

**NBC Devotional**  
**July 28, 2021**  
**“Christ - Our Peace”**

*In March 2004, the South American nations of Chile and Argentina celebrated the 100th anniversary of the world's first monument for peace, “Cristo Redentor” (“Christ the Redeemer”) which is placed on the Andes Mountains between Chile and Argentina. This monument was erected in order to prevent a war between the two nations over boarder issues. In fact, the monument was made out of the metal of the canons with which the two nations wanted to fight against each other. The monument shows Christ as he holds the cross in the one hand and with the other hand he blesses the nations. At the bottom of the monument it says: "May the Andes Mountains crumble into dust before the peoples of Argentina and Chile break the peace sworn to at the feet of Christ the Redeemer."*

*Every year on the third Sunday in March, pilgrims from both countries meet at this monument for a service and to pray for peace between the two nations and peace on earth.*

*Christ – the Prince of Peace! What a sight, what a great idea!*

*The theme for this morning is taken from Ephesians 2:8-18, which speaks of CHRIST – OUR PEACE.*

*Meaning of the word “Peace”*

*The word “peace” on the base of the monument is primarily understood as “absence of war.” Well, this is the way most people interpret “peace” – absence of war and harm, living with a sense of tolerance for people with other opinions and traditions, etc. This is not totally wrong, however it does not touch exactly the heart of the biblical understanding of “peace.”*

*The Hebrew word for “peace” is SHALOM. And SHALOM means more than just “peace:” It means salvation, well-being, wholeness, health, living in harmony, joy and happiness. It has a social meaning and looks at the well-being of persons within the context of the community. It expresses the ideal state of life. Actually SHALOM is the situation at the time of creation. That is partly for what the Sabbath stands for – a sense of rest in order to enjoy the SHALOM of God. Until today, Jews greet each other on the Sabbath with “Shabbat Shalom!”*

*However, sin had destroyed it – SHALOM was not there as God had intended it, anymore. But God wanted to bring his creation back to SHALOM. He did that by making covenants: Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), Moses (Sinai), David. Israel was a people of “covenant.”*

*Well, that actually is the context of our passage in Ephesians: Paul addressed the tensions between Christians with a Jewish and Christians with a Gentile background.*

*Jews, “people of the covenant” between God and Israel; the Gentiles on the other hand were “people outside the covenant.”*

*Paul writes in this letter that Christ came to “break down” this barrier by establishing a “new covenant:” Christ brought reconciliation between God and humanity and between human beings*

*“In Christ” we have peace and reconciliation (“making the two into one man”, v. 15)*

*Isn't that wonderful to know?! SHALOM – what God had created and intended from the beginning is made possible for ALL people and all nations, for every human being in the world, through Jesus Christ. Christ himself is SHALOM. If we are in him and he is in us – we share his SHALOM. SHALOM – the restoration of the whole creation to its proper harmonious life in Christ.*

*Christ – Our Peace has various aspects:*

*Peace with God*

*Well, that sounds wonderful: All human beings should not be outside the “covenant relationship with God,” meaning “nobody should be outside God's design of salvation.” That happens by God adopting us into his family: not because of anything we do, but by his grace.*

*I have heard of the concept of adoption for the first time when I was in elementary school. Michael, a friend of mine, was an adopted child. For me that did not make a difference. Michael was the son of our neighbors – nothing else. Well, for them he was that too. They loved him as their own. And you know what, he even was that legally! When his parents died, he inherited the farm – no questions asked, no doubt about it! He was a son, not a stranger! The same is true for us, when we become “children of God” – we become “heirs of the kingdom,” “sons of our heavenly Father” – royal heirs!*

*This is what God intended and intends for us! He prepared his “peace”, his SHALOM for us and for all human beings of the world! However, we must also appropriate it personally. SHALOM has been prepared by God, but it must become my personal peace, “peace within.”*

### *Peace within*

*When we look at our world today, we realize that most people do not experience that peace, that inner rest within. Our world is “rest-less.” It seems like, that there is always something else which we must have, must do, must get before we feel we can rest and have peace.*

*John D. Rockefeller, the American multi-millionaire (1839-1937), once was asked how much money was enough. He answered: “Just a little more.”*

*One main problem for not experiencing “SHALOM:” “just a little more”, it is never enough what we could have. And that does not only concern money, but everything in life: power, status, influence, pride, things, people to like us, etc. “Just a little more”. But you know what – that will never satisfy us. True peace, true SHALOM never comes from external things, it rather comes from “inside” as a gift of God.*

*Think about it: God gives us his SHALOM in Jesus Christ. That means: Peace with God, SHALOM, is inseparable from fellowship with God through Jesus Christ which is brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, peace with God is more than a personal feeling, or the absence of a sense of condemnation; it is true rightness with God, involving the forgiveness of our sins, and an inner knowledge that we are reconciled with God. That means, an ethical dimension must be present (faith, obedience, humility and meekness – a life of holiness). That is what the entire letter to the Ephesians is all about. Because it is that SHALOM that we experience within, which enables us to share God’s peace with others!*

### *Peace with others*

*“Peace,” SHALOM, which Christ has provided, is not “static” – it not not something to be enjoyed by ourselves. If we try that – we will fail. In fact, real “peace” will not be with us. SHALOM is dynamic; it is alive; it needs to be shared! Christ himself said to his disciples, when he appeared to them after his resurrection: “Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” (John 20:21-22)*

*This is John’s version of the “Great Commission.” That means, going into all the world and sharing the good news – making disciples – is nothing else but sharing and passing on the “peace” of God, his SHALOM!*

*Now, this is not something that we just do, or even could do. When God gave us his “peace”, his SHALOM, he also empowered us to share it – through the Holy Spirit! What we need to do is – to obediently follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, and let him work in and through our lives. However, that is not always easy. In fact, it is not easy at all.*

*One more word in closing: In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:9, Jesus said to his disciples: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.” Children of God will bring SHALOM to the world. However, we also need to know – that always involves a cost.*

*A Jewish student once asked his Rabbi, how two enemies – who are totally different, actually opposite in every possible way – could be brought together and reconciled.*

*The wise Rabbi answered: “Let us learn from the cooking pot! You see, fire and water are natural enemies, and it seems that the two cannot come together without one of them being destroyed: either the water kills the fire or the fire kills the water (depending on whoever is in the majority). However, if you put a cooking pot in between them, things change – and they even work together for good: Think about all the great food which we cook. But you also must not forget what that means:”*

*“The cooking pot needs to be able to take the heat from the fire and be ready to get wet from the water.”*

*“The cooking pot probably does not look the same after cooking, it will be dirty and worn out.”*

*“But only in this way can it be instrumental in bringing about change and something good which would not have been possible otherwise.”*

*“You know,” the Rabbi said to his student. “What the world needs today is more cooking pots!”*

*That is the news we need to hear and we need to share this morning with our world: God has prepared everything in Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God! He has broken down the fence. We can become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Let us share that in word and deed and our entire lives. As we do that, let us become “cooking pots” for Jesus so that the world can experience his true SHALOM!*

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