

# Embracing Peace

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HOPE  
PEACE  
JOY  
LOVE

Sunday, December 7, 2025 | Second Sunday of Advent  
“Embracing Peace” | Isaiah 11:1-10 | Pastor Megan Berry

I don't know about you all, but peace is such a hard concept for me to embrace. It seems like an easy concept in theory: peace on earth = no more war, harmony, people getting along. The Oxford definition of peace is “freedom from disturbance” or “a state or period in which there is no war or a war has ended”. It's quite literal, but is that all there is to peace?

Recently in a therapy session, I was talking about my personal values and the value of peace came up. My therapist asked me “What does peace mean to you” and if I had been walking, I would have literally stopped in my tracks. My brain seemed to malfunction because I couldn't figure out what peace meant for me. I singlehandedly cannot stop war or famine, there is no war within my family that I need to stop, so why did this value of peace feel empty from my life and also undefinable?

I think it's because this idea of peace goes deeper than the literal definition of “freedom from disturbance” or the end of a war. I really like the way Mark Feldmeir talks about peace in his book *Life after God: Finding Faith When You Can't Believe Anymore*. (just a side note: if you've ever struggled with why bad things happen in the world, this book might be for you!)

He states, “We think of peace as the absence of conflict. But shalom (peace) is far more than the absence of conflict because we can be conflict-free and still lack a sense of peace. We might still be unsettled. We might still feel as if something is missing in our lives. Shalom means to make something whole. Shalom is an experience of fullness, completeness, contentment.”

For Mark, peace or shalom, goes deeper than the tangible no more war on earth, into a place of wholeness or well-being.

And I think that's where our scripture is leading us towards as well. Even though on a first read, our scripture seems idyllic, almost like a fantasy “the wolf shall lie with the lamb, and a little child shall lead them”. I think what our scripture is pointing us towards is the idea that part of this sense of peace, part of this shalom, is the recognition that we need wholeness and part of wholeness is complete opposites co-existing together without fear, without worry, co-existing in harmony.

And you're probably wondering “how do we co-exist with the complete opposite people as us without worry or fear? Have you SEEN the world today?”

And yeah, those are my questions too. And unfortunately, this act of peace, of shalom, won't magically happen with the snap of our fingers or the click of a button, it's going to take intentional work to start slowly inching our way to peace on earth.

But I think we can do it! And I think one of our baby steps towards this goal, especially right now in our politically charged times, is to slowly learn how to trust one another again. And this trust is multi-layered and complicated, and everyone will be on a different step of the journey, and that's okay.

I've been reading another book recently called *The Nine Asks: Creating SAFER and More COURAGEOUS Spaces* by Kimberly Danielle. This book goes into the importance of story-telling, the power of story-telling, but ultimately breaks down each of the 9 asks that she details as a covenant that people make with each other when entering into discussion spaces that will require trust and bravery.

I'm only about halfway through the book so far, and it's been a great reminder that this work of building trust with one another also starts at building trust within ourselves. And while it might sound weird to build trust within yourself, I think there's something to that.

Building trust with others and trying to work for peace in the world is a lot harder to do if you yourself are in a chaotic or overwhelmed state of mind. Part of our work towards peace is looking inward and saying "where do I need to practice peace?" or "what parts of myself need to be realigned to work together in a more wholesome way?"

Part of this work is honoring your past, recognizing the ways you've been hurt and being honest with yourself about what might be triggering to you, where you feel that in your body, how you might handle yourself in situations where you feel overwhelmed and triggered.

And doing this work will take time and effort. It might include finding some scriptures that help ground you like Psalm 23 or 1 Corinthians 16:13-14. It might look like having a specific prayer you come back to that helps calm your body and mind or that reminds you to lean on God. Maybe, part of this work is learning to trust in God again or for the first time. It's been a rough few years for all of us, this year especially, and sometimes it's hard to see how God is moving in the world still with everything that's been happening.

And maybe you've already done that self-work and you're ready to start having hard conversations with others. To start building those bridges and taking steps toward trust and peace with those who have very different views from you. First, I invite you to check out the 9 Asks, because it truly has been a great read so far on how to prepare yourself for entering into hard conversations with others.

But the "Megan's Digest" version of what I've read so far, is to enter into those conversations with a mutual understanding that this is simply a time to get to know one another's views. That you both promise to listen without judgement (or minimal judgment) and that you're trying to

learn from the other and not persuade the other or prove the other wrong.

There is something beautiful about the opportunities to speak freely without fear of being judged or criticized, to really speak your truth and your story and why you think in certain ways. It can sometimes lead to moments of peace.

And while I wish this little sermon had the answers to magically fix everything in a month, unfortunately this is going to be a much longer process with bumps along the way. And we will all be in different spots at different times as new topics come up and new emotions need to be worked through (or old emotions rearing their heads again).

But I do honestly believe that these steps of building trust within yourself, with God, and slowly with others, are some of the steps needed to get us to that beloved idyllic peace on earth that we read in our scripture. Amen.