



Dear friends in Christ,

We call ourselves Peace Lutheran Church. Our name declares that Peace is central to our message and our mission. And what is the message of Peace Lutheran Church? What is the gospel (or good news) of Peace?

There is one verse in the Bible that refers to the Gospel of Peace. That is Ephesians 6:15 which says, "As shoes for your feet, put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace."

What is the Gospel of Peace? Romans 5:1 could be called the summary of the Gospel of Peace. It says, "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The Gospel of Peace is the good news that God has made peace with us through Jesus.

And why is peace so important? Because as Romans 5 tells us, we were born enemies of God.

All the religions of the world try to explain the problem of suffering in this world. Hinduism says that we suffer because we are paying the price for our misdeeds in past lives. Buddhism says that we suffer because we have desires and that the way to overcome suffering is to extinguish desire. Islam says that suffering happens because God wills it for punishment or for testing.

The gospel of peace says that there is suffering in the world because we are at war. Back in the Garden of Eden, the human race declared war against God. We sided with the enemy against God, trying to make ourselves our own gods.

The lie that ensnared us in this war against God was the lie that God was our enemy. "You will not die for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The enemy convinced us that God was our enemy, trying to prevent us from achieving our true destiny as our own gods.

By siding with the enemy we became enemies of God. And we still have that sinful enmity against God in our hearts. We want to be our own gods. We think right and wrong are based on what makes us happy now. We think freedom means getting our own way. When God says "No" we say "why?" When we suffer, we blame God.

God wants peace with us. But how can God declare peace with a world that wants him dead? One way: a peace offering. God can offer something that will overcome our enmity, hatred, and anger and declare peace.

But it has to be something really valuable. God has given us all kinds of blessings in this life and we just figured that we deserved them. What could God give us that would overcome the state of war against God in our hearts.

How about God giving us His only Son as a peace offering? God gave us Jesus as a peace offering. And we nailed Jesus to the cross. But even as he died on the cross Jesus declared forgiveness and peace with us. And when he rose from death on the third day, he declared peace with us. He is God's risen, ever-living peace offering.

Our mission as Peace Lutheran Church is to declare this good news of peace to all the world. God has declared peace with all people through the peace offering of Jesus. We are God's ambassadors declaring peace. 2 Corinthians 5:20 says, "So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

So many people in this world still see God as the enemy. They think that God is out to get them, to punish them, or that God simply ignores them. But we have good news, the Gospel of Peace: God has declared peace with all people through the peace offering of his Son.

As we celebrate Easter this year, let the Gospel of Peace be heard.

Yours in Christ,  
*Phil Nielsen*

