**10 Pentecost 2025**

As I speak, there are approximately 30 active conflicts worldwide. Major wars include ongoing action in regions like Ukraine and Russia, the Middle East, and parts of Africa. Many conflicts are characterized by civil wars, insurgencies, and territorial disputes. The number of conflicts fluctuate due to diplomatic efforts and international interventions. Of course, humanitarian crises usually accompany these wars, affecting millions of civilians. In late July, troops from [Uganda](https://apnews.com/hub/uganda) and [South Sudan](https://apnews.com/hub/south-sudan) clashed along the border between their countries in a firefight that left at least four dead, as tensions flared over disputed border demarcations. That one is particularly close to my heart, as I spent time during the last decade working through the Diocese of Bethlehem to build schools in S. Sudan, only accessible by Piper Cub from Uganda over the stunningly beautiful Nile River.

In 1969, “Give Peace a Chance,” written by John Lennon, was released in protest against [the war in Vietnam.](http://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnam-war-history) The song became an anthem of the [anti-war movement](http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/vietnam/antiwar.html)—it was even sung by [participants of the 500,000 strong march on Washington D.C.](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/vietnam/series/pt_09.html) in November of that year. Lennon and Ono were well-known members of the anti-war movement. They even created the method of protest known as [a “bed-in,”](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bed-In) involving occupying a hotel room for a week at a time as [they did on their honeymoon in Amsterdam.](http://imaginepeace.com/archives/15702) This song was actually recorded [during one of their “bed-ins” in Montreal.](http://ultimateclassicrock.com/john-lennon-give-peace-a-chance-bed-in/) Let’s pray that that spirit can help end the war between Russia and Ukraine in our own day.

So, we Christians are supposed to be people of peace, right? We refer to Jesus as the "Prince of Peace," emphasizing His role in bringing peace to humanity, but that’s from Isaiah 9.6 and the early Christians read Isaiah into Jesus. In the New Testament, the gospel of John says that Jesus offers peace that transcends worldly understanding, reassuring His followers not to be troubled. Matthew, in his Sermon on the Mount, says “Blessed are the peacemakers,” highlighting the importance of striving for peace in our lives. Paul in Philippians says that the peace of God “passes all understanding” and guards our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, providing comfort in times of anxiety. And in Colossians, Paul encourages believers to let the peace of Christ rule in their hearts, fostering unity among them. And finally in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul describes Jesus as our peace, breaking down barriers and reconciling us to God and each other.

For all the talk of peace, Christians have not always been peaceful. Noble as they have been sometimes construed, the Crusades were a bloody mess. Earlier in Christian history, when Emperor Constantine became Christian, he, as the story goes, had his legions baptized, horses and all, with the soldiers holding their swords above the river water. I think that was cheating. That set the stage for the Crusades 700 years later. As we approach the 250th anniversary of the United States, there are those who claim that we are a “Christian nation.” I’m afraid that is misleading. We were, in part, founded on Judea-Christian principles, but Jesus transcends secular politics and civil religion. Washington, Jefferson and the boys were mostly Deists, not creedal Christians.

And that, my friends, is why Jesus could say in our gospel this morning, “Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division!” The peace he brings is not the peace that the world thinks is peace, at least not lasting peace. His “baptism” would be His Crucifixion, and it stressed Him out. His Resurrection mandate would divide families and friends. The Fire of His Spirit is a cleansing fire, more like a wildfire with a call to action than a cozy little fireplace fire to warm the house and make everyone comfortable. Meteorology has never been an exact science, but Jesus says we tend to be better at forecasting the weather than understanding the storms that rage within us that cause wars and destructive behavior.

"Let There Be Peace on Earth" is a familiar song written by [Jill Jackson-Miller](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harlene_Wood) and Sy Miller in 1955. It was initially written for and sung by the International Children's Choir in [Long Beach, California](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_Beach,_California). Jackson-Miller, who had been suicidal after the failure of her marriage to screenwriter [Felix Jackson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felix_Jackson), later said she wrote the song after discovering what she called "the life-saving joy of God's peace and unconditional love". That’s the peace of God which passes all understanding, because it transcends this world and its politically and economically motivated peace treaties. Once again, love wins.

Our Anglican/Episcopal liturgy usually ends with a reminder from Philippians of the out-of-this-world depth, width, and height of God’s peace…“And the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and His Son Jesus Christ…” and the priestly blessing that follows seals it and invites us to draw upon its power week in and week out. We can’t end wars and conflicts across the world, but we can pray for those who are trying, including Donald Trump, while understanding that true and abiding peace will always be beyond this world in the love of God.

**May it be so. Amen.**