
World Peace

We often pray for peace in war-torn regions of the world. When we do, however, we have to ask ourselves what peace looks like. Was the world at peace following WWI? It was not, for the allies demanded that Germany pay reparations for the war, something that would have crippled the country for centuries. What would peace look like in Gaza? If the bombs stopped falling and the Israeli soldiers removed themselves and their military might from the region, and the people of Gaza were allowed to rebuild their homes, schools, businesses and infrastructure, would there be peace? We would say that the ongoing animosities that have been held for decades and even centuries would remain, and while there might be no military activity, the region would not be at peace. Do we experience peace in Canada? Certainly things are better here than in most parts of the world, but there is still discord and violence and animosity. We might say that the desire for some Albertans to separate from Canada is an indication that we are far from experiencing peace.

According to the ways of the world, there are two ways we can experience peace. One that was particularly popular a few decades ago involved the use of various mind-numbing narcotics. Marijuana and LSD were two drugs which helped people relax and have a sense of wellbeing wash over them so that they did not feel the discord prominent in the world at that time. Racial disparity and wars in Asia made life less than peaceful, and those who used drugs often did so to numb their senses. It worked, at least initially, but the power of drugs drops as a body becomes used to them, and more drugs were needed to give the same sense that all is well in the world.

A second way, and more obvious way, is to get rid of things that might cause discord and animosity. If two neighbours dispute a property line, the best thing they can do, before the relationship is ruined, is get the properties surveyed. That eliminates the potential cause of enmity. The problem with this method is that we there are many sources of discord, and it is difficult to eliminate all of them. Some say that we should never talk about religion or politics at a social gathering because such conversations are known to ruin the atmosphere and sometimes even relationships. And there are many other potential sources of discord. Still, this seems to be the method left to us, and least according to popular belief and practice.

There is a third way, but it is increasingly unpopular: obedience. In a monarchy, where the regent (king or queen) has absolute authority, the best way to experience peace is to obey the one in power. Hopefully the regent has enough wisdom to create a kingdom where the needs of all are met, and there would be no reason to fight or argue.

Unfortunately, when we talk about obedience today, it is often in the atmosphere of adversity. In our current democratic climate, we, perhaps rightly, perceive that those in power are looking after their own interests instead of ours, and we are loathe to obey them. Even if that is not the case, we perceive that those in power are not doing things the right way (or the best way), and we don't want to follow. The idea of obeying someone in our world because of our political system tends to create an adversarial atmosphere. When those in power demand obedience from us, we get our backs up, and while we might

obey, we do so unwillingly and often with a great deal of complaining. Obedience does not seem like a legitimate way to peace.

But what if there was a very wise king who cared deeply for his people and wanted only the best for them? If his subjects were confident of this, they would feel inclined to obey him because they know that their lives would better if they did. Submitting to such authority, even if it meant giving up one's independence, would be quite easy.

In some of the reading I have been doing of late, the writer talked about how obedience goes against the grain of our culture because we tend toward thinking we should have independence from authority. We want to live our own lives as we wish and not have rules imposed upon them. And that, he said, is the very thing that causes discord. He proposed that true peace can only come if we live in obedience to our King, to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. To do that, we have to give up our perceived freedoms, our independence, and even our rights. Being obedient to Jesus means that we have to be submissive to him, meaning that our own goals and dreams must be put aside so that we can replace them with his will and way. We can do that, of course, because we know that King Jesus is infinitely wise and wants what is best for us.

God's laws, then, should be seen as something that unite us rather than divide us. Obedience can bring peace. In fact, obedience to Jesus Christ is the only thing that can bring peace. Eliminating things that cause discord is impossible, for there is always something that will divide us and being divided, cause us to experience enmity. Using mind-altering drugs to deaden the feelings of discord is fake and futile. Living independently, demanding that we can do whatever we want will only cause more discord. But submitting our lives to a God who loves us and cares for us and who has given instructions about how we are to live – this is the path to peace.

If (since) this is the case, then it also follows that Christians, joined together in the church of Jesus Christ across the world, have the solution to the problem of worldwide discord: we have the gospel message in which we declare that our King cares for us so deeply that he gave his life for us, and he loves us so broadly that he has given us guidance for every part of life, guidance that has our best interests in mind. Peace is possible only if the people stop fighting for their own rights and voluntarily give up their wills to submit to the care of Jesus Christ. Peace is possible but only through humble submission and obedience to Jesus Christ. That is a powerful message that the world needs to hear, and we have the privilege of helping the world understand. If we want peace, we pray for it, but we are also called to action, calling people to believe in Jesus and showing that faith by living obediently.

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