PREACHING & TEACHING

Sermon on Peace

Preaching notes on peace, built on the gap between what the English word suggests and what shalom actually means. Peace in scripture is not the absence of conflict but the presence of something, and that distinction changes what the sermon can ask for.

topic notes · 4 segments

Topic notes. The shalom material in movement two is the reason this sermon is worth preaching rather than assumed.

BEFORE YOU RECORD

- Peace sermons tend to arrive in anxious seasons, which means the room is full of people who cannot produce the state being described. Preach peace as something given and received rather than achieved, or the sermon becomes one more thing they are failing at.
- If your congregation is in an actual conflict, preach peacemaking rather than inner peace. The second is a way of avoiding the first.

01. Three texts, three costs

choose one

[Isaiah if you want the public meaning rather than the private one]

John 14:27. Peace I leave with you, not as the world gives. Short, and the comparison is the whole sermon: whatever this is, it is a different category from what the word normally sells.

Philippians 4:4-9. The peace that passes understanding, written from custody. The circumstances of the writer do a lot of work if you mention them.

Isaiah 2:4 or Micah 4:3. Swords into ploughshares. Public, political and about the end of war rather than the calming of a person, which is closer to what the word means in Hebrew.

02. Shalom is not quiet

the distinction

[the reason to preach this at all]

The English word points at an absence: no noise, no conflict, no disturbance. The Hebrew points at a presence: everything in its proper relation, whole, functioning, complete. It is closer to flourishing than to calm.

Which means a church can be quiet and have no shalom at all, and a church in noisy disagreement about something that matters may have more of it than one where nobody says anything.

03. The trap

avoid this

[peace as the suppression of conflict]

Preaching peace in a congregation that is in dispute can easily become an instruction to stop raising the problem. That is not peacemaking, it is the management of appearances, and the people being harmed by whatever is unresolved will hear exactly what is being asked of them.

04. An angle worth taking

if you want it

[peacemakers, not the peaceful]

The beatitude blesses peacemakers, not the peaceful. It is an active, often unpopular job that involves standing between two parties and being distrusted by both. That is a very different sermon from one about calm, and a much harder one to preach comfortably.

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