

If you want to know what is going on in the culture, go to the movies. Movie screen writers are not only incredible storytellers, but they have a way of tapping into the emotions of the current culture to produce movies that resonate with a large audience. So if you want to learn something about the culture, go to the movies. And the movies will show you what the culture cares about, what their worries are, and what is really important.

For example, the original Star Wars Trilogy came out in 1977, 1980, and 1983. The original story was about an evil empire that was building a powerful weapon that could destroy a whole planet: the death star. Much of the battle was fought with “the Force”. This unseen power that some were wielding. Yet, there was hope that the good guys, the Jedi, would come and save the day.

Why did those stories resonate with the people? Well, in the 1970s and 1980s, our nation was fighting the “Cold War.” From our perspective there was an evil empire, the USSR, which was building a large scale weapon that could destroy the planet: the Atomic Bomb. Much of the battle was an unseen wielding of power, much like the force. But there was hope, the “good guys”, the countries aligned with the US, would save the day.

In other words, George Lucas tapped into the deep feelings and fears of the nation, writing a story that took place “a long time ago, in a land far, far away,” and yet it resonated with our culture at the time.

Fast forward to today. What are the latest movies? And what do they teach us about the feelings and fears in our culture?

Here is a list of some the latest movies: Dark Phoenix, Joker, Terminator: Dark Fate. I haven’t seen these movies. But if you would read about them, you would see that they are all have dark, even hopeless themes. One characteristic unifies them all: They all have an unbeatable villain. Some of the movies don’t even have a hero.

I think the screenwriters are tapping into a common fear among people: There seems to be more and more villains in our world and there are very few heroes. The best we can hope for is to hide from reality and protect yourself. The overwhelming feelings in our culture seem to be anxiety and fear.

In this current culture, I believe one of the best gifts the Christian Church could give to our neighbors is a sense of peace. That’s what we will be focusing on today. We are continuing our series called “Fueled”. We are looking at what Paul says in Galatians, that a life fueled by the Holy Spirit has certain qualities. Paul writes “**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,** ²³ **gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)** We have already talked about being fueled to love and being fueled by the Holy Spirit for joy. Today we are going to talk about being fueled by the Holy Spirit to experience peace.

We want to give a sense of peace to our world. But that is hard. It’s hard to give peace to others when we seem to struggle with it ourselves. We are listening to the same news stories. We live in the same culture. We see the same concerns.

So here is the question I want to answer today: **How can we begin to experience peace?**

We are going to turn back to Paul’s letter to his church in Galatia. Galatia was a city in modern-day Turkey. Paul started this church. He saw these people come to faith and grow. He was the one who told them the story of salvation.

So in the opening greeting of his letter he reminds of the story he told them: **Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Galatians 1:3,4)**

The Galatians had peace because Paul told them the story of Jesus, the hero, who came to rescue his people from this present evil age. It is an incredibly compelling story that changed the people. They had a new sense of freedom and hope. God had come to rescue the people from guilt, shame, and most importantly, death itself.

But very quickly, Paul changes his tone in this letter. He is frustrated and even angry. He has heard that some people have come into the Galatian church and distorted this story of peace and hope in Jesus. Paul says in Galatians 3:1 **You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.**

Paul says that some people came into their church and bewitched them. Literally, they cast a spell on their eyes. They directed their eyes away from the hero of history, Jesus Christ. When we read more of the letter and look at some of the other books of the Bible, we learn that there was a group of people who would come in and corrupt the churches that Paul had established. This group was known as the Judaizers. They would tell new Christians that they were not really saved. In fact, they would divert their attention away from Jesus, and demand that they follow certain Jewish rituals. They gave the impression that entrance into God's family was based on their nationality and religious rituals. This led the new Christians to be afraid. They lost their peace. They were filled with fear.

I believe this is what can happen to all of us. We come to church and we hear the compelling story of salvation. We hear about the hero of history, Jesus Christ. We hear that he lived, died, rose. We hear that Jesus is in charge and we can trust him. We hear that very soon he will come back and make all that is wrong be right. We hear a story that brings us peace.

But then we get a notification on our phones about another news story about another shooting. Then we listen to the fears that are flying around Facebook. We think about all our unfulfilled hopes and dreams. And so we forget the story that we heard at worship. And we start believing a different story, the world's story. And it sounds something like this: The world is a scary place. The world is filled with villains that can't be stopped. The world is spinning out of control. All you can do is hide and protect yourself.

That's why Paul reminds them: **You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. (Galatians 3:1)** Paul is trying to remind them that they used to keep their eyes on Jesus and his story. They used to believe that Jesus is alive and in control and coming back again. They used to believe that Jesus is our peace.

That is what Paul wanted the Galatians to see and believe again. That is what Jesus himself wanted all his followers to believe. It was Jesus himself, who promised to be our peace. The night before Jesus was crucified, he met with his closest followers. He could see that they were worried about the future. They knew that their enemies were powerful and wanted to harm them. So Jesus looked right at them and said, **Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27)**

Jesus himself is peace. He owns peace. He controls peace. He gives peace away. And he even contrasts the peace that he gives with the peace the world gives. The world can't really give you peace. World leaders make promises of peace they can't deliver. They might lead well for a while, but then they leave office or become corrupt and our peace is gone. Maybe our family and friends promised to give us peace, but when we needed them, they weren't there.

That is the only story the latest movies are telling. When these all-powerful villains attack, the best the world can offer is just hide yourself and protect yourself because there is no one to rescue you.

But that's what makes Jesus different. He steps into this world, into a real, historical time period, 2000 years ago. He is the best of humans. In fact, he is more than just a human. He is God as a human. He does good. But the dark world can't accept him. All the powers of evil come together and drag him to a cross. He is beaten and crucified like a weak criminal.

But then he comes back to life. And he explains that he absorbed all the evil of the world into himself, that our evil and our death died with him. He is alive and rules. He is the hero of history, and he is bringing all things to a happy ending. And that's why we can have peace.

Some books and movies have picked up on this story. Probably the most famous was JK Rowling's "Harry Potter". You probably know the story. But the evil Voldemort placed his evil all over the place. And Harry was going around trying to destroy him. Harry realizes that Voldemort placed his evil inside of Harry himself. And the only way to destroy the evil was for Harry to die and then Harry was resurrected. In an interview with "The Telegraph" in 2007, when asked about the parallels to the Biblical story of Jesus, Rowling said, **"To me, the religious parallels have always been obvious, but I never wanted to talk too openly about it because I thought it might show people who just wanted the story where we were going."**

So when Rowling wanted to tell a story about evil being destroyed and peace coming to the world, she stole from the Christian story of Jesus' death and resurrection. She couldn't invent a better story than the one God himself wrote. To her, the parallels were obvious, but she didn't want to talk about them because she didn't want to give away where the story was going.

So if you want to have peace, you need to know Jesus' story. It's the greatest story ever told. You need to know the truth about Jesus. So you are filling in the blanks in your worship folder, here is the first one. Although you might have seen this phrase on a bumper sticker somewhere, I think it makes the point.

1. No Jesus. No peace. Know Jesus. Know peace.

Jesus is our peace. Jesus gives peace to our hearts even in the middle of chaos and fear. Jesus allows us to give peace to others. But how can we know this peace? And how can we live in this peace? And how can we give this peace away to others?

Paul is the one who helps us make this very practical. Later on in his life, before he was able to go to Rome, he wrote them a letter. The famous letter in the Bible called Romans. I believe he was thinking about his experience in Galatia, and how the Galatian people lost their peace. And now when he is writing to the Romans, he doesn't want them to fall into the same trap. He wants them to hold on to the truth.

He writes these words: **Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)** In other words, there is nothing to fear. Jesus is the hero over our sin and death. Jesus is in charge. Jesus is coming back again. There is no one to condemn you. You can let your heart be at peace.

That's a great story, but again, how do we apprehend that message? How can we experience that kind of peace?

Paul goes on: **The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. (Romans 8:6)** The mind that is controlled by the world's story, the world's values is death. But when the Holy Spirit controls your mind, you and I, can have life and peace.

But what does that mean? Well, we are always telling ourselves a story. What story are you telling yourself right now? The villains are winning? The world is going dark? There is no hope for peace?

Or are you letting the Holy Spirit tell you the story of Jesus. A story that stretches from the beginning of time until Jesus' return. A story that says, "Jesus is the hero. Jesus wins."

I want the Holy Spirit to have a story to tell you. I want you to have the Jesus story in your heart. I want to Holy Spirit to play that story on the screen of your heart. I want him to play it over and over again.

So I'm going to show you a 5 minute video. We are used to watched 2 hour movies of dark stories of villains who can't be stopped. But I want to give you a new script. I want you to watch this 5 minute video. He tells the story of the last 6 thousand years of history in 5 minutes. It talks about how humans were created, fell into sin, corrupted the world. But most of all, it tells how God made a promise in the garden. God promised to send someone to fight the world of the devil. To battle with evil. In that battle, the Messiah would be struck, but the devil and all evil would be crushed.

Let's what this quick movie, so that the Holy Spirit has a new story to repeat in your head.

[Show The Bible Project video "The Messiah"](#) (please cut off the video at 5:13)

That is the story that needs to be playing in your heart. That is the story that needs to fuel your life. It is through that story that the Holy Spirit will give you peace, no matter what the circumstances.

So our final fill in the blank is this:

2. Tell yourself the "Jesus Wins" story.

Recently, my wife and I went to the movies. We saw Avengers: Endgame. As we came out of the movie, my wife said, "That was a good movie. But you can tell that the writers have no hope. This is the best they can do. They have no hope. They have no peace."

That is the feeling in our culture today: The world is going dark and there is little hope for peace. And we are tempted to listen to that storyline. But we don't have to. We can begin to find peace when we are fueled by the Holy Spirit, as we tell ourselves a different story, a true story. A story where there is real sadness and evil. But a story that has a hero. A story where Jesus wins. And here is the good news, by faith that story is your story. Amen.