

War and Peace  
James 3:13-4:10

Has there ever been a time when we have not been at war? ... Certainly as a nation. In our country's 245 years we have known times of peace. But what about as people, as God's creatures?

Adam and Eve knew a time of peace. Their peace with God and between themselves is described in part in Genesis 2:25 *And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.* But that all changed when they rejected God's word. When the Lord called to the man asking, "Where are you?" Adam replied, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked."

A spiritual war has been waged inside each person from that time on. Jesus told His disciples about His upcoming death and resurrection. *But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.* Jesus asked His disciples, "What were you discussing on the way?" but they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.

There is a spiritual war being waged inside each of us, and only in Christ are we able to find true peace.

There are those who have a kind of peace born out of unbelief and ignorance. They reject God's law and His claim on their lives. They believe they are just fine without Him. They feel no need for forgiveness because they are spiritually dead.

We are different. We recognize that there is a war within our hearts. We read God's word and realize we have fallen short. We look into the mirror of God's word and see in ourselves the things James writes about in our text: jealousy, selfish ambition, boasting, coveting, quarrels and fights.

Here James agrees with St. Paul, who says (Rom 7:15), "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." There is a war within us.

The devil is hard at work. And his goal is not limited to causing us inner turmoil. James says there is *a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.* There is more than one kind of harvest. The devil is looking for one of his own. He wants our jealousy and selfish ambition to pour out in such a way that it infects all those around us. He is filled with glee when he sees families and congregations torn apart.

We all come to this place as sinners. We come as sinners who want and need to hear words of forgiveness that is our in Jesus Christ. And so our church is to be a place where people can have bad things known about them and still be loved and cared for.

We do not excuse sin in ourselves or others. We receive forgiveness for our sins through the blood of Christ shed on the cross, and then offer that same forgiveness to others.

Everyone here this morning is fighting a spiritual battle within. And most of us would be mortified if those around us knew the sinful things we have thought, said, and done. But they do know! The people beside you, in front of you, behind you are struggling with the same things. They have broken the same Commandments in much the same way.

If used properly, the time of silence we observe during confession and absolution is filled with people thinking the same thing: “Here I am again, God, in need of forgiveness for my many sins. Pastor is going to start talking again long before I am finished remembering all the ways I have hurt you and those around me. Please forgive me.”

And He does! You have come to a great Savior. He is greater than any one sin you’ve committed, greater than all of your sins put together. His cross is His payment for all your sin. His empty tomb is your guarantee of life eternal with Him. In Him, and only in Him is there true peace, knowing that He has won the war for you.

There is a war going on inside you, but God refuses to lose it. He refuses to lose you. James puts it this way: *He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us.*

It’s interesting, to me at least, that God wants to be considered jealous. Our jealousy is motivated by sin and leads to sinful acts. For God to be jealous is to say He wants you to Himself, and He wants nothing and no one else to have you. He says in giving the First Commandment, “*For I the Lord your God am a jealous*

*God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments” (Ex 20:5-6). Only God can be this kind of good jealous, jealous without sin. And we like it!*

He blesses us and keeps us. His face shines on us and He is gracious to us. He looks upon us with favor and gives us peace.

God’s jealousy triumphs over the devil. He will accuse us before God. Yet each day, as we confess our sins to our loving heavenly Father, He forgives us and gives us more grace. He freely forgives us all our sins, and calls us to be reconciled to one another, forgiving as we have been forgiven.

God has a wonderful way of dealing with the war within us. He fights for us and wins with the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus. And then He gives us a peace which the world cannot give – a peace that passes all human understanding.

The war within us will continue as long as we walk this earth, but even so we are at peace through our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.