

1 Kings 8:6–13

The priests brought the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD to its place in the inner sanctuary of the house, to the Most Holy Place, under the wings of the cherubim, <sup>7</sup>for the cherubim were spreading their wings over the place for the ark, so that the cherubim covered the ark and its poles with their wings. <sup>8</sup>The poles were so long that the ends of the poles could be seen from the Holy Place in front of the inner sanctuary, but they could not be seen from outside. They are there to this day.

<sup>9</sup>There was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets, which Moses had placed there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the people of Israel when they came out of the land

of Egypt.

<sup>10</sup>When the priests came out from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the House of the LORD. <sup>11</sup>The priests were not able to take their positions to minister in the presence of the cloud, because the Glory of the LORD had filled the House of the LORD.

<sup>12</sup>Then Solomon said, “The LORD has said that he dwells in thick darkness. <sup>13</sup>I have truly built a majestic house for you, a place for you to dwell forever.”

It's ok.

What's ok, pastor?

It's ok, that you don't remember me preaching about King David and Solomon a few weeks ago and how Jesus is greater than both of them combined. Someone greater than Solomon, someone greater than David is your Savior Jesus Christ – God himself in the flesh. And, "it's ok" because I don't remember what I even said yesterday. Not every sermon is going to be memorable, not every sermon is going to be pastor 'hitting one out of the park!" But every Sunday it is still good day to remember and maybe review a little bit of repetition which might have something to do with learning.

It's ok.

"It's ok, Simeon," the Holy Spirit had been saying to him. You will see your salvation before you die. And what's even more Mary let him hold his salvation in his own arms before the arms of God himself would carry the soul of Simeon into heaven. Peace of mind, peace of heart, peace of soul is what God had given to Simeon and Anna in the Gospel lesson. The same peace about which Solomon in the OT lesson was speaking.

It's ok.

"It's ok" Solomon was essentially saying to his people at that time and place and space of the dedication to God for the temple he built for him. The comfort that Israel had been waiting for, for a long time was finally there – not because of a building project, but because God himself was right there serving his people from his temple. Notice, even the priests couldn't do their jobs because God got in their way!

People of Peace need places and spaces of Peace to gather and be of service to one another in the name of the LORD who also gathers where one or two are there in his name.

Now, today we get to see Solomon fulfilling his father David's dream that God did not allow him to do. Solomon built the temple for the LORD and the LORD approved of his effort. Like old Simeon who held baby Jesus in his arms we can also be people of peace gathered in places of peace. Believers come to church to be reminded that Jesus is their peace. A place of peace was made by Solomon and now today a place of peace can be made by construction companies to reach, preach and teach about Jesus our Prince of Peace.

**Jesus came to bring trouble.**

**Jesus came to bring peace.**

Today being the first Sunday after Christmas we may have had some time to think this last week. Maybe we thought about this past year, or we thought about the year yet to come – today being the last day of 2023 we have some time left to ponder the future. Simeon did too on that day so long ago when he went to church where God led him to see God's salvation in that little baby Jesus.

Like Simeon, Solomon also in today's lesson is doing some pondering of his own. He's being very positive about this dedication of the temple that God had commissioned him to build. Now the same type of cloud that covered Mt. Sinai for Moses was inside of Solomon's Temple. The same God is Jesus who came to bring trouble so that he can eventually bring peace.

Did Solomon let this occasion get a little too much into his head? Because later we read in the Bible that because of his many wives he built other high places for the sake of their other gods. How could Solomon change so drastically from saying "**I have truly built a majestic house for you,**" to building stuff for other false gods?

Solomon built a house of the Lord to the Glory of the Lord who brings peace. The angels that first Christmas sang, '**glory to God in the highest.**' But unlike those angels, Solomon seems to be talking in two directions.

What happened to Solomon's place of peace that he built for his King of Peace? The temple didn't change – and yet somehow Solomon did. When people get distracted away from spaces and places of Peace then their own personal peace can be in danger. To be honest, I wonder if part of Solomon's problem was skipping church? Feel free to prove me wrong if you find Solomon's church attendance listed in the Bible but that fact that he built the temple did not guarantee that he went to it regularly with a healthy pattern of attendance. Or was Solomon so busy taking care of political troubles that church was the last thing on his wise mind? I know many people today who fall away from faith because they stop caring about God's care for them at church. And it breaks my heart.

Solomon is a bit of a mystery man to me, because I just can't grasp how a guy like him could be so close to God and yet fall so far. The bottom line remains a mystery because I just don't know. How might we be tempted to act as shamefully as Solomon? When we ask God to bless us in the ways that we've chosen to serve him to which God says, No. Then does that tempt us to think that God does not approve? Should we expect a cloud to enter the new church building to get God's approval at its dedication? No. The presence of God is Bible Baptism, Bible Communion, and Bible teaching and preaching. Jesus brought trouble to bring peace.

How long will the church last? A place of peace is only as good as people of peace gather there. What good is a church without members? What good is a temple without returning to it?

The glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord that Solomon built. How can that same glory of the Lord fill the houses of the LORD today? Through obedience to God's Word and Sacraments – sinners need their Savior. We need to gather at a time, space and place to hear about the Glory of the Lord that is a dwelling place for the Lord forever in heaven. Not here.

Peace on earth was in that moment for Solomon to cause him to respond in an eternally minded type of way. Peace on earth is Jesus who saw, who came, who conquered sin death and hell all at once.

Peace came by Jesus who came to bring trouble. The more trouble the more we can be dedicated to sharing and showing the presence of God in our life of faith. We serve to the best of our ability and yet God is the one who ultimately causes faith to occur in hearts dedicated to possess the peace of Christ by grace through faith.

Bible believing people respond to God's gift of peace and grace in similar ways. Simeon, Anna and Solomon all give honor and praise and glory to God for bringing peace divine, peace eternal, peace that fills hearts with the joy of Jesus when we come to the house of God. The glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD. How much of the glory of the LORD fills our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit?

How much of the holidays to bring family back together when it sometimes gets ugly? Oh boy.

There are **places of peace and people of peace**. Places like churches, temples and houses of worship are supposed to be peaceful places but they are not always that way. Jesus came to bring trouble because Jesus came to bring truth. We repent – Jesus forgives

**Places of peace** are not as important as people of peace who can be found in them. Jesus comes to bring peace to people who build places of peace in the name of and to the glory of God the LORD.

Notice that Simeon was waiting for '**the comfort of Israel**' which is a title we may not remember that describes Jesus. Jesus is peace on earth as the angels sang, but not the type of peace we expect. Jesus is peace on earth as Simeon says he can now die in peace. We are souls who need rest from the battles, rest from the skirmishes, rest from all the fighting – and so God provides houses of worship and rest with his blessing of the church.

The “**glory of the LORD had filled the House of the LORD**” what is to stop the glory of the LORD filling our houses of worship? When people fail to come to church, then people fail to be re-filled and reminded that the glory of the LORD is the true comfort that we need, like Simeon. Solomon needed the same ‘comfort of Israel’ and I believe he was returned to him later in his life.

We may build churches that are places and spaces of worship but God is one who builds faith in human hearts where we need his peace, rest and comfort. Jesus speaks trouble inside the truth of the Bible. Jesus speaks peace inside the truth of the Bible.

There is one thing about this lesson that remains a mystery for me. When Solomon says ‘that the LORD has said that he dwells in thick darkness’ is a mystery to me. I have my ideas about that but I’m just not sure, for now. Maybe the more I read the Bible the more that mystery will be revealed to me by God but if not then for now I am at peace with Jesus who lives in my heart by grace through faith. That is what brings me real Peace, that fact of God’s ‘comfort’ is what my soul really needs.

It seems as though Solomon was inspired by the presence of the Lord and the fact that the priests were not able to take their positions of service because of the cloud of God. Only Jesus perfectly served and still serves souls who need his peace at church.

As presumptuous as Solomon may seem by saying, “a place for you to dwell forever” I take it as being positive. When God builds faith he means for it to last. Not to go out of season, not to be a one time thing, not to grow out of it, and not to treat it as a one-and-done kind of thing. Faith causes the soul of a believer to endure forever and eventually like Simeon be taken to God’s eternal house of heaven to live there with Jesus forever.

This place of peace will bring people to be at peace with God – because Jesus true God and true man is the one Person of Peace who brings comfort to all who struggle through this life.

Jesus is God and his presence is the Bible at church and the Bible at home. God the Holy Spirit lives in our hearts by way of Jesus’ peace from the Father’s love. Salvation is spoken to bring you forever peace made ready for the day we die and enter heaven. Amen.