



CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

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Finding Peace With Each Other

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Good morning church. So yesterday my wife and I spent an afternoon at the mall, which happened to be my least favorite place in the planet. And I tell you what, I was absolutely shocked. There is so much Christmas junk out right now. I mean everywhere I look there's Christmas stuff, there's Christmas music playing. In fact, we actually saw Santa Claus walking down one of the I always there. He wasn't looking too jolly actually, but does it seem like it's too soon for all this Christmas? Yes, I mean it's not even Thanksgiving yet. I mean come on already met. I'll tell you what. This is the time of year where I love Christmas obviously, but this is the time of year where there's some anxiety that comes. Anyone else feel that?

You see I happen to be, I think, the world's worst gift giver. I am horrible, I have a horrible track record of picking out gifts, especially for my wife, and it causes me some stress. I mean my repertoire of presents over the last few years have included, for for Rachel, a she wanted some new comfortable pajamas, so I went out to Wal-Mart and I got her this amazing pair of Minnie Mouse P.J.s. I thought they looked comfortable. They had like a hood and everything with like the Minnie Mouse ears on it and the little footie that came with, come on! That it didn't go over well. Or the time, I'm a cheapskate, I spent a whopping \$2.88 on a pair of earrings and I left the tag on. Not good, that was that was not good. One time it was the only gift I gave her, but I gave her a bag of Skittles. But it was a tropical kind. So, I thought it was really good. She'd be excited not so much. It's actually gotten so bad that my kids are beginning to like rat me out to her. And so, two years ago I got her a pair of slippers. I thought they were amazing they looked comfortable to me. They turned out to be man slippers, but my kids saw and just like what are you doing dad. So, they told Rachel, and this is the extent my wife has to go to deal with me, she actually

went, I wrapped them up, she found them unwrapped, then took them out, went back to the store returned them and bought herself the present she really wanted rewrap it and gave it to herself a Christmas. I need help. There should be like a support class for like lame husbands around Christmas time held here at the church, man.

Well what we're talking about today is a gift that I think is on all our lists. It's something that every single person in this room longs for. And no, it's not the newest iPhone. It's something that we all want desperately, but we that very few of us actually find it. In fact, it's something that we're willing to pay absolutely any cost to obtain. But oftentimes once we think we have it turns out to be some cheap knockoff that over promises, it under delivers, and we end up wanting to return it. What we're talking about today is the gift of peace. And it's found in our passage in Ephesians chapter 2. So, I'd like to invite you to open up to Ephesians 2, our passages versus 14 through 18th. I want you to stand up with me as we read God's word together. Ephesians 2:14 -18. In fact, I think where to start in verse 13 as we begin to read and to give us some context. Verse 13, *"but now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off had been brought near by the blood of Christ, for he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commands and expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace and might reconcile us both to God and one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who are far off and peace to those who are near, for through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father"*.

Heavenly Father, we come before you this morning and we are grateful that we can gather. And Lord in the midst of our lives we all share this in common, that we all have struggle, there is chaos abounding that there is difficulty knocking on our door. From time to time Lord it gets desperate, and what we long for and those moments, in the moments in between, is this idea of peace. So, I pray that this morning you would just make it clear how we can achieve this, where we can find this, and that we would walk away with this gift. We thank you Father in your Son's name, amen. Go ahead and take a seat.

Peace; it's what's on everyone's wish list. All of humanity collectively desires this. Peace. Peace is this; freedom from conflict. It is a lack of strife, both inwardly and outwardly. It's a cessation of hostilities, it's a dwell in safety, far removed from the chaos that is swirling around us in our world. I mean all we need to do right is turn on the news in the evening. I mean this world is clearly in chaos, there is a lot of

people yelling and shouting and not a whole lot of people seeking to understand and ask questions. In the midst of the chaotic world, it seems like peace is this mystical concept that is completely unattainable. So, we search for it, and just like we search for that perfect Christmas gift we never seem to find it. And so, we go for the cheap substitutes. The things that always leave us empty and wanting more. See the reason I think it's so hard to find peace is because oftentimes we look in the wrong places for peace. And so, some of the places that we look for peace that are oftentimes wrong are this; wrong places, we look for peace, peace in things. Sometimes we lie to ourselves and we believe that our life is measured by the sum of our belongings. He who dies with the most toys way wins. That's the lie sometimes we believe. We think that material objects will bring us joy and satisfaction and somehow fill some void in our life only to discover that's clearly not the case.

How about peace in our image. Some of us worked so hard to craft this narrative that our life is awesome. And even though our life might be in chaos and it's falling apart, as long as other people think we got it all together, that brings us some peace. It's the Instagram life. If you go on Instagram and people are living the perfect life. They got the perfect kids, the perfect husband, the perfect car, the perfect body, the perfect diet. They got everything together and they give the illusion that if we have what they have then will find joy and satisfaction and happiness and then our souls can find rest. It's a lie. How about this, another lie we tell ourselves that we can find peace and other people. Thinking that our friendships are spouse, or our children will bring you peace. You'll soon discover that's definitely not the case. You think if you just, "hey my wife is true to me a certain way that I would be happy, then I'd find contentment. You know if my boss gave me the respect that I deserve then everything would be fine in my life. If my kids would just listen to me for once in their life, then I would be happy, and I would find rest". See the problem is people are sinners and if you put your hope in a bunch of sinners, and that's where everything that you are rests you will always be disappointed, you're not going to find peace in other people.

So, in the first three areas fail gets where we turn. We look inward. We look for peace within. Now, in where peace makes her great online click bait. It makes for you know a lot of book sales. Finding your best life now sounds great but guess what, as you turn inward you begin to discover that much of the turmoil and chaos that's in your life comes from within. Jeremiah 17:9 says *"the heart is deceitfully wicked who can understand it?"* See it's our hearts. It's *us* sometimes that are broken, so looking into ourselves to find peace will always fall short. See the reality is this none of these things will ever satisfy

you. Their effects will be short lived because true peace is not an object, it's not a place, it's not even a state of mind. True peace is a *person*, true peace is a person. We see this in verse 14, didn't we? Verse 14, *"for he himself, speaking of Jesus, he is are peace"* See Christ is the key that unlocks the peace in our life. And he does it in three ways.

Briefly three ways Christ gives us peace. Christ gives us first peace with God. This might be new news for some of us, but did you know that before you became a follower of Jesus Christ., the Bible refers to you as an enemy of God. That you and Jesus were not on talking to our terms. You weren't B.F. Fs, you weren't friends. Romans 5:10 tells us that we were formally enemies of God, who have now been reconciled through his death. In fact, a couple of weeks ago Pastor Steve in Ephesians chapter 2 Verse 3 said this, that we were by nature, before Christ, children of wrath like the rest of mankind. See Christ came and through his resurrection, through his death burial and resurrection, he came to bring peace between us and God. That now we've been called friends of God, and now we can have access to the Heavenly Father. You're not going to find peace with anyone else in this life, unless you know peace with God, and that's only through Jesus Christ. Christ gives us peace with God.

It's not just that he does something else, two, he gives us the peace *of* God. Not just peace *with*, but the peace *of*. Our God is so gracious and so loving to us, now only as he bring healing in a relationship to the father, he brings healing in daily life. As we go about life and there is the chaos, and there's the brokenness, and the hurt, and we're wounded and we are led to despair, God promises to give us the peace of surpasses all understanding in Philippians 4. John 14:27. Christ says, *"peace I leave with you my peace I give to you now as the world gives to you. But let your hearts not be troubled neither let them be afraid"*. He gives you the ability to remain calm when life is chaotic. He gives us the peace of God.

But there's a third way, and this is what our passage today talks about. The third way God gives us peace, through Christ, is this He gives us peace with each other. He gives us peace amongst God's people. So, what is God's plan for finding peace with one another? As this passage reveals for us, there are multiple ways Christ made it possible for us to find peace with one another. Back to verse 14, verse 14 says *"for he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility"*. Christ made peace possible because he made us one. See throughout the Bible there are two types of people there are God's people, and not God's people. They're referred to as the Jews and then the Gentiles. Paul refers to them in Ephesians 2 as the circumcision the Jews, and the uncircumcision

the Gentiles. And when Christ died on the cross, not only did he die to reconcile us back to him, he died so his people could have reconciliation together and his people would be one. That two would form into one. Christ desire and he died in a cross to make us one. It says that he broke down the dividing wall of hostility, not just between God and man, but between Jews and Gentiles, between all his people.

Years ago, many, many years ago, I used to lead a mission's trip down to Mississippi, down to Mendenhall Mississippi every spring break where you go down there and work. And Mendenhall Mississippi is a very beautiful little town but in some ways it's kind of stuck in the past. And it's one these towns where there's literally a set of train tracks going right down the middle of it. And in one side are those who are white and on the other side of town or those who are African American. There's still hostility, still some prejudices that exist out there even today, completely sad to down go down there and observe that. But this is what Paul is talking about. That there used to be a set of railroad tracks dividing God's people and one side there were the Gentiles and one side they were the Jews. And Jewish kids did not play with gentile kids and gentile kids not cross tracks or play with Jewish kids. How come? Because it was the rules man. This is the way they were raised. This is what they've been told since they were young. This is what was written down for them as a set of instructions. But see in verse 15 what we are told that Christ when he came he abolished the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that he might create in himself *one* new man in place of the two, so making peace. See when Christ came and died in the cross what he did is he tore out the tracks, he tore down that the dividing wall, that he wanted his as people to interact and come together as one.

Now that's true, why is it sometimes feel like we're not one is God's people? Why do we tend to isolate ourselves, and we it's just interact with those who are like us? How many churches across North America have a set of railroad tracks going right down the middle of it? So, I look at you all this morning, one we got a really good-looking church, you guys all look good this morning. But we're different, right? We're diverse, I'm not just talking like ethnicity. I mean we got young and old, we got gray hair, we got pink hair we got purple hair, we got those who are wearing suits, we had those are wearing t-shirts on Sunday morning. We got those who raise their hands in worship, and we got those who won't even raise their hand ask a question. We are different and the differences aren't necessarily bad. But a problem comes when our differences begin to divide us. When we get to separate and isolate ourselves that people are just like us within God's family. Know what we're doing? We're building walls of Christ died to tear down. See I think as believers, we have a tendency to cling to what I refer to as these "micro

identities” within God's family. These are identities that we hold to that are by themselves maybe good things but sometimes they cause division. There's many of them. But I want to share a few of them with you this morning and I hope it's okay at church on Sunday morning for us to get a little real with each other. OK. I don't mean to offend anyone many of these identities, I have myself. But let's just call it what it is these identities at times can become bad.

So, one identity that we come to, that keep us sometimes from loving each other is God's people is this, our politics. We got republicans, we got democrats, we got independents. If politics keep us from loving one another, if you will not be in the same life as someone who is a democrat or an independent or republican, that's a problem you're building some rail tracks down the center of community. Maybe it's not politics, here's what I struggle with maybe stage of life. Now we got married, and got singles we got widows, we have those in the church who were divorced, we got those with kids and those who don't have kids. And I get it. Birds of a feather like to flock together, right? And that's OK. But if you will only sit next to people, interact with people here Canyon Hills that are on the same stage of life as you are, if you will only be in a LifeGroup with someone who's on the same stage of life as you are, and you will not serve or interact with anyone else. That's a huge problem. That's not what God has for his people.

Here's a big one. How about theological camps. Now, let me say and make clear what I'm *not* saying here. There are definitely times where we have to divide when it comes to theology. I'm not talking about core elements of the faith. OK. Not talking about the nature of Christ who he is, his deity. I'm not talking about the inerrancy of Scripture, right? I'm talking about the theological issues that for 2000 years the church has not had unity on and they're still trying to figure out. Topics that good and godly men and women can disagree with and still have fellowship and get along with each other. But sometimes we wear these theological camps and we put them on, and they keep us separated and keep us from loving each other. See your primary identity is Christian. My primary identity is Christian. You are a follower of Jesus Christ. You are redeemed by him. That's who you are. You're not reformed. You're not Calvinist or you're not Armenian and you're not pre-trib or post- trib, you're not dispensation or covenant theology. Most of us don't know what that stuff even means. That's not your primary identity. And if you go walking around wearing that is this is who I am, you're building walls. Because a lot of times our theological campus is, we're at war with other camps. And for two thousand years we've been at war with them. I don't think it honors Christ. I don't think in heaven there's going to be all these different theological camps that exist. There's only one people in fact. First Peter chapter 2 versus 9 or 10th gives us what our identity is as his

people first Peter to nine through 10 says this *but you, Canyon Hills, are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous life. Once you are not a people but now you are God's people.*" That's what we cling to. That's what unifies us and bonds us together that despite our differences of ethnicity, and background, in economics, and personalities, that we are one is brothers and sisters in Christ. With Christ that's what is possible for us to be one.

Second point, peace is possible because Christ made reconciliation possible. Now it sounds all well and good right. Here we are Sunday morning, we're talking about unity, we're talking about being one, we should all hold hands start singing Kumbaya, right? But here's the reality, it doesn't feel that way what happens when you get hurt by God's people? That if you've been in church for any length of time you know that this has taken place, this is possible, in fact it's inevitable that conflict is inevitable amongst God's people. Because guess what we're saved but we're still sinners. We're all works in progress. There's still this residual effect of sin that makes you and me selfish. And I want what I want, and I want it now, and we hurt, and we bite, and we devour one another. So, Christ made it possible for reconciliation to exist because he knew that would take place. What's reconciliation? Well in Greek, reconciliation literally means to reunite or to restore to favor. Verse 16 says, *that Christ might reconcile as both to God and one body through the cross, therefore killing the hostility.*" Reconciliation it's this, it's God's process for restoring peace in a relationship. Reconciliation is God's process for restoring peace in a relationship. Reconciliation doesn't mean that there's not consequences for actions. Reconciliation does not mean that you somehow sweep sin under the rug. What it means is that you're willing to give peace a chance and our relationships with one another.

So, I want to get really practical here this morning. You know one of my roles here at the churches, I oversee the adult ministries, and that includes LifeGroups and I interact, I spend most of my day working with LifeGroups, with LifeGroup leaders to restore peace. There's conflict. There might be someone in this room there might be someone sitting right next to you right now that you are at war with, interpersonally. So how do we get healing there? What are the steps of reconciliation? Three things. first step of reconciliation, write this down. Reconciliation starts with self-examination. It starts with self-examination. The biggest barrier to reconciliation with God's people is often ourselves. That we have built because we've been hurt in the past, so we put up walls right. The walls are protective in nature, so we don't get hurt again. But those walls also keep us from restoring a relationship with the person who

wounded us. So, we to ask ourselves some questions. One of the questions you need to ask yourself on your self-examination is this, “when there's conflict have you assumed that you know the other person's motives?” Do you assume that you know what is going on in their head when they wounded you? You know I think the reality is, is that it's possible for people to hurt us but even knowing it, right? That they can be completely oblivious to the fact that we've been deeply wounded and there is going about their life just fine. And here we are off in the corner feeling wounded and angry and getting bitter at them and they don't even know. Again Jeremiah 17, “*the heart is deceitful, who could understand it?*”. If the Bible says you can't understand your own heart, what makes us think that we have some sort of special insight to other people's hearts? The truth is you don't know their motives. So, you have to go and ask questions and try to discover what was going on when the offense took place.

How about this question, have you set unrealistic expectations for them? Have you set the bar so high, that there is no way in this world they could possibly meet it? And all this has done is basically assure that they, and everyone else around you will always disappoint you, because your expectation for people is so high. Conflict always comes out of unmet expectations. So, we ask ourselves are the expectations we have, right? So, you pray about it, and you seek counsel, and you talk to other people who are neutral or give you godly advice. Have you set unrealistic expectations? How about this question, have you elevated personal convictions above other people? Any time we're overly confident about convictions that are not clearly mandated in Scripture, it will lead to conflict. Let me say that again, any time we are overly confident about convictions that are not mandated and God's word, it will always lead to conflict. And all that does is allows us to justify disassociating with someone because they haven't met some narrow standard that we have created. We got to do some heart checks, a gut check. We got to look inward and have self-examination of reconciliation that take place. That's the first step that's hard.

Second step, there needs to be confession. A confession that you've sought the Lord in prayer, you've checked your own motives, if you sense that you've contributed in some way to the conflict, you need to own your part. Now most conflicts, most conflicts, not all, but most conflict is a two-way road. Takes two people to create conflict usually. But not everyone in the conflict has equal blame. So, if you own 10 percent, you own 10 percent and deal with that 10 percent. And you need a humble yourself and repent and go back to that person, even though they've wounded you 90 percent, you still wounded and sinned against them. Own what you need to own and make repentance and confession. In the book [The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict](#), the author Ken Sandy says this “that even if

you do not start to dispute your lack of understanding, careless words, impatience or failure to respond in a loving manner, may have aggravated the situation. When this happens, it is easy to behave as though the other person sins more than cancel yours, which leaves you with a self-righteous attitude which can hinder forgiveness. The best way to overcome this tendency is to prayerfully examine your role in the conflict and then write down everything that you've done or failed to do that might have been a factor."

You've got to look within and make confession. You've got to come out and say I have sinned. In fact, this is biblical. James 5:16 says confess your sins to one another.

There has to be confession, but after confession that comes the third step, very important, but oftentimes the hardest. There has to be forgiveness. Reconciliation will never take place within God's people unless we're willing to forgive, unless we're willing to make the choice to forgive. Forgiveness is a choice to release a person from the obligation that resulted when they injured you. Let me say it again forgives, forgiveness is a choice. It's a decision to release a person from the obligation that resulted when they injured you. We don't forgive each other because other people deserve it. We forgive other people because we realize that we have been forgiven much. Mark 11:25 says this, *"And when you stand praying forgive. If you have anything against anyone so that your Father who is in heaven will forgive you, your trespasses."* Forgiveness is a choice and it's a choice as God's people we must make if we are to live in peace with one another.

Third and final point is this peace is possible because Christ has made us equal. Verse 17, *"in Christ came and preached peace to you who are far off and peace to you who were near"*. You see everyone in this room had a different starting point in your journey with Jesus. That we all the final destination don't we see some of us were far off. Some of us came to Christ maybe later on in life and before Christ you live the life just for yourself. You were selfish you live for pleasure. Anything that felt good or look good you took, and you are the center of your own universe. And if you hurt people, you trampled people and it didn't matter. But then there came a moment where God took a boulder and he dropped it on your life and he got your attention and he reached down to the filth and he pulled you out, and he saved you. And now you're counted among his redeemed. There's also those of us in this room who have been a Christian since we're a little, and you kind of grew up in church. You've been attending church since you were little, and you're always been moral, and you always did good things. And I mean the worst thing you've ever done is steal a pen from church on Sunday morning, and that's the extent of your sinfulness. But see we're the same, we're equal because it took the same crucifixion, the same

death, the same resurrection to save each one of us. Our starting point doesn't matter it's the final destination that does. As someone once said, "All ground before the cross is level". We are equal in Christ and because we're equal in Christ verse eighteen, *"for through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father."*

We have equal access to him. Now this is critical to understanding how we can achieve peace amongst us as God's people. Because the whole same Holy Spirit dwells in you, dwells in those around you. We're part of the same family. We got the same Heavenly Father. And what this means is that when we hurt one another, when we gossip about one another, when we slander one another intentionally or not, you are hurting a son or a daughter of the King. What would you do if someone came up and hurt one of your kids? Hmm, mama bear and papa bear come out really quick right. You'll be fighting and swinging and do whatever you, like you're going to protect your own. What makes us think that our Heavenly Father doesn't do the same for us? This is a gut check that before you open your mouth to accuse somebody who's a sister or brother in Christ, before you start gossiping about him, before you attack him start lobbing verbal grenades in their direction, you better check yourself because you need to understand that if you've somehow misread that situation., if you are signing motives to them it didn't exist, and if you are somehow judging them, they got a Heavenly Father who's going to rise up and defend them against *you*. He's a stand up and he will fight for his own. You very well might find yourself having to stand toe to toe against an angry Father who is going to defend one of his own. That is huge to understanding how we can achieve peace. You talk about a deterrent to conflict, that should cause to fear and tremble before we open our mouth against a fellow brother and sister in Christ. Which should cause us to prayerfully consider and go to the Lord in prayer and demonstrate humility and brokenness before our God. Before we would go and accuse, that when we go to someone who has wanted us to be with gentleness and love, with the goal of restoring a relationship not just venting and getting something off our chest. The fact that we are equal in Christ is a huge deal. And understanding that can bring peace to our relationships.

At the end of the day, peace is a gift that you can't purchase it and I can find it at any store. It can only be given and the only one who gives it is Jesus Christ. The reason Christ died on the cross wasn't just to bring us to the Father. It was to make us unified as his people. When conflict happens in our lives, we should actually as God's people see it as an opportunity. It's an opportunity to display humility and forgiveness just as Christ has done for us. It's an opportunity for us to show a watching world that we are

different. That even though there's chaos all around us and the worlds in complete turmoil. God's people are together that we stand out, that we can be lights on the hill. John 13:35 says *"by this all people will know that you are my disciples that if you have my love for one another"*. There's nothing more evangelistic, there's nothing more mission than God's people getting along. Peace is the gift that you're never going to return, it's never going to disappoint. And I hope that we are committed to striving for peace with one another. Then when we feel wounded, we love. When we feel hurt, we give grace. When we are sinned against, we seek to reconcile. May that be what Canyon Hills is known for.

Let's pray. Father help us to be a people that are unified. Help us to be a people that love each other. Help us to be a people that are united together and know we might hurt one another that we will come together and seek to reconcile every single time. It's not an option for us. You have demonstrated, you've paid the price to tear down the walls and may we never rebuild those walls that you've broken. Father we love you and we thank you. Be with us as a church. Go before us Father, in your Son's precious name, amen. Well this morning we got some people appear that would love to talk to you about how to find peace. That if you don't have peace with Christ, you're not going to have peace in any other your life. And these individuals love to have an opportunity to talk to you about how you can find peace with Jesus. They're also up here just to pray with anyone else if you need the peace of Christ this day as well. So thank you for your time. Have a great day. God bless.