-10
3. Ephesians 2:13-18
4. Romans 5:1
5. Philippians 4:6-7

Questions

1. Pastor Jason mentioned that we live in the most connected generation in history, yet anxiety and depression are at all-time highs. Why do you think this paradox exists?
2. What's the difference between 'peace with God' and 'the peace of God'? Why is this distinction important?
3. The sermon states that 'horizontal peace begins vertically.' Can you think of a time when your relationship with God affected how you handled conflict with others?
4. Paul writes about presenting our requests to God 'with thanksgiving.' How might gratitude change the way we approach our anxieties and fears?

5. Pastor Jason shared Brian Welch's story about finding peace after leaving a successful but destructive lifestyle. What does this tell us about where we typically look for peace versus where we actually find it?
6. In Ephesians 2, Paul addresses the tension between Jews and Gentiles in the early church. What are some modern-day 'dividing walls of hostility' that Jesus wants to tear down?
7. The sermon mentions that peace 'flows from trust, not control.' What are some areas in your life where you're trying to find peace through control rather than trust?
8. How can we be 'peacemakers' in our homes, workplaces, and communities while still addressing real problems and conflicts?

Life Application

This week, identify one area of your life where you've been trying to create peace through control rather than trust. Practice 'presenting your requests to God with thanksgiving' about this situation daily, and look for opportunities to own your part in any relational conflicts rather than focusing on what others need to change.

Key Takeaways

1. True peace is not a product but a person - Jesus Christ himself is our peace
2. Peace with God must come before we can experience the peace of God in our circumstances
3. Horizontal reconciliation with others flows from vertical reconciliation with God
4. Peace comes from trusting God rather than trying to control our circumstances
5. God's peace actively guards our hearts and minds like a soldier standing watch at a city gate

Ending Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for being our peace. Thank You that through Your life, death, and resurrection, we can have peace with God and experience Your peace in our daily lives. Help us to remember that when anxiety tries to overwhelm us, Your peace stands guard over our hearts and minds. Give us the courage to trust You with the things we cannot control and the wisdom to own our part in conflicts with others. May we be peacemakers in our families, workplaces, and communities, reflecting the reconciliation You have given us. As we go from here, help us to rest in Your presence and carry Your peace wherever we go. In Your precious name, Amen.