

SESSION SIX

The Story of Pax

*A Six-Week Study on
Peace and Justice*



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We are Pax, a faith-based organization with the vision to transform the twenty-first century through the peace of Jesus. Our mission is to inspire and equip the next generation through slow, beautiful, Jesus-centered content by people of color.

Through our content, artistry, we collaborate to create a better world. For more information about our discipleship materials or partnership opportunities, please visit us at madeforpax.org.

This guide is a beta resource that we are still refining. If you find any errors, issues, or have any insights into how we can improve this guide, please reach out to us at eli@madeforpax.org. We want this resource to last and we really appreciate your feedback.

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Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV).

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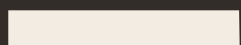
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**A resource by and for
people of color.**

**PAX
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The Co mmatiation



Establishment

Disruption

Call

Climax

Consummation

Consummation of Pax

**This week is about the finale of the story.
This week is about heaven meeting earth.
It is about all things being set right.**

This is our sixth and final session of this journey in the Story of Pax. Last week we learned about the climax of the Story of Pax in the life and ministry of Jesus. In this session, we learn about how the story of God comes to its climactic end. We study where the world is headed and how the restoration of all things will play out in the here and the now. Where is creation headed? How do we imagine the world into the future?



Pulse Check

*Last week you spent time gazing at the love
of Jesus through a Visio Divina.*

*Before you begin Session Six on the Consummation of Pax,
spend time sharing how Jesus' love as depicted by the artist
makes you feel about your identity as Beloved
and your calling to be a peacemaker.*



Preparation

To prepare for Session Six, follow the grounding practice and read the accompanying prayer. Be present with those you are with and be attentive to what God might impress upon you during this time.

Start with a grounding practice because the world we live in is always on the go. We're often expected to show up, produce, and execute. This is a time for us to come together and consider shalom—God's dream for us to be whole, flourishing, and at peace. In truth, shalom is God's dream for us to be fully human. This grounding practice reminds you to slow down, breathe, and invite the God of Peace to settle you before you begin with the group study.

GROUNDING PRACTICE

Light a Candle

Take three Deep Breaths

Inhale: God of Peace

Exhale: I am Here

Inhale: God of Peace

Exhale: I am Yours

Inhale: God of Peace

Exhale: I am Ready

A Prayer on Shalom

- Based on the Psalter

O Dios,

We praise you because you are our deliverer and defender, the One who exalts the lowly and remembers his people.

O GOD, let us not return oppression with oppression. Let us not speak peace with our mouths while our hands and our hearts pursue evil. Equip us as your body to together pursue your peace with boldness; peace that is not naive but sacrificially mirrors your steadfast justice and love. Help us to know that even when you seem silent, you are still working. Help us to participate in this work.

En el nombre de Jesús te pedimos,

Amen

This prayer was written by Giselle Gayton and originally appeared in Pax's digital prayer book, Tethered: 21 Prayers of Pax for and by Gen Zers of Color.

Manifesto

*King Jesus returns to renew all things,
including peace and justice, once and for all.*

Read Revelation 21:3-8, 21-27.

In the book of Revelation, Jesus returns to earth and confronts the empires of the world. Jesus speaks of a time when those who choose to reject God will no longer be able to victimize the poor, dominate the weak, or reject the image of God (imago Dei) that resides within them. The perfection of God's creation will be made possible by the return of King Jesus to earth.

The pax that was lost in the garden and reclaimed powerfully through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus will one day be consummated by God in Jesus' ultimate return.

The author, John, writes, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.' And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.' Then he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life' "(Rev. 21:3-6).

We exist to live into the inevitable return of Jesus on earth and help wipe tears, confront evil, and share Jesus with a hurting world.

We exist to live in response to the birth, life, death on the cross, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. We exist to shine light on the path forward toward joining in with Jesus in the restoration of all things.



Video

(This is a 6-8 minute video experience.

For now, please read the video script below).

Video Script

by Pastor Drew Jackson

Come with me, if you will, to January 1, 1863. It's New Year's Day, and Abraham Lincoln issues an executive order known as Proclamation 95, or the Emancipation Proclamation, stating that "all persons held as slaves within any State . . . shall be forever free . . . and the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons . . . in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom."

When the news of freedom began to spread across the country, it caused much excitement and jubilation among Black people. And we know that it wasn't until two and a half years later, on June 19, 1865, that the last group of enslaved folks in Galveston, Texas, heard this news of emancipation. But even though freedom had been declared, it didn't immediately change the lived realities of Black people in America. Terror still surrounded them on every side, and they now had to navigate new threats to their bodies and their personhood. One formerly enslaved Black man, W.L. Bost, said that freedom meant "being just like a turtle," cautiously peeking out of the shell "to understand the lay of the land." Freedom had been declared, but the ever-present dangers of death, terror, and oppression hadn't gone anywhere.

Last week in our time together, we talked about the beautiful reality of the Story of Pax that Jesus has been raised from the dead. And his resurrection signaled that God's project of renewal, in which pax will once again fill the creation, is now underway. This is good news, and this is what we as followers of Jesus base our entire faith on. The apostle Paul said that if Jesus is not raised from the dead, then everything we believe is false and we have no hope in the world. But Jesus has been raised and he is at work making all things new.

But this is where things get hard for us, because things still aren't new yet, and it honestly doesn't even seem like things are getting better. Freedom has been announced, but it doesn't seem like much has changed at all. Poverty only seems like it's becoming more deeply entrenched as the wealth gap continues to expand; pandemics are sweeping across the world; racism and White supremacy continue to terrorize people of color; our Indigenous neighbors continue to have their rights trampled on. And so, despite the reality that Jesus has been resurrected, things are still not good.

When I was in my early twenties, I lost my mom to breast cancer. And that was a time in my life when I had to say to Jesus, "What gives? You said you defeated death, but death just took my mom. So, what's going on? I believe that you've been raised from the dead, Jesus. But when I look around me, I can't tell."

After Jesus was resurrected and appeared to over five thousand of his disciples, the Bible tells us that he ascended into heaven, back to his Father's right hand, with all power and all authority in heaven and on earth having been given to him. But when he left, he gave us a promise that he would return. In Acts 1:11, right after Jesus ascends back to heaven, an angel appears to his disciples and says, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." This was the promise: that Jesus would come back to bring consummation, or completion, to the work of pax that he inaugurated in his life, death, and resurrection..

Myth

Pax in the world is fully and completely up to us.

Now, typically, the church has had two responses to this. Some have taken the approach of not caring about this world at all--completely disengaging--and just waiting for Jesus to come back and make it all right again. I grew up in a church like this, and was taught that the world is just going down in flames anyway, so the best thing to do is just try to live holy and wait until Jesus comes to get us. But this doesn't seem to line up with the call that Jesus has given us to be peacemakers and doers of justice in the midst of a world devoid of pax.

Others have taken the approach of giving no thought to the return of Jesus and, therefore, believing the transformation of the world is really 100 percent on our shoulders. In a survey that was taken a few years back, nearly 38 percent of people who self-identified as Christian said that Jesus will probably not or definitely not return. Listen, there's a lot that we don't know about the return of Jesus, and I'm not here to speculate about when it's going to happen or what it's going to look like or any of that. But the prospect that seeing the world flooded with love and justice is fully and completely on our shoulders is, quite frankly, burdensome. If, at the end of the day, pax being realized throughout the world is fully and completely up to us, the prospects don't look very good. We haven't even figured out how to live at peace with our own selves.

Material

We engage in the work of Pax because Jesus is coming back.

The story that the Bible tells, however, is that Jesus, as it says in Revelation 21:5, is coming back to make all things new, and that we have work to do in the meantime. I love the image the apostle Paul paints in 1 Corinthians 10 when he describes the church as “those on whom the ends of the ages have met.” What he means by this is that with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the old order of death, decay, and injustice is passing away, and a new age full of the peace and justice of God is being ushered in. And we as followers of Jesus stand in between those two realities, with one foot in both worlds. We are people who live in tension. We feel the pain of this world that is passing away, but yet we have seen what is to come, and we both wait and work for this new world that Jesus is bringing.

In the speech he gave the night before he was assassinated, Martin Luther King, Jr., captured the idea of being people who live in this tension--the tension of having one foot in the world that is passing away, but having glimpsed God's new world that Jesus will fully usher in one day. He says at the end of his speech, “Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And he's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land!”

Dr. King spent his life moving people to keep marching toward the promise--the promise of freedom, the promise of justice, the promise of Beloved Community--even though everything around them stood in opposition to that promise. God has given the promise. It is a sure thing. Jesus will come again to make all things new, and that should motivate us to keep on marching toward the promise and to keep on building for the world that is to come.

What does it look like to keep on marching? It looks like paying attention to see who has been pushed to the margins of our local communities, what structures and policies keep them marginalized, and considering what God has put in our hands to enable us to work for their flourishing. It looks like standing in solidarity with those who don't look like me, those who have had different life experiences than me, because I recognize that we are all kin, and I understand that what affects one directly affects all indirectly. It looks like speaking up and challenging hate-filled speech, even when it comes from family members and friends as we sit around our dinner tables. It looks like asking ourselves every day, “What is the work of pax that has been put in front of me,

today, to do?" We do this work, not because we think it's ultimately on us to bring the fullness of pax into the world, but because God has given us the promise. And through our lives and by our prayers we bear witness to the world that is to come.

There is coming a day when God will wipe every tear away from our eyes. A day is coming when death will be no more, where our loved ones will not be taken by cancer, COVID, and crooked systems of injustice. A day is coming when those who have been trampled on will be raised up, when those who are hungry will eat their fill at the banquet table of the kingdom of God, when every person will be fully seen, fully known, fully loved, and God will be fully worshipped. Jesus has given us that promise, which is why he has called us to build for the world that is to come right here and right now, on earth as it is in heaven. We engage in the work of pax not because we think it all rests on our shoulders, but because Jesus has been raised from the dead and he is coming back.

As it says in this historic Christian confession, "Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again." It was in light of this reality that the apostle Paul told us in 1 Corinthians 15:58 to "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," knowing that our labor, our labor for justice, our labor for love, our labor for pax, is not in vain.

One of the things that we do at the close of every one of our church services is offer a word of benediction, which just means a blessing and a sending as we prepare to go back out into the world to be the people God has called us to be and to do the work God has called us to do. As we bring our six-week journey through the Story of Pax to a close, I want to offer you this word of blessing and sending as we prepare to go. So wherever you're at would put your hands out just like this, in a posture of receiving, and receive this word of blessing from our God:

May the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ go with you wherever he may send you. May God equip you with everything you need to do justice and to love mercy in the place where you're at. May you be reminded that, as a child of God, you were made to be a peacemaker, and may you be strengthened in your resolve to keep on marching toward the promise. So, go in the pax, in the shalom, of the crucified, resurrected, and returning Jesus the Christ. Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 01** Session Six discusses two myths: (1) disengaging from the world; and (2) believing that saving the world is all on you. Which one are you more prone to believing?

- 02** How do Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:58 encourage you to keep working for peace and justice?

- 03** In what ways can you be a person who lives in the tension of having one foot in the world that is passing away, while also glimpsing God's new world that Jesus will fully usher in one day? What are healthy and holistic ways to practice this in your life today?

*Spend some time meditating on your answers from the discussion questions.
Write a prayer of confession in the space below.*

Benediction

*May God bless you with the ability
to release the burden that the world
is not yours to save.*

*May the Spirit awaken you to the beautiful truth
that you have a part to play*

*May your eyes see resurrection
in the midst of this decay.*

*And may you hold fast to the word
that your labor is not in vain.*

Amen.

Go in Peace. Go in Pax.

Motion

Parting Prayer

_ written by Paul Alcorn

*As we depart,
Both individually and collectively
Be who you are called to be.
In any and in all the ways you can
Seek justice.
Resist evil.
Stand strong against Death.
And all Death's works and wiles.
Add your voice.
Move your feet.
Extend your hands.
And because it just might
Hold on to that long arc of history like your lives depend on it.
And pull
With as little or as much strength you have
So that together we might help it continue to bend in the direction of justice.
And peace.
And hope.
And promise.
For you and for me.
For us and for them.
For all of the children of God.
So, having been nourished by this evening's gathering
Its words and its witness.
Go now and be Peace.
Amen.*

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