

Opener

By Christmas Eve 1914, the First World War had raged across Europe for nearly five months. The grim reality of a hard war began to set in. Both sides began carving out trenches across the Eastern and Western fronts. They prepared for a war that had no end in sight. The Western Front extended for hundreds of miles through France and Belgium, protecting the heart of France and from an invading German-led army. Life in the trenches was bleak—soldiers on both sides were at the mercy of a bitter European winter. Supplies and morale were dwindling. There was insufficient medical care, and the enemy trenches were often only a hundred feet from their own fortified positions. The distance between the opposing trenches, referred to as “No Man’s Land”, was littered with the bodies of the deceased from both sides. To step into this space meant to step into nearly certain death. It was against this backdrop, that, on a moonlit night, and a frost covered ground, the unexpected occurred. It was something that defied the cold realities of war, and would have a lasting impact on all those involved and even beyond.

The Christmas Truce

Merry Christmas – Are you having a good time? Let’s give Jesus Praise!

Help me welcome all of our campuses – ADOC

A couple of months ago – reading about how WW I started

Holy Spirit spoke to me - events 103 years ago – parallel to today

Most people don’t know who this is...

(Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand picture)

Main catalyst for starting the war – his assassination

Not disparaging this man’s life – but simple act escalated

After the assassination...

Austria declared war on Serbia
Russia declared war on Austria
Germany declared war on Russia
France declared war on Germany
Germany declared war on Belgium
Britain declared war on Germany

This all happened in just a few days
One single act – leading to another – escalation

WWI – lasted 4 years – over 16 million people died

A lot of the war was fought using Trench Warfare
The armies hardly moved at all
They just dug in on their position – and shot at each other

(Trench Warfare Picture)

Digging in on a position – refusing to move
Dig your own line – shoot ammo into the other territory
People you cannot see

But that first Christmas 1914 – something happened on Christmas Eve
Someone took a step out of the trenches – made the first move
French, German, and British soldiers came out of the trenches
Laid down their weapons – a cease-fire
Even though there was disagreement – found common ground – faith

(Christmas Truce pic 1 & 2)

They exchanged seasonal greetings – and talked
Eat food – exchange gifts – played games

That night changed them

When the fighting was to resume on Christmas day and following
They didn't want to fight anymore
The commanding officers had to reassign them to different fronts

Commanding officers created a new rule – no “fraternization”
You can't get to know who you hate – probably won't kill them

It was known as the...

The Christmas Truce of 1914

I feel like the world we live in today is similar
Simple acts that have escalated – polarization
Trench warfare – making position more important than people

Division between husband and wife – parents and kids – siblings
Republican and Democrat
Between races and religions

Joke – Silent Treatment
No one wants to make the first move

Story – even in my own life – relational tension this year
Exhausted by the secular – politics – sports – news

Social media is almost of the devil
Brutal comments – trench warfare

I think we need a Christmas Truce – I'm calling it...

The Christmas Truce of 2017

I believe God wants to use Christmas to bring a cease-fire
Between husband and wife – parents and children
Between siblings – in our community
Between races – between political parties and ideologies

What is a Truce?

Truce: a suspension in the fight

If it were to happen – would happen the same way as it did in 1914

Someone has to take the first step.

Everyone waiting on someone else to move first – let it be us!
Don't make it about who was right or wrong – take the first step

Willing to drop our weapons.

Be willing to let go of opinion – position – ideology
Make the person more valuable than the problem

Focus on what unites.

Let Christmas be a catalyst for change
I know there are real problems
But for all we don't like – there are more things that we do
Why can't we focus on that?

Leave changed.

I believe that we could do more than celebrate Christmas
We can experience Christmas

Chains fall – Fear bow – Lives healed – Hope found
Jesus, you change everything

The Bible's teaching about Truces

But there's one part of this that we must understand
Most think the right way to deal with conflict is...

Resolution

In fact we call it – Conflict Resolution – it rarely works
Determine a winner and a loser – and over 16 million die
The Bible has a different idea – a different word...

Reconciliation

It's better to reconcile conflict – not resolve it
What does it mean?

Reconcile: to bring back together by bringing the balance
to zero.

Illustration – you young people don't know anything about this
Older folks – we reconcile our bank statements
Bring the balance to zero – now Quicken
Look what the Bible says...

(Ephesians 2:14-16 NLT) For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.

Through Jesus, God brings our balance to zero.

And once He does it in us – He gives us the same ministry for others

(2 Corinthians 5:18-19) All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

Let me say it this way...

When we are reconciled with God, He gives us the power to reconcile with others.

I know what you're thinking...

You're asking too much – you don't know what they did
I don't know if I can

You're right – you can't – unless God is working in your life

That's why I want to give you this challenge

If you're looking for a home church
If you're looking for a new life – New Year...

“Give us a year of your life and see what God can do.”

We invite you – give God a year – give us a year

Take you on a spiritual journey – ask others who have

Participate in what we do here

Here’s what will happen...

2018: A Year of Reconciliation

You’ll get a fresh start

I believe you’ll see reconciliation in every area of your life

That First Christmas

The first Christmas truce happened 2017 years ago...

A lot of bitterness in the heart of the people that first Christmas

Between Romans and Jews – over taxes – sound familiar?

Between Mary to Joseph – pregnant out of wedlock

Herod and Wise Men – Shepherd to employers – working all night

God saw it and called for a truce

He took the first step – in the middle of the trenches

(Luke 2:1-14) But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

This is what Christmas is all about

Jesus stepped into the battleground of our lives
Took the first step – clean our slate – no discussion – no resolution
He reconciled us

Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the Newborn King
Peace on earth and mercy mild God and sinners reconciled.

~Charles Wesley

Altar Call

Be reconciled – with God and with each other
He brought you here – to change your life
Let's pray...

Salvation Prayer

Invite our ushers to come take their place
In a moment we will light candles

If you prayed that prayer – let us know
Mark the Connection Card in your Worship Guide
No one visit or call – send you your next steps

Offering – for those who want to give – give you an opportunity
Not an expectation – wanted this service to be our gift

After the white bucket passes – offering connection cards
Black bucket – on right hand side of your row – candles

Offering prayer
Stay seated and sing this song with us
Receive offering and pass out candles

(What a Beautiful Name)

You were the Word at the beginning...

Candle Lighting

Let's all stand together

History records that at the Christmas Truce of 1914

Soldiers gathered on the battle lines and sang a song

Silent Night – Holy Night

God did something in their hearts that night

He silenced the war within

My hope is that God does it here too

I'll light the first one – join us in singing

(Silent Night)

This could be your life – silent – holy – beautiful

My Christmas Prayer

Be reconciled to God

And carry the ministry of reconciliation to others

And you'll experience the peace of God this Christmas

Blow candles out

Collect them back from you at the doors

Merry Christmas