

LECTURE SERIES PUBLIC THEOLOGY

An International and Intercontextual Assessment





*Blessed Are the
Peacemakers*

Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac

*A Perspective from
Palestine*

A photograph of a high-security border wall, likely the US-Mexico border. The wall is made of concrete and topped with multiple layers of barbed wire. A tall, cylindrical watchtower stands on the left. The wall is covered in graffiti, including a large drawing of a person and various phrases like 'FREE', 'PAPA ON MIND', 'MIX', 'RAZEK MAINGI', and 'e hatch PEACE'. A person in a light-colored shirt and dark pants stands with their back to the camera, looking at the wall. The sky is clear and blue.

Introduction – Blessed Are the Peacemakers

• The Sermon on the Mountain

- Love your enemy
- Stand up and face the oppressor, and turn your other cheek to him
- Engage with the humanity of your occupier by walking the extra mile
- Do to others what you want others to do to you
- Avoid shallow religiosity—God is searching for the pure in heart
- Blessed are the peacemakers
- The meek, not the powerful, inherit the land
- Blessed are those who are thirsty for justice, who suffer for justice' sake

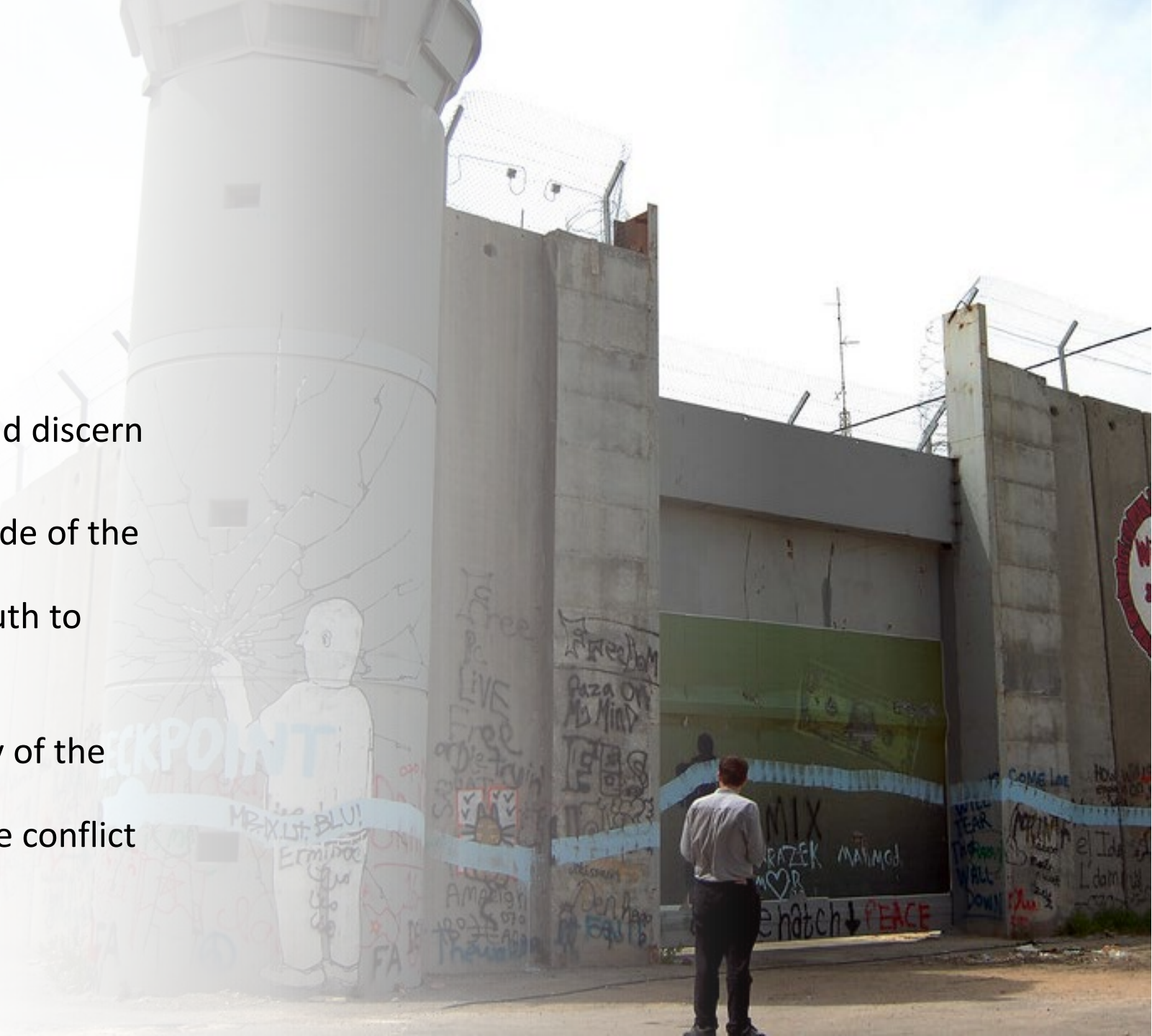
Introduction – Blessed Are the Peacemakers

- Blessed Are the Peacemakers
 - Children of God (serious!)
 - What did Jesus mean?
 - He said this in a politically charged environment
- Kingdom people
 - Meek
 - Thirst for justice
 - Merciful
- We have a mandate; fatalism is not an option!



Blessed Are the Peacemakers

1. Peacemakers listen, understand and discern
2. Peacemakers are compassionate
3. Peacemakers step into the other side of the Wall
4. Peacemakers takes sides; speak truth to power
5. Peacemakers seek justice
6. Peacemakers engage the humanity of the aggressor
7. Peacemakers go beyond ending the conflict



Peacemakers listen, understand and discern

- Study... listen... understand
- Discern and ask the right questions
- Avoid stereotypes
- Humanize conflict... It is about real people
- Compassion



Peacemakers Are Compassionate

- We should care
- We should mourn
- “Apathy” has no place!
- “It’s unfortunate”



Peacemakers Are Compassionate

- “The opposite of good is not evil, the opposite of good is indifference.”
(Abraham Heschel)
- Jesus and the Parable of the Good Samaritan



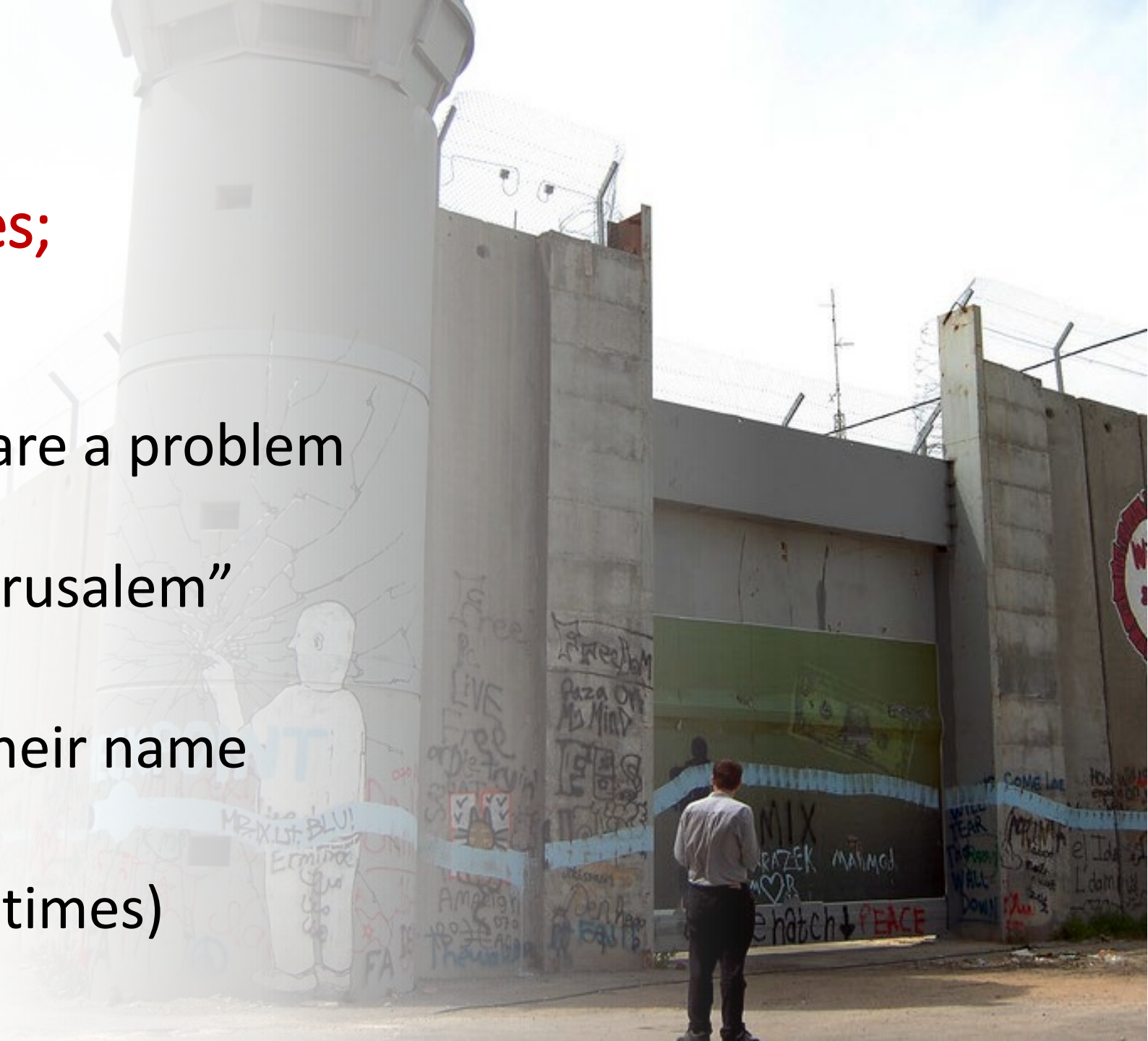
The background image shows a section of the West Bank Wall. On the left, there is a large, cylindrical concrete watchtower. The wall itself is covered in graffiti, including a prominent drawing of a person in a white uniform. A person in a light-colored shirt and dark pants is standing in the foreground, looking towards the wall. The sky is clear and blue.

Peacemakers step into the other side of the Wall

- The ideology of Wall
 - The lie: we cannot coexist with those who are different than us
 - Separate
 - Dehumanize... Demonize... Justify violence
- It takes courage to step to the other side of the wall

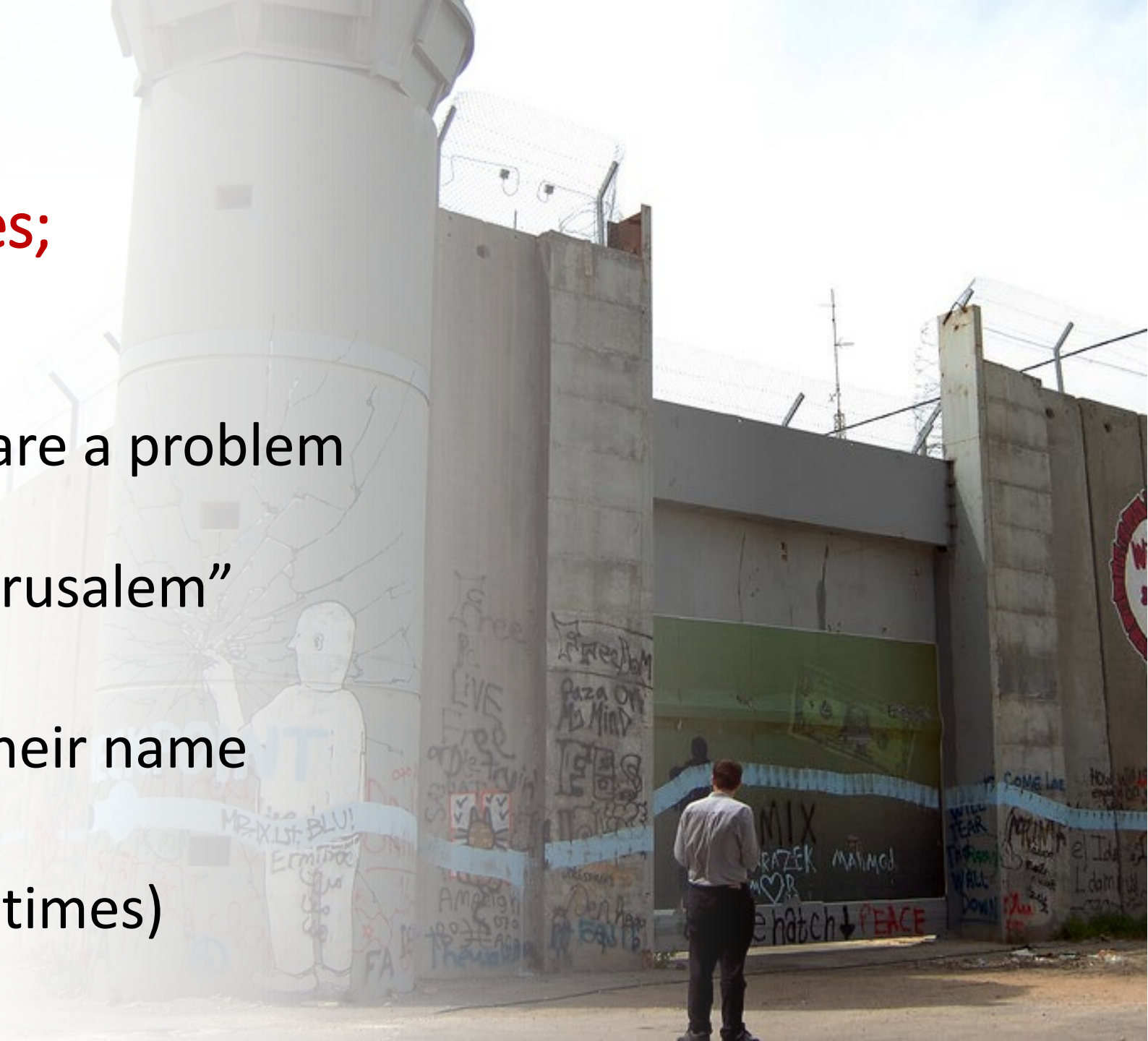
Peacemakers takes sides; speak truth to power

- “Diplomatic” Christians are a problem (Toothless)
- “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem”
- We must takes sides
- We must call things by their name
- Speak truth to power
- (It is fine to offend sometimes)



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Peacemakers takes sides; speak truth to power

- “We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must—at that moment—become the center of the universe” (Elie Wiesel said in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech)

Peacemakers seek justice

- Justice matters
- Justice is the path to peace and reconciliation
- Justice is different than revenge
- Challenge unjust structures



A photograph of the Berlin Wall, showing a concrete wall with graffiti and a person standing in front of it. The wall is covered in various messages and drawings, including a large figure of a person. The person is standing with their back to the camera, looking at the wall. The sky is blue and there are some structures in the background.

Peacemakers engage the humanity of the aggressor

- Resist Evil with Good
- Walk the extra mile, turn the other cheek
- Creative resistance (nonviolence)
- It is a joint work

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Peacemakers go beyond ending the conflict

- The process vs. The end goal
- Peace is not the absence of conflict; but begins by ending it
- Reconciliation... equity... inclusivity...



There Will Never Be Peace

- “There will never be peace until Christ returns”
- What is at stake?
- Divine Intervention?
- We are God’s hands and voice



A photograph of a high-security wall, likely at Guantanamo Bay. On the left, a tall, cylindrical white watchtower stands against a clear sky. The main wall is made of grey concrete blocks and is topped with several layers of barbed wire. The wall is heavily covered in graffiti, including the words "FREE", "LIVE", "PAPA ON", "MIND", "MIX", "RAZEK", "MAINGI", "e hatch", and "PEACE". A person in a light-colored shirt and dark pants stands with their back to the camera, looking at the wall. The overall scene is one of a heavily fortified and monitored area.

There Will Never Be Peace

- “Christians need no longer wait for direct divine intervention, because the intervention has already taken place. The Messiah has come, and there is no need to wait for another. He said what needed to be said and he did what needed to be done. God did his part. The ball is now in the court of humankind. . . . The transformed faithful are to engage the world, challenge the monopoly of power, and live the life of an already liberated people” (Mitri Raheb)