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First—Righteousness — And After That—Peace

By Rev. Samuel McPheeters Glasgow, D.D.

"First—King of Righteousness and after that also King of Salem, which is King of Peace." (Hebrews 7:2).

"Peace" is the primary word in the mind of the world today. That's the word with the golden glow; the radiant word covered by the dark shadows of war in the human heart,—hoping, waiting, praying, warring, for peace.

A young pilot officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force, now in the combat zone in England, was worshipping with us at the family altar some months ago. When we arose from our knees, he repeated a phrase that had been used in the prayer for peace. He seemed to find a deep satisfaction in it. In the prayer we had prayed for "peace with righteousness." "That's what we want," he said, "peace with righteousness."

The great Christian forces in this day are not beseeching God to be on their side, but are seeking in humble earnestness to be found on God's side in this global contest.

"Peace" is the word that constantly knocks at the heart-door of humanity today.

One of the most beautiful names of Jesus, our Lord, is—"Prince of Peace." The natural result of Christ's presence and reign in human hearts is peace. Christianity exalts peace and bids its followers work for peace, and, if necessary, fight for peace. But we must discriminate. We are not thinking of "peace at any price." Such is a betrayal that only genders strife. Such is only a brief cessation that the roots of war may deeper grow. God's Word forbids our crying "peace, peace," when there is no peace. When there is no peace.

Surface healing, with the infection deep down, is more dangerous and deadly because there is an apparent cure.

What kind of a peace do we long to find, bringing to a conclusion this world chaos, this global devastation and conflagration? Not a negotiated peace, which only sows the seed of future and more terrible wars for our children. And not a sentimental peace that blinds its eyes to the stern fundamental facts. There must be justice and retribution; the moral order of the world must be vindicated. If not a negotiated or a sentimental peace, then what kind?

Melchisedec is a type of Christ, one of the most beautiful of all the Old Testament types. Our text speaks of the "King of Salem," that is, "the King of peace." But, "King of Salem," "King of peace;" is a sequel. Note that the text says "after that," "he is King of Salem, which is King of peace." After what? . . . "First, King of righteousness, after that King of Salem, which is King of peace."

Jeremiah, who dealt fundamentally with problems similar to those facing us today, speaks out and declares that the Lord will "execute judgment and justice in the earth." And he further states that his essential name whereby he shall be called is "the Lord of Righteousness."

So we today are looking for a Christian peace. A peace that Christ can approve. One that will reflect Christ's character and exalt His Kingship. We must remember, therefore, that He is first King of righteousness, King of decency, King of morality, King of justice, King of honesty, King of truth. And that He is King of righteousness and equity for all people: for Denmark, for Holland, for Norway, for Poland, for China—for all the oppressed millions of the earth: He is King of righteousness.

As His Kingdom extends over the earth, righteousness fills the hearts of men. Wrongs must be righted to have God's approval and to maintain any semblance of finality. God must be put back upon the throne of the nations. He must have His rightful place among men. He and He alone can maintain the moral order of this world. The Church of Christ, and His followers everywhere, must rest upon and exalt "righteousness" before they can build "peace" in man or nation.

There is much shallow talk about the church today. Some who glibly praise it would not know whether its services were held last Sunday or not. They have not been inside of its doors for many months, some for years. They simply use it as an argument. Some who criticize it are simply looking for a victim they can use to prove a point.

There is a growing tendency today to use God and many of the things that belong to His holy plans and purposes as a mere gesture. The hands that handle these are unholy and unmarked by reverence. "He that cometh to God," that really gets to God, that cometh acceptably, "must believe."

So, here is the clear call. First, "King of righteousness," then "King of peace." It is a peace of righteousness that is needed in this wicked and torn world of ours. This peace must be calmly and deliberately and fearlessly administered and it must be sustained among the nations by whatever power is necessary to make it as permanent as possible. It must seek to negate the possibility of another world cataclysm and declare in practical and righteous terms its passion; "never again shall any nation be allowed to destroy millions of its own and of its fellow nations, actuated by pride, turning its back upon God, and adopting as its religion the deification of man."

There are many groups today who are seeking to write the peace terms and to sit in at the peace table, who have not been invited, and, who, I dare say, will not be. There would seem to be elemental justice in allowing the men to write the peace, who have hazarded their lives to preserve our liberty and rights in a world gone mad. Let those who win the peace make the peace. They know what it has cost and what are the implications of its being sustained among men. Clearly God's Word speaks, and I believe with utter finality declares the principles involved. First "King of righteousness, after that King of Salem, which is King of Peace." A righteous peace, a peace that God can approve and bless and undergird.