



Sermon Transcription • Philippians 2:1-11

Christ is Our Peace

Pastor Jeff Bucknam

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

December 9, 1965, that's today - what ... 53 ah years ago, right? Right, that's when that aired, it aired in the United States on CBS, which is one of the national channels in the US. When it aired there was some concern about whether or not it was going to be well received. Coca-Cola actually was the one who put it out, believe it or not, there was portions of that show - which I'm sure you've all shown to your children - and you've seen several times yourself. There are portions of it actually that were like, blatant advertising for Coca-Cola. Snoopy at point apparently ran into a sign that says, "Drink Coke". But they edited all that out so that we don't experience it that way anymore. They were really concerned - the people who put it together, especially the network and Coca-Cola were really concerned with that section right there in this show. Because it was kind of the only time in the mid '60's where somebody would be in a popular television program, reading Scripture of that kind of length. I mean it's from the King James Version - Linus gets up and he answers the question that Charlie Brown has, "What's Christmas all about?" People were concerned, the advertisers and others, that it's going to turn off a big section of the population. But it didn't! Half of the United States population watched that show. Half! Like it was huge, huge and we watch it today right? I mean I watch it every year with my kids, I'm sure that you've seen it several times, everybody raise their hand - everybody's seen the Charlie Brown Christmas, everybody at some point or another has been to some dance somewhere and tried to do the dances of the Charlie Brown Christmas - yes? Right, [dancing] this one and this one, yeah you're welcome, that's all you're going to get. [Laughter] But you go and get your tree every year, the running joke that I have with my family is if it's my turn to choose the tree, I always say, "Well we're getting a Charlie Brown tree, I'm just going to find a bush out front there and that's the one we're going to ..."

"Dad, no!!"

"No, that's what we're getting."

"No!!!"

"It's cheaper."

"No!!!"

"The true meaning of Christmas kids." Right, it's part of our cultural language right. I spoke to a guy a number of years ago, who said that he grew up, he grew up not around the church at all, and the only piece of Scripture that ever he had known prior to coming to church was from that, from that play, or from that show. This section in Luke 2, which of course is the story of the birth of Christ and how it's announced to the shepherds in the midst of a field. It ends - and the reason I showed it to you - is it ends with these lines in Luke 2:13-14.



“Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘[Glory to God in the highest] Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.’”

Now when you and I hear that, we think that what he’s talking about - that Jesus is going to come and he’s going to bring peace to us, what we think that means is like good feelings, the kind of peaceful feelings I have when I’m sitting by the fireplace and all the Christmas stuff is done and I’ve wrapped all the presents and it’s Christmas Eve and it’s snowing outside and all is right with the world and the kids are all asleep. That kind of peace, that kind of inner peace. But that’s probably not what’s being announced to these shepherds in this moment. They’re announcing that there’s glory to God in heaven and on earth peace among men, and woman, on whom his favour rests. Meaning that what Jesus does is he comes to bring, in the Hebrew language, *shalom*, he comes to bring a wholeness to our relationships. He comes to actually create a body of people who will be marked by the peace that they have with one another. Such a way that the rest of the world’s going to look at them and think, “Look at how they love one another, look at how much peace they have among one another, man I want to have a part of that.” It’s like a taste of heaven. I want to have a part of that. So Christmas, the incarnation of Jesus, coming from heaven to earth is supposed to lead us to a kind of peace. Christ in that sense is our peace, not just inwardly, but the way we demonstrate it with each other. How does it happen? How does that kind of peace happen and how specifically does Jesus coming from heaven to earth motivate us to that kind of peace? That’s what I want to talk about here, in Philippians 2:1-11, Paul actually takes up that question, he’s dealing with how Christ is our peace with one another and how do we stay that way? He’s actually going to cite the incarnation, the story of Jesus coming from heaven to earth to talk about that. So here, in this passage, if you have a Bible, you can turn it to Philippians 2, and we’re going to look at verses 1-11 here in the next few minutes. In it we’re going to kind of use these as our headings okay. First of all, Christ is the source of our peace. Second, there is a threat to our peace, and then third, motivation - I want to give motivation for more peace. So the source of our peace, the threat to our peace and finally the motivation for more peace.

[The Source of Our Peace]

Here’s the first of those, the source of our peace, Philippians 2:1-2,

“Therefore if you have any *encouragement* from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.”

Now I want you to notice the beginning of that passage, and the first verse, he’s listing out some benefits that are yours if you’re a Christian, if you believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation, if you’ve expressed that to him, you’re saved and there are some *benefits* that you have for becoming part of Christ’s family and he lists them there right. Encouragement from united with Christ, comfort from his love, common sharing in the Spirit, tenderness and compassion.



A number of years ago I was actually interviewing at a church, it was a time in my life where I didn't have a ministry and the Lord had opened up a door for me to perhaps work as an associate pastor of a church in San Jose, California. I went - it was a great weekend, I remember going there and playing in a - they had a church softball team, and I let in the winning run by not catching the ball in the outfield - so that was really great, the church was not happy - it was actually funny. I was interviewing there and this is on a Saturday and like none of the guys from the church wanted to talk to me after that, probably why I didn't get the job in the end. But, one of the things that they wanted me to do is to connect with a lot of the new believers they had in their church. For whatever reason this particular church had so many people who had just come to faith in Christ. And they said, "Listen, what we need is we need an associate pastor who's going to come and disciple these people. So what we want you to do is to go and have dinner with a few of them - just get to know them, and see how they feel about you, and you about them, and see if this is a match. So we did, we went and had some great Mexican food and the people who were sitting across the table from us were from various backgrounds. One guy's all sorts of tattoos and he comes from a gang background; another guy was in the business sector, San Jose right so the Silicon Valley, he was an atheist who came to faith in Christ over a long period of time; these two ladies had some very, very different sketchy backgrounds of their own, they kept telling us, regaling us with stories about their upbringing and how it is they came to faith in Christ - in tears saying, "Oh Jesus saved me I'm so thankful." One of these ladies, kind of halfway through while they're all laughing and talking amongst each other about how great it is to be a Christian - she turned to me, looked me in the eye and she said, "You have no idea, Pastor," This woman's been a Christian for like, I don't know 18 months at this point, "You have no idea, Pastor, how *much* we have as Christians." Now that struck me at the moment because I'd been in the Christian faith since I was like 16. And if you've been around something, sometimes familiarity either breeds contempt or indifference - you just get used to it, you just get used to being around Christian people, you get used to being the beneficiary of all these things that Jesus has done for you. What Paul's trying to do here is basically sit across from you with tears in his eyes saying, "You don't know what you've got Christian. There's *huge* benefits to being a believer in the Lord Jesus." What are they? Well I mentioned them; encouragement from being united with Christ and comfort from his love. So in other words Christians we're not dower, we face the same suffering everybody else in the world faces, we face death and financial hardship and relational turmoil and all that kind of nonsense. We live in the same fallen world everybody else does and we mourn, we grieve. Last week I talked about how we groan inwardly - it's like a woman giving birth to a child, that's a kind of deep seeded groaning - we have all of that, but not without hope. That's different, it's one thing to groan and have no hope, it's another thing to groan and know that this is not always the way it's going to be. It affects the way we view our current circumstances - it should anyway.

So I got an email from my father-in-law, who was a pastor for I don't know - 35 years or so, and he sent me an email when I was kind of getting started in ministry and he wrote on the top of the email, he said, "Jeff, this is what a true Christian looks like." So it was an email from a friend of his who has been part of his church for years and years. And this woman, her name is Nancy, she had contracted cancer and it was at a very late stage. So the prospects were very poor. So here's what she wrote to her friends and family. She said,



“Hi all. Time for an update. I’ve had a wonderful 2 extra weeks of freedom from all the drugs they pump into me. I thought that I was to start a new round of drugs *yesterday* but there were some scheduling difficulties and so Thursday will be my first day. They will be using two drugs on me. This Thursday I will get the first one, the following Thursday I will get the second, and then I get a week off. Then it starts over again. After 2 times of this they will take another lung scan and see how things are going. If the nodules on my lungs are the same or seem to be shrinking, then I will continue with the treatment. If they’re bigger we will stop, and to quote the doctor, ‘Hopefully there will be something else out there to try by then.’ Encouraging, eh? The side effects will be pretty much the same: fatigue, low blood counts. One drug can cause numbing in the hands and feet, which may or may not go away after the drug is stopped. If the cancer is gone, it will be worth it... I have learned more about my cancer in the meantime. My cancer comes in two types. The *other* type typically responds much better to treatments. Mine doesn’t and is much harder to get rid of. I didn’t know that... But, one thing I do know is that God knows all of this and nothing is too big for Him. He is God. He has a plan for me. Right now, this is His plan for me, to go through this. I don’t know what His will for me in this is long term. But no matter what, He loves me and He’s in control. That’s my comfort and He’s my strength... Continue to pray for wisdom for my doctors. And, of course, we’re praying that God’s will is for me to be healed and Him glorified. Love, Nancy.”

So listen, you don’t get that kind of vibe from somebody who doesn’t believe in Jesus, who doesn’t have hope for the future, when they’re facing a thing like cancer, it’s like the worst possible outcome possible, yet we Christians - yes it’s awful and cancer’s terrible and it kills way too many people and yet it’s not the last chapter of the story.

I get asked from time to time to speak at funerals, not frequently because of I’m a bit of a fire brand, and I got asked, I got asked by a friend to speak at their funeral because I am a fire brand. And this woman, she said to me, “Listen, my husband’s family is going to be coming from all over and they’re all a bunch of secularists, meaning that they don’t believe that there’s any heaven or hell, or immaterial world, they basically - real science people right.” And so what she said, “What I’d really like you to do is challenge them.” And I said, “Really? Are you sure you want me to challenge them at the funeral?” She said, “No that’s exactly what my husband would have wanted, he would have wanted all of these people to get in a room, he spent most of his life challenging these people, so he wants you, I’m sure he would want you to let them have it.” I was like, “Ohh let them have it!!” [Laughter] So time came for me to speak at this funeral and there sitting in the room, is a room filled with people. I knew the husband, a dear, dear man - it’s filled with people. And many of them travel from a long way off and didn’t believe in God, some of them were like, “This is the first time I’ve been in church in the last you know 50 years or something like that. I left it behind because it’s all a bunch of nonsense.” So here’s what I said, I said, “Here’s what I want to challenge you to think. That you have a grieving widow and a bunch of children here and afterwards you’re going to go over into the other room and they’re going to give you the sandwiches with the mustard on them, and you’re going to stand there with that and a little fruit square on your plate, and you’re going to go through a line and you’re going to walk up to this grieving widow and you’re going to try to offer her some kind of condolence in this - one of life’s most difficult moments - facing the very thing that all of us will face - death. And what do you have to



say here? See if you're a Christian in this moment you can come up and you can say to her, 'Dear sister, I'm so sorry for your loss, your husband was a great, great man, and I am looking forward to the day that I will sit by a lake in heaven with him and talk to him for ages and that you will see him again and we will be united in Christ.' You can say that, you can say, 'This is not the last chapter of the story.' But if you're a secularist, if you believe that the only thing that there is in the world is material stuff, that he is really sitting in a grave, rotting and this is it, and what are you going to say now to her? You don't have any hope. Stop pretending that the next sports win is going to provide all that you need. It's not going to happen." See this is why people don't ask me to do the funerals. [Laughter]

But Christian, you do hear what I'm saying there don't you? Like you have comfort from his love. You have encouragement from being united with Christ. He also says here that you have common sharing in the Spirit, in tenderness and compassion. You see that in verse one there? He's probably - Paul's probably referring to the blessings that are yours because you're part of the Christian community there right? The tenderness and compassion are things that other show you. You have a part in tenderness and compassion, you receive the compassion of others in the midst of your difficult circumstances. That there is a great blessing in other words, Paul is saying, of being part of the Spirit's work in the church.

So there's this story where Jesus speaks to a rich ruler. A rich, young guy comes up to Jesus and Jesus tells him you need to give all your money away, it's basically in the way of you serving me. It's your true God, so let's put your commitment to me to the test, go and give away all your money and then come follow me. And the guy's like meh, I can't do that, money's too important to me. So he walks away sad, and Jesus says, "Man how hard is it for a rich guy to get into the kingdom? Well Peter is sitting there and he's listening to all that and he jumps in as Peter often did, jumps in and he says, "Jesus we've given up everything to follow you." Listen to what Jesus says, Luke 18:28-30,

"Peter said to him, 'We have left all we had to follow you!' 'Truly I tell you,' Jesus said to them, 'no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much *in this age*, and in the age to come eternal life.'"

So there's two things that you get. You give up everything to follow Jesus and in some cases that means your parents are going to turn their back on you if you're from a Muslim background or from some kind of Hindu background, they might actually decide, you're not our child anymore. So what do you do in that situation? Jesus says, well if you don't hate your father and mother you can't be my disciple - that's what he means - that your allegiance needs to be placed solely in me, and nothing can bar you from coming. So you're going to give up everything, everything you've got to follow Jesus. Peter's like, "We did that, we left our nets and followed you. We don't have anything, what about us? What do we get?" And Jesus says "There's two things you get, you get eternal life but in this age, all the family that you gave up are now replaced. Your biological family is now replaced by your spiritual family." What's he talking about? Well he's talking about the person sitting next to you. He's talking about the church, he's talking about what's going to happen when you leave these things behind you join this new body of people and the church is that body of people. And listen, if you've ever been in a



deep moment of distress in your life, I can tell you right now that you have been deeply thankful that you have a church. That your brothers and sisters take you under their wing and they bring you meals and they try to help you as best they can and yes they fail and fall down as often sometimes as they help, but there is a community of people around you who are, who are there to help. And they will be there to help.

The last sermon I ever preached when I was - in order to go to New Zealand we had to sell everything. I remember we had like eight boxes that we placed underneath my parents house. And then we left to go to New Zealand, we didn't know anybody there. Got off the plane, these dear people - Colleen and Hudson were their names. They took us under their wing, they let us stay in their house on the top of this hill. My son, Ethan, was two years old at the time, and he would run around their house terrorizing their fish, they had these fish in the pond and he would try to grab them by the tail, and they were like, "<New Zealand accent>Oh leave the fish alone," you know. They could see the airport, this man Hudson, my son would get up early and I was like, "This is awful." You know, leave behind your family and stuff, you're like, "Who's ever going to help with us." Hudson used to take my son Ethan, and sit outside early in the morning and they would sit and they would look at the planes and he'd talk to him about the planes for like an hour. Like a surrogate grandfather. We stayed there for a number of months and then we ended up moving into our own place, but that wasn't the end of our relationship with them or with others. The other pastor in the church, was an older gentleman, and he decided, he and his wife decided that they were going to be the grandparents to my kids. They would invite them over they'd tell my wife and I, "You need to go on a holiday, or you need to go away for a while, we're going to look after your children, just love on them like crazy." We had friends there who honestly became my children's aunts and uncles, and all these sorts of things. When I left there, I remember the last day, I had to fly away in the afternoon and I told them on my last sermon. "Right, so I got to leave here at like 3:00 pm and right now it's 11:00 am so I got four hours to give you this message." They all kind of freaked out. I was like, "This might be a while so settle in, you know." But what I talked about to that church was how they had embodied *that passage*, how they had become sisters and brothers and aunts and uncles and mommies and daddies both to me and to my children. Every place I've ever gone in the world and I've done ministry, the beauty of it all is I get to engage with brothers and sisters in Christ, and there is a deep joy in being part of the Christian community. Do you have any idea what you got Christian? Encouragement from being united with Christ, comfort from his love, tenderness in compassion, sharing in this spirit. The point here is that there are these massive benefits to being a Christian but Paul's point here is, "Look that's the source of our peace. We share in all these together. But there are implications to that sharing." You notice what he says in Philippians 2:2

"Then make my joy complete. [Like if you have all of this stuff, like if you've been graced with all these things, then make my joy complete] by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind."

In other words if you've received the benefits of Christ's work, then you should share the benefits of Christ work.



Ah imagine - I think I've used this illustration before - imagine that you have children and you have an older one and you have a younger one, and you go to the McDonalds to get the french fries, and you know you do it, you try to hid it from people, but you go to the McDonalds to get the french fries, don't you worry, you know, "Oh I've seen you there." Right. So you're in the McDonalds drive through, and you're getting the french fries cause you want to give the kids a little treat, and you get to, get the french fries, get the big one of course because you're like, "Well I don't want to buy like two separate ones, even though that would be pragmatically smart for you to do, because there's two children in the back and they might fight. So I'm going to get the one big one, cheaper, I'm more Mennonite than I am pragmatic, so I'm just going to give the fries in the back to the kids, give it to the older one because you're freaked out that the younger one's just going to throw it out the window you know, so you give to the older, the older one's sitting there with the hot fries, big - half the size of them, right and they're holding these fries, you give these, and you share some with your little sister, little brother. Okay, kids in the back, and you're driving away and it's not very long before you hear the little one say, "Can I have some fries?" And the older one saying, "No, I'm not done yet." "Can I just, but you're supposed to share." "No, I'm not done yet." And they start reaching. "Get your hands off my fries." Now if the older one's doing this what do you say to them. "You need to share the friends." "No I can't, they're my fries." Then you pull over, as a parent, and you get out of the car and you walk to the side. "<yelling>Give me those fries." And you say, "Who's fries are these? Who's fries?" "<crying>They're yours." "<yelling>Right! They're my fries. Giving it to you was an act of grace. I handed them to you. Do you deserve fries? No! I've been with you all week, it's not been a good fry week, I gave you the fries out of grace, and now you're withholding them from your little brother, your little sister. Are you kidding me? What you received by grace you pass on by grace." This is what Paul's saying here. Not, not about the fries. [Laughter] You see his point though like if you have all these blessings that you've been giving by God, then those blessings should form a kind of attitude in you. You should make his joy complete by being like-minded, passing it onto those around you. The peace that you've received from Jesus should be the peace that you and I demonstrate with each other, yes?

[The Threat to Our Peace]

So the source of our peace, but there is a threat to it, there's a threat to our peace, Philippians 2:3-4,

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."

So there's a background to this historically. The Philippian church, was a really good church, one of Paul's favourite. Paul's in prison when he's writing this, and when you're in prison in the Roman world you had to have people who provide for you or you'll die, they didn't give you like three meals a day and give you like yard time and stuff like that. You were in a hole in the ground and if people didn't give you blankets and provide for your food, you would die, so you needed friends who were giving you gifts. Well this church in Philippi had sent there little friend, Epaphroditus, and they sent with him and basically a financial contribution to take care of Paul while he was in prison. When Paul gets this



gift he sits down and he writes this letter, it's basically a thank you letter, thank you for the money. He's a missionary in prison saying thank you for looking after me and sharing in my suffering. So they're a great church, they're like a real model church in this way - really giving and they're facing the suffering in their community really well, like from the outside the community is starting to look really down on them and they're starting to oppress them, but they're remaining faithful. But Paul's like there's a problem, I can see it on the horizon. As good a church as you in this present moment, and as good as things are going on, over the horizon I see some problems surfacing, namely you guys are kind of fighting with each other. Apparently Epaphroditus when he came and Paul said, "Hey, how are things going in the church in Philippi?" Epaphroditus said, "Yeah pretty good *except* there's a couple of these ladies who are really getting upset with each other." Paul writes about it in Philippians 4:2-3,

"I plead [he says] with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life."

So there's these two ladies who are having a go at each other. We don't know why, no idea. Paul's basically saying, "Look the church is going really well, but it's, there's a threat to the church and that is you guys are not getting along and this little fight that you're having, these seeds of dissention could bloom into flowers of disunity that will destroy everything. And that's the way you ruin churches guys - is you enthrone your opinion; you've been wronged in some way, you perceive it to be so, you enthrone your opinion and then you go to war. It's not just in the church that happens, I mean like have you ever been a part of the sports team where you've had a little bit of a fight between couple of the players and then the team was winning for a while and then all the sudden the players are fighting with each other on the floor. You know it's basketball, they won't throw the ball to each other, "No I hate you. You stole my girlfriend..." Whatever it is you know. And the team all the sudden starts loosing, all of us have been on this team before. Your workplace, you ever had a workplace fracture where there's somebody that you just don't get along with or they've done something to you that does not been resolved and so everytime you walk by their desk your stomach kind of tightens. You do whatever you can to avoid them. When the company was doing really well business wise, but now there's so much fracture within that they can't produce what it is that they were producing before because of what's going on inside. So it is with the church, there was a guy a number of years ago who wrote this blogpost, he called it the *Anatomy of a Church Conflict*. So in other words, here's eight steps to how church conflicts happens. This guy had been a pastor for something 40 years or so. Here's what he said:

1. An offense occurs, somebody's been wronged or perceives themselves to be wrong.
2. A biased view of the offense is shared with friends. Right when you go share it with your friends, what happened to you - you're not being charitable to the other side. What you want your friends to do is come to your side, and of course they do. And that's why number three happens.
3. Friends take up the offense. I mean they like you, they want to be on your team.
4. Sides begin to form. Cause that other person was doing the same thing about you and they've been forming their side, and now you got two sides starting to grow in the church



5. Exaggerated statements are made, those involved hear things that were never said, and say things they wish they had never said. Right, so it just grows and grows and blossoms like that.
6. Past offenses, unrelated to the original offense, surface. “You know I’m not surprised to hear that he’s such a jerk, because four years ago, when I was sitting there in the front row of the church, he looked at me in a jerkish sort of fashion. Hmm he’s a jerk, I thought then that he was a jerk and now its just sure.”
7. Those who try to solve the problem, usually church leaders, are blamed for not following proper procedure and become the new focus of anger. The people who try to step in, it’s like breaking up a fight. You try to step in and all the sudden people are hitting you. “What am I doing - I’m just trying to solve the problem.”
“No you did it wrong.”
8. Then finally, everything blows up and people choose not to speak to each other ever again.

Listen can I tell you, I’ve been a pastor for 20 something years, I’ve seen this happen repeatedly in churches I’ve been a part of. If you want to blow up a church, just enthrone your opinion and go to war. Take that offense, don’t show grace about it, take that offense, and in principle dig your heels in... pull out your guns.

[The Motivation for Our Peace]

So let me give you some motivation for more peace then. Alright so if there’s the threat, here’s some motivation for how we can have more peace and not live like that in our church and in our families. Here we go. Look at Philippians 2:5 and following,

“In your relationships with one another [writes Paul], have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”

Well okay what kind of mindset are we talking about? Now he’s going to quote an ancient hymn here. And in it he’s going to point out two big things, so what should your mindset be. Well it should be that of Christ Jesus. Well what was Jesus mindset? Well think about what it took for Jesus to come from heaven to earth - right Christmas. And then think about what it took for Jesus to go from earth to the cross - Easter. So I want you to think about Christmas and I want you to think about Easter says Paul. First, Christmas - your mindset should be the same as Christ Jesus, Philippians 2:6-7,

“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider *equality* with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself *nothing* by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”

In other words, he emptied himself and that means to make yourself nothing, he traded - Jesus traded his unity, his experience, his everything that he had with God in heaven, in the Trinity, and he came to earth, making himself nothing so that instead of having that fellowship he is now dumb as us. Now look, there have been theologians who have tried to make sense of this for a lot of years. The incarnation’s a miracle. Let me give you a couple of tries here; one from C.S. Lewis. Lewis wrote,



“Lying at your feet is your dog. Imagine, for the moment, that your dog and every dog is in deep distress. Some of us love dogs very much. If it would help all the dogs in the world to become like men, would you be willing to become a dog? Would you put down your human nature, leave your loved ones, your job, hobbies, your art and literature and music, and choose instead of the intimate communion with your beloved, the poor substitute of looking into the beloved's face and wagging your tail, unable to smile or speak?”

Some husbands are actually like this, but you get the idea. I mean, okay, Lewis, ah it makes kind of sense but the question is, is the gap that exists between human beings and dogs, as great as the gap that exists between God and human beings. Ah, so here's Philip Yancey's try at it, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, I've shared this lots of Christmas', great quote, he says,

“The God who roared, who could order armies and empires about like pawns on a chessboard, this God emerged in Palestine as a baby who could not speak or eat solid food or control his bladder, who depended on a teenager for shelter, food, and love. Once, when I was in London at a performance of Handel's *Messiah*, I looked toward the auditorium's royal box where the queen and her family sat and I caught glimpses of the more typical way rulers stride through the world: with bodyguards, and a trumpet fanfare, and a flourish of bright clothes and flashing jewelry. Queen Elizabeth II had recently visited the United States, and reporters delighted in spelling out the logistics involved: her 200 kilos of luggage included two outfits for every occasion, a mourning outfit in case someone died, forty pints of plasma, and white kid leather toilet seat covers. She brought along her own hairdresser, two valets, and a host of other attendants. A brief visit of royalty to a foreign country can easily cost twenty million dollars. In meek contrast, God's visit to earth took place in an animal shelter with no attendants present and nowhere to lay the newborn king but a feed trough. Indeed, the event that divided history, and even our calendars, into two parts may have had more animal than human witnesses. [An animal] a mule could have stepped on him [on God].”

A mule could have stepped on God. See Paul's point here is look, you just, when you look at Christmas it reeks of humility - yes? That's a *long way to go* from heaven to earth. But he didn't stop there, the humility of Jesus, coming that distance to restore a relationship didn't stop just by becoming a baby, he ended up going to a cross. And that's what he said in Philippians 2:8-11,

“And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

You guys, the crucifixion process among the Romans was crazy violent. The whole thing was done usually to shame dissident. So if you had an issue against the Roman government and you voiced it publicly and maybe even took up arms against them, the way that they would respond would be by crucifying you publicly. And the reason they did it publicly is so that everybody else could see what



they do to dissidents. So if you have any ideas in your head about, I'm going to be a rebel against the government, "Hey guys, this is what Rome does to rebels." Well what is it that they do? Well the process of crucifixion begins with a scourging, they call it the flagellum. They take this whip that has nine tails on it, and at the end of each one of the tails they put little shards of bone and rock, real sharp things, and one of the guards will whip the body. Put the body of a person up against a pole and they will whip the body. And the idea was that these nine lashes come around the side and they stick to the body and then you yank it off so that the flesh of the body comes off. You do this several times, some people die at this particular point because of the trauma. But you didn't want the people to die. You wanted them to stay alive, so that you could put them on the cross publicly and humiliate them. So then you give the - you know the cross has a vertical beam and a horizontal beam - you give that vertical beam to the person, they have to carry it to the place of their own execution, usually on a main road somewhere. The idea here is was that they would have to walk through crowds of people who would jeer at them, in front of the victim carrying the cross - in front of them was usually a person announcing their crimes. So in Jesus case, "King of the Jews, a dissident to Rome, claims he's bringing another kingdom." This is what we do to people who claim other kingdoms. And you get up there to the top of the hill or whatever the main road is, you are dropped into, you are fastened into the crossbeam, usually by nails, interestingly a lot of the nails went into the arm not the wrist. We're not totally sure that the nails went into the wrist of Jesus but, somewhere along the arm and held them up on there. There was usually a seat placed on the cross, right underneath the bum. And the idea was so that you could actually last longer. You're naked up there, you're defecating yourself and the idea was so that people can walk by and see and make fun and mock and put the sign on the top of your head that said your crime. Once when the Romans took over a particular land they crucified 6,000 people along the main road going into the city just to show everybody else who might have thoughts of rebellion, that this is what's going to happen to you.

So here's my question: If you made the mouth of men and women would you allow them to mock you on that cross? If you formed their hands would you allow those hands to nail you to the cross? If with one thought you could bring the entire army of heaven upon the moment, if you could disband the molecules of the body of those who are persecuting you - would you have endured that suffering? So here's the point. You do see how far Jesus came in order to restore a relationship that was fractured - yes? How far are you and I willing to go then? Those who've been graced, who've received the prize how far are you willing to go then to restore? Peace on earth and goodwill among those on whom his favour rests. Let me pray.

Father, I'm thankful for your grace and for your word. I ask that you would help us to see that this time of the year is certainly about the peace that you bring to our hearts but more than that, it's about the peace you bring to our lives. So God I pray that you would help us, as far as it depends on us, to live at peace with all people. Some of us in the room, I know Lord, have issues with others and they have not gone the distance yet and I pray Father, that you, by the power of your Spirit would press them to do that very thing for your glory, and for our ultimate good as your church. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.