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God’s Covenant and unifying peace of Christ

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KEY VERSE

“That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us.” – John 17:21a.

READINGS

Isaiah 52:7–12; Psalm 45

Introduction

The world today is deeply divided – politically, socially, economically, and even religiously. In the midst of such fragmentation, the voice of Christ rises through His high priestly prayer in John 17 with a plea for unity, rooted in God’s covenant love and the peace of Christ. The call to unity is not simply for agreement or coexistence, but for oneness in love, mission, and identity.From Isaiah’s proclamation of salvation to the praise of the King in the Psalms, from Peter’s testimony in Acts to the intercession of Jesus in John, today’s Scriptures echo a single truth: God’s covenant with humanity finds its fulfilment in Jesus Christ, who brings peace and unity among all people. As the Church, we are not only recipients of this peace—we are called to be ambassadors of unity in a divided world.Let us reflect on this sacred calling under four headings drawn from the assigned texts.

Proclaiming the Good News of Peace (Isaiah 52:7–12)

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation.” – Isaiah 52:7. Isaiah envisions the arrival of messengers bringing the news of God’s victory and redemption to a broken and captive people. The image of “beautiful feet” speaks of those who carry the message of peace – a peace rooted in God’s covenant faithfulness.This prophetic passage anticipates the coming of Christ, who is the Prince of Peace, and the Gospel He brings. The peace spoken of here is not merely the absence of conflict; it is shalom – wholeness, restoration, justice, and right relationship with God and one another.

When Nelson Mandela was released from prison in 1990, the world saw in him a bearer of peace. Instead of calling for vengeance, he announced reconciliation and forgiveness. His feet were beautiful, not because of eloquence, but because he brought healing to a broken nation.Likewise, the Church must rise with beautiful feet – carrying the Gospel not only through preaching, but through lives of compassion, justice, and reconciliation. Wherever there is brokenness, we are called to be messengers of covenant hope and unity.

Celebrating the Reign of the Righteous King (Psalm 45)

“You love righteousness and hate wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.” – Psalm 45:7. Psalm 45 is a royal psalm, a celebration of the king’s character and reign. Traditionally linked with earthly kings of Israel, it finds its ultimate fulfilment in Jesus Christ, the anointed King, whose rule is marked by righteousness, justice, and joy.This psalm reminds us that unity flows from the nature of our King. His covenant is not one of oppression, but of justice. His leadership is not divisive, but healing. In following such a King, we

are shaped into people who also love righteousness and hate injustice, and who bring joy rather than conflict.

A pastor once remarked, “The character of a kingdom is revealed in the character of its king.” Jesus, our eternal King, rules not with a sword but with a towel – washing feet, healing wounds, and restoring outcasts. When we live under His lordship, we become peacemakers in His name.To truly reflect God’s covenant and peace, we must live under the reign of Christ – not merely professing Him with our lips, but embodying His values in our everyday interactions. This is where peace begins – in hearts ruled by the Prince of Peace.

Embracing the Universality of God’s Covenant (Acts 10:34–43)

“God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.” – Acts 10:34–35. In this groundbreaking moment in Acts, Peter declares the inclusiveness of the Gospel. The vision of Christ’s peace now expands beyond Jewish boundaries to embrace all nations and peoples. This is a radical revelation – the covenant is not exclusive but inclusive, meant for every race, language, and culture.Peter’s realization that “God shows no partiality” was revolutionary. He had to unlearn cultural and religious barriers to see the universal reach of God’s love. Christ came not to form exclusive clubs but to build one body from many peoples.

In the early 20th century, the Welsh Revival spread rapidly, not just in Wales but to India, Korea, and Africa. At each place, God worked uniquely through local cultures. One missionary noted, “We didn’t bring God to India. We found Him already at work.” God’s covenant knows no borders.In today’s context – whether in urban congregations or village fellowships – the Church must be a witness to unity in diversity. Racial, linguistic, and caste divisions must fall at the foot of the cross. In Christ, we are one family, reconciled through one Gospel.

Living the Unity of Christ’s Prayer (John 17:11–23)

“That they may all be one… so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” – John 17:21. Jesus’ prayer in John 17 is a sacred window into His heart. On the eve of His passion, He prays not for miracles or victory – but for unity among His disciples. And not just unity in purpose – but unity like the one He shares with the Father: deep, holy, spiritual oneness.This unity is not uniformity; it is not agreement on all issues. It is the mystical unity born of being in Christ – a unity that transcends theology, culture, and history. It is a unity rooted in love and mission: “so that the world may believe.”

At the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference – often considered the birthplace of the modern ecumenical movement – leaders from various denominations knelt together, committing to global evangelism. Despite differences, they agreed: “The world will not believe our message until we become one.”In India, where religious and communal divisions are sharp, the Church must be a prophetic witness to Christ’s peace. Whether CSI, CNI, Mar Thoma, Catholic, Orthodox or Pentecostal – we are one body, called to answer Christ’s prayer through our unity in love and mutual respect.Unity is not just good theology – it is missional necessity. A divided Church cannot proclaim a reconciling Gospel. But a unified Church becomes a living sign of God’s covenant and the peace of Christ.

Conclusion

The covenant of God has always been a covenant of redemption, justice, and peace. In Christ, that covenant reaches its climax and extends to all the earth. Today, we are called not only to receive the peace of Christ but to live it and share it.From the messengers of Isaiah, to the King in Psalm 45, to Peter’s bold declaration in Acts, and finally to the heartfelt prayer of Jesus in John – we are reminded that unity is God’s desire, peace is Christ’s gift, and the Church is the vessel of both.Let us not delay in answering Christ’s prayer. Let us commit ourselves to live in the Spirit of peace, crossing every boundary that divides, and bearing witness to the covenant of grace that makes us one.

Prayer

Gracious and Eternal God,We thank You for the covenant of peace revealed in Jesus Christ. We thank You for His prayer for our unity, and for the promise that we are one in Him.Forgive us for the divisions we have allowed, the prejudices we have harboured, and the peace we have withheld. By Your Holy Spirit, heal our brokenness and unite us as one Body.Make us messengers of Your peace, ministers of reconciliation, and bearers of Your covenant love in this world.Let Your Church – diverse yet united – be a radiant sign of Your kingdom, until the world believes and Your name is glorified.We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

Amen.