

Well, good morning, Grace Hills.

I want to let you know a couple of things about this week and next week before I dig into the message today. This week is what the church has, for a couple thousand years or so, called Palm Sunday. And that's sort of a celebration and honoring of the day when Jesus came into Jerusalem, to present himself as the sacrifice for sin. He's sort of coroneted as King in an Earthly, temporal way. And I'll come back to that in just a minute. It didn't mean what a lot of people really saw that day as meaning, and Jesus knew that. He knew people didn't get it, they didn't understand. So he finds himself, later that day, looking down on the City of Jerusalem, weeping over their lostness, over their lack of understanding.

But then a week later, the following Sunday, is Easter. Next Sunday is Easter Sunday, and so between those two Sundays, is the moment when Jesus gives his life on a cross for us. So this week, every year for Christianity around the world, it is a huge, huge moment of both mourning and celebration. It's remembering the death of Jesus, and remembering that he didn't stay dead, that he came back. So this is like the biggest week of the year for the church, for Christianity, for Jesus followers.

So we're going to talk a lot today about Jesus and what he did for us. And next week, about his resurrection. And it all fits perfectly into the healing series that we're in because we're coming down toward the end, where it's like we have worked through some pain, we've worked through the owning of our sin. We've talked about our hurts, habits, and hangups, and how do we come over the brokenness in our lives, and now we're beginning in this last part of the series to just kind of emerge from that.

So today we're going to talk about, "How do I have peace with God in my life? How do I have peace with others? How do I have peace in my soul? And with myself?" And then next week, "How do I now, having made peace, how do I live and walk every day in the resurrection power of Jesus?" So we're going to talk about those two things over today and next week. But I also want you to know that next week happens to be the day for the church every year, and particularly in America, where a lot of people are willing to check it out.

A lot of people will visit on Easter Sunday, when they may not visit at another time. And a lot of those people may not understand or believe that Jesus is alive from the dead, and so every year, I'd sort of recognize this in my heart and mind as a chance, an opportunity to share the gospel. To share the simple truth about Jesus, and the love of God with people who may not know it, or understand it, or be familiar with it. So I just want to challenge you to sort of spread the word, and invite people, and we will embrace the crowd that comes.

In fact, we're going to do three services next week because you can look around and see some seats here, but by the second service every Sunday, we've been full. Like all the seats are taken, so the earlier you can come the better, but we're going to do an 8:30, a 9:45, and an 11 next week. So three services, and if you just, how many of you just love early mornings, it's just your thing? So obviously, you're here, so the earlier, the better. And if you invite people to come, to come with you to the early service, that's great. And we'll make room, and we'll figure it out, and we'll have an awesome time. We'll present Jesus to people who may not know him.

Today we're celebrating communion. We do this every year on Palm Sunday, partly because the last week of Jesus' life, between Palm Sunday and Resurrection Sunday, during that time is the time when

Jesus celebrated the Lord's Supper for the very first time with his disciples. So we would say, "He instituted this thing, that the church has done for 2,000 years now." That we gather together, and we take communion with one another, to remember and honor, and recognize the death of Jesus. So we're going to do that at the end of the message today, as we get into the last final few songs.

But I want to also mention this, next Sunday on Easter Sunday, we're also going to be baptizing, so if that is something that you feel like you need to do, or you are ready for, you've made a commitment to Christ, but you've not taken that next step of declaring your faith, your baptism. Or, if somebody in your family, or somebody that you know is at that place. Or, you just have questions about what that all means, you've not made a commitment yet, but you just want to know more about it, fill out one of those cards today.

Just check off the baptism box, and we'll get in touch and say, "What do you need to know? And are you ready? And what questions do you have? And how can we walk with you through this great celebration?" We'll do those baptisms outside, and so not sure, we're praying for good weather, and obviously we had snow flurries at 3:30 a.m. this morning if some of you were up watching that. So I don't know. I'm hoping it warms up by June, but we will baptize next Sunday, no matter what. And remember, in the heritage of our church, the first Sunday we baptized was outdoors, in cold water, on a 19 degree day. So it's unforgettable, this life change, this moment that happens in peoples' lives.

I want to talk about peace today. Like how do you live in peace? How do you find peace with yourself? And by that, I mean I've got this story, we've got all this brokenness that we've talked about, how do I finally come to a place where it does not haunt me all the time? How do I come to peace about that? How do I come to peace with God? Because I think people talk about that, or they use that phrase a lot, "I've made my peace with God." And we say that as though there's something wrong with God, and I have to get over what I think is wrong with him, and that's really a complete misunderstanding of what peace with God is all about. Peace God is a gift from God, and we'll get into that in a second.

How do I have peace with others? Like in my family, my marriage, my in-laws, my parents, my siblings, my cousins, the people at work, the people that I might disagree with in the culture about maybe political things, or humanitarian things? How do we have peace in our world? How do you get peace for the planet? Because, obviously, we are not at peace, there is constant, constant conflict, and misunderstanding with nations all over the world, and they align in different ways, and it's been going on since the dawn of humanity. So how do you get to peace? How do you get there?

And I just want to, I often begin with a confession of where I've struggled, and so I just want you to know that in my own household, we are not at peace. Last night, I shot my wife, and my daughter then shot me. What happened was, my son turned nine, and so we had this Nerf party. And people gave him Nerf guns, a collection, an arsenal, like the military might call for help, from the Cox house. And darts, and bullets, and things were flying all over the house. And so he'd got one that I'd never seen before, and I shop for Nerf guns often, and so this is one I hadn't seen before.

So I equipped it, and turned the safety off, and I needed to test it, and my wife was right there. So I tested this thing, and then I looked, and it's like don't shoot people with it. It says that clearly on the box. And then my daughter then shot me, and we're just testing these, and it just descended into chaos, and darts flying. And so I need this sermon today to save my life, but I want to talk about how do you

have peace in relationships; with self, with God, with others? How does that happen in this process of healing?

And I need you know at the beginning of the message, that this is something that builds on what we've said already. In other words, the pathway to peace is not just declaring it, or claiming it, or asserting, "Okay, I'm going to have peace now." There's kind of a process, and we've been talking about that process over the first few weeks of this series. And so we said, "I need to get real about my brokenness. I need to get honest about my hurts, habits, and hangups. I need to confess my sins to God, and to other people, and so the message of peace is something that builds on those things."

I believe that peace is ultimately the result of this painful process, of getting honest, and real, and confronting the ways in which my life has not been together. That I've experienced the chaos of sin, and disunity, and hurt, and brokenness, and when I deal with those kinds of things, then the pathway toward peace is visible, okay. But we have to clear some things away first. And we do that through all the steps that we've talked about so far.

So peace, even though it's a free gift from God, and I'll kind of explain how that works in just a minute, but even though it's that, in order for me to embrace that gift, in order for me to understand and to enjoy that gift, I have to work through some hard stuff in my life. I got to come to grips, and come to terms with my story, and my pain, and my hurt, and the way I've hurt others, and the way I've hurt God, and the way I've sinned, the habits I've had, the addictive tendencies I may have displayed in my life, the things I've done out of self-misery, or self-loathing, all that stuff comes up, and I start to deal with it. And as I deal with it, peace becomes possible.

Now peace is not possible because I'm dealing with stuff. Peace is possible because of what Jesus did. Peace is possible because of the work of God, in history, and in eternity, and in my life. So I don't make peace with God. I don't make peace happen. God makes peace possible. God makes peace a reachable reality. But I want you to understand at the beginning of this message, the promise that peace is indeed possible because of what Jesus did.

So if you walked in this morning, and you saw maybe the title of the message is about peace, and you go, "Man, I really need that because my life is in chaos, and I just don't know if I'll ever be at peace. I just know if things will ever be normal, will ever be the same, will ever be healthy, you need to understand and to know that, "Yes, absolutely. Peace is possible. It is the promise of God, to all who will believe in him, all who will repent and turn to him. It is the promise of God to everybody that we'll deal with the things that we've already talked about dealing with."

In order to get there, I want to start of just reading Jesus' words. Every message in the series, we've tied back to a B-attitude of Jesus. One of the statements he made in the Sermon on the Mount, some of which are seemingly contradictory, until you understand what he meant, some of which are hard to receive, until you understand how he equips us, and that's kind of where this one falls.

Jesus said this in Matthew chapter five verse nine. He said, "God blesses those who work or peace: for they will be called the children of God." God blesses those who work for peace, they'll be called the children of God. Now again, when it says, "God blesses," it means that God makes joyful. He gives joy, and happiness, and peace to those who are peacemakers. To those who seek peace. To those who make

peace in their lives, God gives joy. And then he closes by saying, "For they will be the children of God." There's this connection between the idea of peace with God, and being part of the family of God.

And I think where Jesus is coming from, is the understanding that God has been at work gathering a family to himself. He's been building a family. He's been making a family, and Jesus died for the sins of mankind. All who trust in him enter into the family of God, we become God's children, we become what the New Testament calls joint-heirs with Jesus. And so we're like brothers, so to speak, to Jesus who saved us, and gave his life for us, and God is making this family. And God's family will be a place of peace forever and forever.

Now most of us don't know what that's like. Most people don't necessarily know what a peaceful home, a peaceful family looks like, but God has said, "I am building one, and I want you in it. I want you to be included in it, to find your place, to find your role in my family. I want you as my child, and when you become my child, you will have peace." Now sometimes it takes time in this life to watch peace work its way into who I am, and into my relationships. But from eternity's perspective, he guarantees that at the end of it all, there will be peace.

So if you came in this morning struggling, and scrambling, and walking through some chaos, you need to cling to the promise, peace is not only possible, peace is promised. The problem with this particular B-attitude, it's kind of like the last one we looked at, he talked about those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. And the problem with that B-attitude isn't that it's not true, it's that I don't necessarily do that naturally.

Like I'm going to bless those who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness. The problem is, none of us naturally hunger and thirst for righteousness. We hunger and thirst for other things, right. And the same is true with this, we are not naturally peacemakers. It's been that way since the Garden of Eden. God makes this beautiful, wonderful place, and puts Adam and Eve in it. And all the world is at peace, until a single act of disobedience, and one of their children murders the other. And the rest of humanity and all of history has been chaos and everything, but peace.

It's been confusion, it's been division, it's been separation, and that's been the human story for all this time now. And you see it coming up between nations, and cultures, and people who are different. I see it sometimes maybe between people who are of different ethnicities, and they have no reason to disagree, but something inside is broken. And we wind up having these fears, and disagreements with people because they're different than we are, and we don't understand them, so we're on-guard, and we're defensive, and something gets misunderstood. And the next thing you know, we are divided.

Home ought to be this place of peace, this place where we can all thrive, right, but homes are tough, families are hard to pull off, marriage is difficult. And raising kids is hard, and so out of all that sometimes comes this opposite of peace, it comes as turmoil. And yet, God has said, "I am building this in your life, and I want you to be peacemakers." And we look at that command, and we go, "I want to be blessed, but I don't necessarily naturally make peace."

So we're going to talk about that today. And I want to give you two very simple steps to becoming a peacemaker, very simple steps to becoming a peacemaker. These are really short, they're easy to remember, and they're not necessarily easy to live out, but they're easy to understand. And if I can understand it, I can start to live it out, okay.

So here it is, how to have peace in life. Number one is this, you got to learn to receive peace. Okay, got to learn to receive peace. If I'm going to be a peacemaker, I have to start as a peace receiver. I have never met someone, who naturally makes peace, unless they have received it first. You cannot give what you haven't received. You cannot give to others and create around you what you have not come to an understanding an experience of in your own life. You can't teach what you don't know. You can't impart what you've not been given. You can't give something away that you don't possess.

And so when it comes to peace, in order for me to be a peacemaker, I have to start on the side of grace. I have to start with an understanding that this is not what I naturally do. I am not naturally speaking a peacemaker, but when I receive peace, when I'm the recipient of peace, when I understand what peace looks like from God's perspective, then I can start to give it to other people. I can start to develop it in my life, and in my family, and in my relationships, but I have to receive peace first.

Now the good news is, this is available for every single last one of us. Even if everyone else in your life is an agent of chaos, and everyone lets you down, and you don't receive or get peace from anybody around you, the promise is still true that God wants to give you peace. So again, we have this sort of cultural understanding of what it means to make peace with God, but I want to scratch that for a second. This is not Lieutenant Dan, up on the masthead, shaking his fist, and making peace with God. We have that kind of cultural picture of being mad at God. And now I'm not mad at him anymore, so I get to go to Heaven somehow, that's not really a biblical idea.

The biblical idea is, "We're all lost and helpless. We are all sinful, we're all condemned, and God did something about it." God sent his son Jesus, who came to Earth, and died taking the penalty and the payment of all of our sins upon himself, died in our place, and then offers us the free gift of peace with God. You don't make peace with God, you receive it from him. You accept the peace that he purchased on Calvary. You take the peaceful pathway, the restored union with God, the repaired oneness with Jesus, you get that because Jesus bought it. Because Jesus purchased it, Jesus paid it all.

He took the debt I owed to God, and it creates this inanity, it creates this problem between me and God, when I have broken his rules and his commands, and I have offended him. And because of that, I'm separated from God. There's like this barrier, this wall of separation. You ever have someone that you owed money to, or that owed you money? And then you bump each other at the mall, or at Walmart, which is like the mall in Bentonville, Arkansas. So you ever find yourself in that predicament?

So there's this thing between you, right? And so you bump into each other, and you exchange pleasantries, and if you're the one who is owed money in that moment you're thinking, "Oh, sure. You're doing fine." And if you're the one who owes money you're thinking, "I hope he forgot. I hope she doesn't remember. I got to get that together," right. Well, here's the thing, all of us owe a debt to God for our rebellion that we cannot pay. Jesus already opened it up and said, "Blessed are those who are poor in spirit, who acknowledge their bankruptcy."

So I come before God, and I'm going to make peace with God, right. I'm going to talk to God about my problem with him. And I'm going, "God, I don't understand this, and I really don't like this about you. But I'm going to try to make peace with you." And the whole time, God is saying, "Are you kidding me? There's an enormous debt that you owe, and you're not doing anything about it." Well, Jesus comes and he says, "I'll take your debt. I'll take your sin. I'll take your crime, your penalty. I'll take the punishment you deserve, and I will bear that for you on Calvary."

Now when I come to God by faith, and I believe him, and I receive him, my debt can be canceled, and that brings peace. Because when the debt is canceled, when paid in full is stamped on what I owe to God, I can now receive peace with God. I can have peace with God. I need to receive it from God because there's some other people in my life that need it, and he makes it possible. Romans chapter 5, these verses declare something that's just beautiful. He says, "Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight," now let me stop because there's a mouthful. There's a lot there, okay.

Anytime the Bible uses the word, "Therefore," he's connecting into something he said before. So in Romans 1, 2, 3, and 4, in those four chapters, he has built the case that we are all sinful and lost, but we've received grace as a gift from Jesus, right. By faith alone, that's the point of the early chapters of Romans. We're all lost, but by faith, we can be made right with God. We can receive him by faith. And then he says, "Therefore, on the basis of the salvation I get from God, on the basis of the redemption I now enjoy; therefore, we have been made right in God's sight by faith."

And I shared last week, or maybe the week before, about this perfect tense. That when you're reading your Bible, and you come across a phrase that's worded in the that way, "Have been made right," it's not making us right, or he made us right. It's have been made right. It's like saying, "The biscuits have been made." In other words, they're complete. They've come out of the oven, and now they're ready to be enjoyed. They have been made. So apply that language here.

You, if you're a believer in Christ, you have been made right. You have been completely made right with God. You may not feel that, you may not experience that, you may wonder how that's even possible, but it's a truth that is scriptural, that when you've trusted in Jesus, you have been made right with God. So the result of your salvation is, first of all, you've been made right with God. He no longer has this eternal problem with you to deal with and to settle about your sin. Instead, Jesus died for that. You've received Jesus as your savior. Your debt's been paid. You've been washed, cleansed, and forgiven, just as we declared a couple of weeks ago, "You now have been made right with God."

And then he goes on and says this, "And we have," that's like present possessive, "I have this. I've got this." "You have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ, our Lord, has done for us." So let me tie it all together. If you have trusted Christ, you have been made right with God, and that will never change, and you now currently possess whether you feel it or not, you currently possess peace with God, and you possess it forever. Why do you possess it? Because of what Jesus Christ, our Lord, has done for us.

So if you're at a place in your life, and you look and go, "I don't have peace with God. I try to talk to God, and I don't know what sense to make of that. And I've not laid my life down before him. And I don't know what to do with Jesus. And I've still got these issues and these problems, this separation between me and him, this barrier of my sin is still here. What do you do about that?" You come to a place in your life, where you decide, your own volition, it's not something anyone else does for you. Baptism doesn't do it, the church doesn't do it, your parents can't do it, religious upbringing can't do it, confirmation can't do it. None of that stuff makes you right with God.

You decide to receive what Jesus did on the cross. And when you receive what he did on the cross, his death, as the payment for your sin, and you receive him, the living Jesus, as your Lord and Savior, you have peace with God. So if you came to me and said, "I just don't have any peace in my life," this is step one. This is step one, you got to receive it. You don't make it, you don't find it, you don't create it, you

receive peace. And now that you have peace, that brings us to step two, you learn to make peace. You learn to make peace.

In other words, you didn't initiate it, you didn't start it, you didn't invent the idea of peacemaking, Jesus did, God did. And he made peace with you, and so when you receive his peace now, you get to become a peacemaker in all the relationships of your life. That includes a relationship with yourself, and your past, and your future. It includes your relationship with God, and how you see him, and how he sees you, and being close to him, and intimate with him. It includes being a peacemaker in your marriage, and in your family, and with your kids, and with your parents, and with your siblings.

It includes making peace with the people in your neighborhood, in your workplace, with people in your nation, with people in other nations, with people who are different than you. It includes making peace and being a peace spreader, a peace creator in the world around you. And if you have received peace, you now have what it takes to be a peace maker. Now, naturally, as we are, even we, as Christians, still struggle with the leftovers of that sinful life, right. And therefore, we sometimes because of our unhealthiness, and our brokenness, and those patterns, we still tend, instead of making peace, we try to make people do what we want them to do.

We try to make life better through ways that aren't necessarily in line with what God wants for us, ethically speaking. Instead of making peace, sometimes we make trouble, we make problems in our lives. We create situations, we allow the old me, the old sin to boil out and to spill itself on everything, and I don't trust people, and I'm afraid of people, and I'm defensive, and I try to prove myself, and I walk into a room and I'm immediately in competition.

And I hear a piece of gossip, and that gives me like weaponry, and there are all these things that flow out of a life where maybe I've been given the free gift of peace with God, I haven't appropriated it yet in my life. I've not been cultivating it and making it. Now by making peace, that doesn't mean you invent it, God invented it. It doesn't mean you create it, God gave it to you. But now that you have it, you get to be a peacemaker in the rest of your life.

I want to talk for a second about what this is and what this is not. And this is very important, I want to be very real with you for a second, and I want you to think about your life. Don't think for a second right now, "Boy, I wish so-and-so was here to hear this sermon." There's some stuff in here for me and for you, okay. So I want you, as you listen to this, to think about your life. And honestly, honestly ask, "Could I be guilty of these things? Could I struggle with these things? Could I be misunderstanding these things? And maybe other people have been trying to tell me that, and I've not been hearing it. I've not been listening."

So let me tell you what peacemaking is not. And then I'll get into what peacemaking is, okay. We want to be really clear about these things. Peacemaking is not enabling abuse. I want to be really clear about that. When you enable, or let me put it differently, it is not absorbing abuse. That is not peacemaking. To allow someone to abuse you, to manipulate you, to control you, to take advantage of you, and for you to back up and go, "Well, I just didn't want to say anything, or do anything, or stand up for myself because I wanted to make peace." That's not what peacemaking is, okay.

Because, ultimately, what that does, is it just continues to feed and enable that abusive behavior, and you will not be the only recipient of it. It'll spread further. It'll keep going. So peacemaking is not

absorbing abuse. Peacemaking is also not enabling sin. It's not enabling sin. "Well, I see this thing that was destructive and harmful in someones life, but if I bring it up, they'll be mad at me. And that's not peace." Well, maybe the end goal is peace, but there's going to be some trouble in the conversation between now and then. And so peacemaking is not enabling sin.

Peacemaking is also not overlooking error, okay. It's not overlooking error. So when someone says, "Yeah, I just believe God is just every ... He's just in the clouds, and whatever way you want to get to Heaven is fine, he's whatever you want him to be." And you go, "Yeah, I could see that. I don't want to argue or cause any problems, I really want peace to be here." No, that's not what peacemaking is. Peacemaking is not enabling error or overlooking error, okay.

Peacemaking, at times, requires us to step up, to take a stand, to do the right thing. Sometimes you have to fight for peace. I know that sounds funny because we think of peace as the absence of conflict, and yet sometimes, peace is the result of conflict. It's the result of healthy conflict. It's the result of standing for the values and the things that God stands for. And so when you see God in various ways, standing up for the innocent in scripture, peacemaking can very well include those things.

So understand that being a peacemaker doesn't mean appeasing people. It doesn't mean keeping the pathway easy and smooth, and never having conflict. Because I can tell you, this is one thing I can truly confess out of my life, is I have struggled a lot with this. I have thought for much of my adulthood, and even though I know better, I don't always know better, do you know what I mean?

That sometimes I fall under the impression that, "If I just avoid conflict, that's a win. That's creating a life of peace, because conflict is bad, right." But I'm coming to understand, the longer I live, the longer I wrestle with things, the more that I grow, or mature spiritually, I'm beginning to grasp, that sometimes peace flows out of healthy conflict. So peacemaking is not absorbing abuse, enabling sin, agreeing with error, those things are not peacemaking.

Instead, peacemaking is something else. I want to get into what it is. And again, keep thinking, "Is this true of me? What do I need to hear out of this?" Peacemaking, first of all, is having nothing left to prove. Peacemaking is walking into a room, where other people are, and not walking into dominate, not walking into win, not walking into be better than. Peacemaking is not walking in with, "I have to now immediately be the Alpha and prove that I'm better, and bigger, and badder than everyone else here." That is not peacemaking. That instigates an unhealthy kind of conflict.

And so when I live in a spirit of competition, and I live under this weight of, "I always got to prove myself, I always got to measure up. I always got to outdo everyone else," then think about how that translates into common, average, ordinary relationships, that maybe that you and your spouse, one of the reasons why things are not at peace is because you're competing with each other. You're trying to prove, "No, I'm not as bad as you think I am, and I'll prove how great I am in this moment."

And so peacemaking, sometimes is going, "I don't have to prove how awesome I am. I don't have to prove that I'm better. I don't have to prove that I'm smarter. I don't have to prove that I'm okay. I can let you, I can let you have this position that I'm not going to fight for anymore." It's deciding, "I'm not going to live with something to prove, okay."

It's also not living with anything to hide. Peacemaking is, "I'm going to have peace when I stop trying to outdo everyone, and I stop trying to compete with everyone, and overcome everyone." Peacemaking also is living a life in which I'm not hiding things. It doesn't necessarily mean that I share every detail of my life with every person I ever meet, but it means that when it comes to the people who matter, who are closest to me, I don't keep things covered up. I'm not living two lives. You cannot live at peace and live two lives.

You cannot be two people and be at peace, guaranteed. You'll either be authentic and have peace, or you'll be inauthentic and not have peace, but you cannot mix the two. And so being a peacemaker means, "I'm not going to pretend to be something I'm not. I'm not going to keep up a facade and wear the mask," because what that always, always creates is turmoil. Every single time. I can look back on some of the unhealthiest phases of my adulthood and go, "I see that right then and there, I was more concerned about what people thought of me, and sort of projecting a certain image of myself, than I was about being authentic."

And every single time I've done that, it leads to turmoil within. It leads to the opposite of peace. It creates problems in me, it creates problems with other people, and so I cannot be a peacemaker and live this kind of double life, and keep up the image, I need to embrace authenticity. So peacemaking is having nothing to prove, peacemaking is having nothing to hide, peacemaking is laying down my rights, at times. We're very concerned with our rights, I think as Americans, and I'm sure that comes partly at least out of sort of this national tradition, that for a few hundred years now, we have really fought hard for our freedoms and our rights.

And what we do, is we kind of create this mental Bill of Rights in our heads, right. We live as privileged Americans. Almost every American I know, it doesn't matter how much money you've got, we are a privileged people. And so we will be served we will be taken care of, people will treat us right. And if they don't, we'll make sure to make it right. That's just kind of how we approach life sometimes.

And so we're not accustomed to the idea of laying down our rights because I'm very good about making sure I get what I deserve. And if someone has wronged me, I deserve to get even, right. If someone hurts me, I deserve to hurt them back, that is right. And it's a right that I should have to get revenge. It's a right that I should have to make it even. Peacemaking is laying down my rights, at times.

Doesn't mean I don't deserve something. It simply means that even though I might deserve it, I am letting it go. I'm letting it go because at the end of the day, it's not about me. At the end of the day, I can be right and I can win the argument, and I can get my way. I can demand my money back. I can fight with the person in the crowd. I can badger and belittle my spouse into finally agreeing that I'm right in this case, and in winning that battle, I lose the war.

And having my rights, and getting my way, am I satisfied? Almost never. Almost never. And so Jesus comes, and what did Jesus have a right to do with humanity? I mean, he's God, in the flesh, and we've offended him. He's God on Earth, and we have broken all of his rules and his commandments. We've gone our own way. We've decided we don't need him.

John chapter 1 opens up and says, "He came to his own people and his own people received him not." You know what they did? They killed him. His own family, his own people. That they rejected him, they called him a liar, they made false accusations. What did Jesus have a right to do? Well, he's God, he's

perfect, he's sinless, he's all-knowing, he's all-powerful, he's authoritative. He could just go like Thanos, just nevermind. Sorry. He'd just snap his fingers, "Poof," we're all gone. And he would be right to do so.

And instead, Jesus says, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they do. I will pay their price. I'll go to the cross," and laid down his rights. Think about the number of times, and this is a fine line, I understand, that I need to not enable bad behavior, but at the same time, I need to watch my own behavior, and not demand my rights at the cost of a relationship. To demand that I'm right at the cost of a relationship is the opposite of peacemaking. So when I've received peace, I start to give it to others. At the end of the day, Jesus is the model. He is not only the source of the peace that I receive, Jesus is the model that I follow in order to understand how to make peace in my life. If you really want to make peace in your life and be a peacemaker, just do whatever Jesus would do. Just do what he did in his life.

There's a passage we often read at Christmastime, and I think it's unfortunate that we only read it at Christmastime, because it's a global kind of verse. But in Isaiah chapter 9 verses 6 and 7, this is a messianic verse. It's not just a Christmas verse, not just good for Christmas cards. This is a verse for today. This is a verse for Palm Sunday, and every Sunday, and every day of my life.

The Bible says this, "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us." And then it says, "The government will rest on his shoulders." When? Well, not yet. But it will happen. "The government will rest on his shoulders." And so while everyone around us argues about which is the right form of government, and who's the right, which party is smarter, and better, which guy deserves to get elected, and all that kind of stuff. While everyone's arguing about that, some day, some day, we will see a good, righteous, healthy amazing government. Some day, and it will rest on Jesus' shoulders when he comes to reign as King. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of what? Peace. Prince of Peace.

His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor, David, for all of eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen. Jesus Christ came on Palm Sunday, 2,000 years ago. And comes into Jerusalem to be coroneted as King, and the people of that day definitely shouted their Hosannas and their Praise Gods, and they were praising him, but they were not praising him according to his plan, and what this kingdom would become. They were looking for a political deliverer in the moment. He's come to get us out from under Rome's thumb.

And when he didn't do it the way they thought, when there was no war, when there was no battle, when there was no bloodshed among the Romans, they began to doubt. And by Wednesday, by the middle of the week, they're crying out, "Crucify him. Crucify him." Some of you are going, "Wasn't that Friday?" It's a whole different, we'll talk about it over coffee sometime, Wednesday versus Friday. But nonetheless, later that week, that same crowd of people that said, "Yes, he's the King. He's the King. Crown him."

By mid-week, Rome's still around, and there's not been the bloodshed yet. They who feel self-righteous, that they have a right to just kill everyone else, that they have a right to rule and reign, and everyone should bow at their feet, Jesus comes to those people who think they have that right, and he doesn't do it their way. And by mid-week he's crying, they're crying, "Crucify him." So from, "Crown him," to "Crucify him."

And now those of us who embrace the crucifixion of Christ, who understand what the cross means to our lives spiritually, who understand the kind of peace that he gives to us, and we understand that that same kind of peace will someday rule the world, that it will be the rule and the reign of Christ for all of eternity, we get to embrace his crucifixion and his cross, and we get to enjoy his crown. In other words, to enjoy him as King, and even as the New Testament says in this crazy, grace-saturated, unfathomable idea that his believers, his followers will actually reign with him for all of eternity.

Not over him, certainly, but with him. How's that possible? How can you have multiple reigning alongside the King? Well, it's only possible in a Kingdom of true eternal, everlasting peace. And there's only one person in all of history who can actually bring about that kind of kingdom, and his name is Jesus. And so we get to coronet who he will in the future. Now he is King of Kings today, yes. But he will someday establish his rule over all the Earth. And our job now is to live in light of that. Our job now is to live that out.

In other words, I've trusted in Jesus Christ, I'm a Christian. I've followed him. I've received by grace, through faith, this free gift of eternal life. I have peace with God. I stand on this stage, not being perfect, not being the greatest performer in the world, not having gotten all the check boxes right, but I am the recipient of grace. I am saved. I am right with God today. I have peace with God today. And as the recipient of that, I also know my future idea, my belief about the future, is that that kind of peace will someday rule and reign for all, forever.

But I know that in the meantime, in the meantime, my role and my goal is to get as many other possible to enter into that kind of peace today. To become recipients of that peace now. I get to spend the rest of my life inviting other people to come, and enjoy, and receive the peace that God wants to give them for all of eternity.

So here's my appeal to you. If you don't have peace in your life with God, if you don't have peace with yourself, if you don't have peace in who you are, if there's turmoil, and there's division, there's separation between you and God, and you've never settled the question and the issue of your sin, then I want to invite you right now to receive the King of Kings, to receive Jesus, and to enjoy the free gift of peace, starting today and lasting all throughout eternity.

I want us to bow our heads. With our heads bowed, I want you to know, in just a moment, we're going to take communion. When I say, "Amen," in a moment, we're going to stand then, and sing a couple of songs, and we're going to take communion during that time. And communion is a celebration, it's a memorial, it's a remembrance of the price Jesus paid for us, of the death he died. So I want you today to ask yourself, "Do I have peace with God? Have I received? Have I received the peace that God offers to me in my life?" And if not, it is all for the asking, it is an open invitation. It is handed to you by God, himself, this invitation to know him, to know his peace, to know his son.

As I want to invite you right now to just declare from your heart, "God, I receive you as my savior. Jesus, I receive you. I want to turn from my sins, I want to repent, I want to believe. I want to trust in you and receive the free gift of eternal life and peace. I want to be right with you."

If you're here and you're a believer, and maybe you've received him, but you're not at peace because there's some stuff you've collected. There's some sins you've committed, and you've not confessed. You've not dealt with it, and communion is this chance for us to stop and go, "Jesus, I need to make this

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right. I need to give this over to you. I need to confess this, and agree with you about it. And ask you to cleanse it. And then we're ready to approach this table."

Father, I ask that you just help us to know, and understand, and receive the peace that you offer. We love you, we trust you, we celebrate you today, as King. And it's in Jesus name, we pray. Amen.