

January 1, 2012  
Christmas 1

*"Another Year for Jesus' Peace to Rule Our Lives"*

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### **COLOSSIANS 3:12-17**

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**T**herefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. <sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." These are the words we just read to you that you also have on the front cover of our bulletin for today. What do you think of when you see the heart with the words inside, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts?" When I see this heart, I think of how much my Lord and Savior has loved me this past year, even though I don't deserve his love. When I see this heart I think of how much my Savior's love will be there for me in this new year that we begin today.

The word for rule is used on once in the New Testament. That means we are not able to get a better understanding of this word by looking up other verses where it has been used. When we look into other Greek writings we discover this word is used for an umpire or referee supervising a game of sports. Think of how bad the football games would be if there is no umpire or ref to call the rules of the game. Even nice little girls would get into fights if there were no refs in soccer or basketball.

Think of how the peace with God that you have in Jesus fills every part of your life and rules it in a good way. When the old man Simeon held the baby Jesus in his arms, he said, "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace according to your word for my eyes have seen your salvation." He was ready to face death because of the peace he had in Jesus his Savior. You have this peace in Jesus. You can face death if it should come this year, and you can face whatever challenges life brings you.

We don't know what conflicts and troubles we will be facing in 2012. If the new year is anything like this past year, there will be some challenging times for all of us. Whatever the conflicts may be for you personally, the peace you have in Jesus will be there for you controlling and ruling and umpiring and refereeing your life.

#### **Let this peace help you get along with other people**

The peace you have in Jesus will help you get along with people even when they bring conflict into your life. "Therefore as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe

yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." How am I going to handle the people that try my patience and get on my nerves or hurt my feelings? I am going to reflect the peace Jesus has won for me by how I treat them. I want to reflect how Jesus feels about me in the way I treat others. I want to face each day putting on the beautiful clothes of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Look at who you are. You are God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved. You didn't deserve this position in life. It was given to you through the peace that Jesus won for you at the cross. Here is how we are described in a previous chapter of this letter to the Colossians, "Once you were alienated from God and enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation." You have no way of knowing how many sins you have committed against your God this past year. The national debt passed 15 trillion dollars but that is small compared to the debt of sin in our lives that a holy and righteous God demands to be paid in full. We are alienated from God, separated from God, without hope. It says that we were reconciled to God. That means we have peace with God through Jesus' physical death. The heavenly Father transferred every sin every committed onto the body of his Son and had him punished in our place. This is the peace Jesus brings to us when he said on the night of his resurrection, "Peace be to you." This is the peace that we are assured is ours when we take his body and blood in his holy Sacrament.

This peace in Jesus brings joy to us personally, but also gives us the power to be kind to people and show them the forgiveness that Jesus has shown to us. "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

You won't make it through this year without someone hurting you. It maybe someone in your family, a member of your church, or just a person you meet who makes your day miserable. Jesus prayed for his enemies as they were nailing him to the cross. "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." Anger wells us inside of us and we want to react by hurting the person who hurt us. But then the forgiveness and peace you have in Jesus steps into the game of life and rules and controls you to such an extent that you are able to forgive, and even pray as Jesus did, "Father forgive them."

Are you ever bothered by sins that seem to haunt you and raise their ugly head from your past life? A 65 year old grandmother from Gypsum, Colorado wrote a letter to Eagle Valley High School, confessing to cheating on a test 47 years earlier. Here is what she wrote in the letter, "I know it makes no difference now (after 47 years), except maybe this will keep some student from cheating and help them to be honest - conscience never lets you forget - there is forgiveness with God, and I have that, but I felt I still needed to confess to the school."

Some sins have a way of haunting us such as cheating and also hurting other people. Think of the people you may hurt this past year of your life. You have forgiveness for those sins in Jesus and also the strength to forgive whatever grievances you have against one another." Let the peace of Christ rule your heart."

## **Let this peace help you grow closer to the Lord**

This peace you have in Jesus will also help you draw closer to the Lord. I am not being selfish when I want the Lord to use this year to draw me closer to his love for me, his amazing love that I have not deserved. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful." What a blessing it is to be close to other members of the body of Christ who share this special peace we have in Jesus. I get to worship each Sunday with Christians who know they are part of the body of Christ because of this peace they have in Jesus. They reflect this peace in their smiles, their greetings and especially in their singing and worship and prayers. The night before he died our Lord Jesus told his disciples, "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you." The body of Jesus Christ, his church, his beautiful bride, shares this peace with other members of the body.

This peace you have in Jesus is like a river that flows through your life and also through you into the lives of other people. Didn't we just sing about that in the hymn, "When Peace Like River?" These words were written by a man named Hoaratio Spafford. And what inspired these words about the peace we have in Jesus? He was going to England on board a ship to be with his wife who had survived a ship wreck several weeks before. Two of his children had drowned in the cold waters off the English coast. As they passed over the place where the ship sank, the captain called for a moment of silence. Spafford looked up at the stars, and then look down into the dark waters where the bodies of children were entombed. He thought of his children. He thought of his wife who was grieving and waiting for him. He thought of how much his heavenly Father loved him through Jesus' his Son, He went back to his room aboard the passenger ship and wrote these lines, "When peace like a river attendeth my way. When sorrows like sea billows roll-Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul."

The Lord has provided a way for us to have faith in Jesus similar to that of Haoratio Spafford. He takes his Word and causes it to dwell in us richly. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." The word for dwell has the thought of taking up residence and moving in. We want God's Word to take up greater residence in our lives, for that will cause the peace of Christ to even dominate and control our lives more.

Last weekend we came together here in this church to celebrate Jesus birth on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. We love singing the hymns and spiritual songs that speak of Jesus' birth. I can still hear the girls singing from the front and back, "In the Darkness." The best hymns and songs that we have in our hymn book are those that speak to us about Jesus and his love for us in ways that reflect the words of Scripture.

Do you recall the time Paul and his coworker Silas were beaten and thrown into prison? It says in Acts 16 that in the middle of the night they were praying and singing hymns to God. Their hymns were sung so loudly that the rest of the prisoners and the jailor heard them singing these songs of praise. Some of our best moments in this new year will come in our worship together as we sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in our hearts towards God.

How can I take this peace I have in Jesus and radiate it to people wherever I go? We have an answer in these words, "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Whatever you do? Are you a student going to school? Are you retired? What job do you have? Do you shop for groceries? Do you have parties with friends and family members? Do you enjoy your neighbors? Whatever you do, give glory to God with the peace of Christ that rules your heart.

Look again at the heart on the front of your bulletin cover. Think of how your heavenly Father's love for you in Jesus will become more real to you through his Word and then displayed through you to all the people you come in contact with this year. A referee can make a bad call that changes the game. Let the peace you have in Christ control and umpire and referee your life. This peace will never make a bad call. Amen.