

What Is the Church of the Brethren? People who find their Peace in Christ

Review:

Time and time again, I am asking you to invest in our Church. Just this morning, I asked our Sunday School class to consider what it really means to be a member here. I asked them to consider investing three hours a week into our church:

One hour for Giving – serving in a ministry

One hour for Growing – studying the Scriptures

One hour for Glorifying God – worshipping God

Even though there is 168 hours per week, asking for three hours is huge! What am I asking you to invest in?

Counting the cost means three things:

1. To Believe in the person of Jesus
2. To Belong to His Church
3. To Become like Christ

PRAY

What makes you happy? Good movie, good book, time with family, time away from family, time alone, spring, winter, kids, friends, etc.

Friday night the preacher at the Prairie Pride asked an important question: why aren't more Christians happy?

They either haven't experienced the peace that Jesus brings, or they have taken their eyes off of His peace. I want to remind you today that if you are part of this Church, the Church of the Brethren, then you are called to have peace. Peace with your God and peace with your fellow man. This peace should produce passion and a different way of life.

From its very beginning the Church of the Brethren has set out to be people who express the passion they have for Jesus.

There were two groups that impacted the early Brethren: the Anabaptists & Pietists. These two groups called the Brethren to principles that have never left us:

1. Get Back to the Bible
2. Be doers of the word, not just listeners
3. The world is in pain, do something about it
4. Preach like you are in love
5. Serve the Kingdom of God, not the Kingdom of man
6. Look at the way your heart is moved from Scriptures
7. No Creed but Christ, no book but the Bible
8. Stand up for the peace that Christ brings

The early Brethren realized what peace was. So what is peace?

Peace is not the absence of conflict. Peace is the absence of inner turmoil during conflict! REPEAT

The early Brethren read scriptures that called them to be peace makers and desired to share the peace they found in the Scriptures and in Christ.

- James 3:18 (NLT) – *Those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of goodness.*
- Matthew 5:9 (NLT) - *God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.*

They knew that if they were peacemakers, then they would reap a harvest of goodness and be blessed as God’s children! What more could you ask for?

Their lives had been changed by Jesus and they had peace. They had truly experienced peace! All of us who have Jesus, know what I am talking about. We have experienced the peace that Christ brings.

Colossians 1:19-20 – *For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in [Jesus], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

The early Brethren had peace with God and they wanted others to have it to. They wanted to be peacemakers by sharing the story of how Jesus changed their lives.

So what about you? Do you have the peace that brings in your life? What does it really mean for us to have peace?

FINDING YOUR PEACE IN JESUS MEANS:

1. HAVING PEACE WITH YESTERDAY

All of us have a past that isn’t too pretty. In fact the Bible tells us that “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” (Romans 3:23) This means that all of us have built a wall between God and ourselves.

In fact, the Scriptures tell us that without Jesus there is no peace: Isaiah 48:22 - “*There is no peace,*” says the Lord, “*for the wicked.*”

You might say, “Now wait a second, I’m not wicked!” But the fact is every person outside of Christ is. You were once outside of Christ and have experienced the wickedness that sin brings.

The term “wicked” refers to what is inside all of us:

Jesus said in Mark 7:20 (The Message) - *“It’s what comes out of a person that pollutes... [then Jesus lists what comes out of our hearts and then says] all these are vomit from the heart. There is the source of your pollution.”*

It is what is in your heart that makes you wicked!

Isaiah 64:6 (The Message) – *We’re all sin-infected, sin-contaminated. Our best efforts are grease-stained rags. We dry up like autumn leaves—sin-dried, we’re blown off by the wind.*

This means that our yesterday is in trouble. Our yesterday, the things of our past that we try to keep hidden from every body else, has made us wicked when we stand before God. Sure, we might look good in front of every one else, but in front of the Holy One, the Perfect One, the Lord God Almighty, we are wicked.

So how do we get out of this bind? How do we have peace with our yesterdays? People try all kinds of things that are accepted by our society – they put a lot of time into their work, they have lots of kids, they put a lot of effort into a hobby, they work out, they spend all of their time with their spouse, etc. None of these are wrong in of themselves, except they won’t fill the empty void that is in every one. Only Jesus can do this. If you try to replace Jesus with these things – then it becomes wrong. You miss out on what He can bring.

The only thing that can bring us peace, though is Jesus.

To put it simply: only Jesus changes what is inside of us from pollution to peace:

Ephesians 2:13-14 – *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.*

Jesus tears down the wall of wickedness that separates you from God! When you put your faith in Christ, you have peace about your yesterday!

In fact Jesus said in John 14:27 – *“I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give isn’t like the peace the world gives. So don’t be troubled or afraid.”*

The bottom line: We can have peace with our yesterdays when we have faith in Jesus!

Having peace means:

1. Having Peace with Yesterday, and...

2. HAVING PEACE FOR TODAY

PEACE - Peace is not the absence of conflict. Peace is the absence of inner turmoil during conflict.

Coming to Christ doesn't mean that you won't have trouble for today. It means that you will be able to get through those troubles.

The world offers: **HAKUNA MATATA**

Hakuna Matata!
 What a wonderful phrase
 Hakuna Matata!
 Ain't no passing craze
 It means no worries
 For the rest of your days
 It's our problem-free philosophy
 Hakuna Matata!

This means that you have no responsibilities, no problems, and no real cares. This is not what Christ offers so that you can handle your today, whatever you are going through. All of us go through storms in life.

Storms in life: health, death of a loved one, a crisis of faith, financial problems, family problems, etc.

In Mark 4, we find the story of Jesus riding in a boat when a storm comes up. He gets up from his nap, and calms a storm by simply speaking.

Think about it, what could have been more of a thrill than witnessing Jesus stand up, speak softly, and calm the storm? Jesus didn't do this miracle so that the wind would be stopped. He did it so that the disciples would learn to have peace. The miracle Jesus wanted to show them was not the miracle of calming the storm but the miracle of calming them in the storm.

This gospel story confirms that the boat in which Jesus and his disciples found themselves went through a real storm, a real threat.

The storm doesn't just skip their boat. It doesn't just decide that it won't blow on their boat just because Jesus is on board. It hits them full force. Nowhere does Jesus promise his followers anything different. A peaceful voyage is not the ticket Christians travel on. But a peace-filled journey, with Christ always present, is.

Jesus Christ's promise is not to sail us around every storm but is to bring us through all storms – that is the essence of Christian peace.

The Church of the Brethren holds three New Testament practices most dear: the Love Feast, Baptism, and Anointing. Why? Because they point to Jesus.

- The Love Feast reminds us that Jesus came to serve even those who don't deserve it. Jesus came to bring peace to those who would never have found it else where! This is the essence of our love feast.
- Baptism reminds us of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism points us to the peace we have with God to handle our problems of today. Baptism points us to the peace we have in Jesus.
- Then there is Anointing – anointing with oil reminds us of Jesus' presence and power during our trials today.

These three Church of the Brethren ordinances are all about peace. Even the very practices of our Church point us to the peace we find in Jesus.

Having peace means:

1. Having Peace with Yesterday,
2. Having Peace for Today, and...

3. HAVING PEACE ABOUT TOMORROW

READ Matthew 6:25–34 – Jesus told us to not worry about tomorrow. How do we do this?

First and foremost, we realize that: Jesus is control! He has the power to handle ANYTHING that life can through at us. We don't need to worry, because we can have peace in the power of Jesus. JESUS HAS YOUR BACK!

Some of you though, don't believe that tomorrow looks to good. Maybe you've been told that you won't amount to anything and you started to believe it. Maybe you've been told that you have a disease or an illness, and think that God has abandoned you. I want to remind you that Christ is not finished with you. He will work out your tomorrow and you can have peace about it!

Philippians 1:6 (NCV) - *God began doing a good work in you, and I am sure he will continue it until it is finished when Jesus Christ comes again.*

Philippians 4:19 (NLT) - *And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.*

Do you remember the story of Beauty and the Beast?

It is only when the Beast discovers that Beauty really loves him in all his ugliness that he himself becomes beautiful.

It is only when we discover that God loves us in all our unloveliness that we ourselves start to become beautiful.

The problem is that just like the Beast, some of us don't like the transformation. There was a part of the Beast that he had to overcome that preferred the horns, and the snout, and curved tusks. Once the Beast trusted in Beauty's love fully and abandoned his old ways, he was permanently transformed.

The same is true for us: once we totally trust Jesus Christ, tomorrow has no worries. Our lives are transformed into peace and beauty.

Little by little, our beauty will come out when we trust in the love Christ has for us. The forgiven person starts to become a forgiving person, the healed person to become a healing person, the loved person to become a loving person. Jesus Christ changes us into the beautiful creatures that we are designed to be!

Jesus says, "don't worry about tomorrow – have peace!"

- There is no one who can condemn you for the things you've done or the sins that will be committed tomorrow! Romans 8:1 (NLT) - *So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. Have peace!*

Jesus says, "don't worry about tomorrow – have peace!"

- Tomorrow you will be new. 2 Corinthians 5:17 - *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

Jesus says, "don't worry about tomorrow – have peace!"

- Tomorrow you will share in His glory! Colossians 1:27 (NLT) - *For it has pleased God to tell his people that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. For this is the secret: Christ lives in you, and this is your assurance that you will share in his glory.*

Jesus says, "don't worry about tomorrow – have peace!"

- Tomorrow, the Holy Spirit will be there. Jesus promises that if you have placed your faith in Him and have repented and been baptized, the Holy Spirit, God Himself will always be with you. Acts 2:38 - *“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

Do you believe that peace is possible? Do you believe that your tomorrow is taken care of? You do if you believe that Jesus has your back. You do if you believe that Jesus will take care of you, like He promised. You do if you believe that Jesus is strong enough to take care of whatever tomorrow brings.

Having peace in Jesus means:

1. Having Peace with Yesterday,
2. Having Peace for Today, and
3. Having Peace about Tomorrow.

Do you have peace? What makes you happy? Is it Jesus?

If you are searching for peace in your life: Go to God. Trust in Jesus. Put your faith in Christ.

I want to leave you with this promise and this challenge:

*Philippians 4:4-7 (NLT) – Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. **If you do this, you will experience God's peace**, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*

The Bible is clear that if you put your faith in Jesus, you will have peace. The Church of the Brethren has always stood for this. At its core is the promise that there is peace in Jesus Christ alone. They have always called for their people to go to Jesus.

Will you go to Him?

Prayer and ask for people to raise their hands if they have a decision.

When Peace, Like a River - #336