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## Righteousness and Peace

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# Righteousness and Peace

## **Abstract**

"It is a vision of the kingdom, when lion and lamb, like righteousness and peace, lie down together."

Posting about God's perfect kingdom from *In All Things* - an online journal for critical reflection on faith, culture, art, and every ordinary-yet-graced square inch of God's creation.

<http://inallthings.org/righteousness-and-peace/>

## **Keywords**

In All Things, lectionary, righteousness, peace, grace, church

## **Disciplines**

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## **Comments**

*In All Things* is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

# Righteousness and Peace

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 [all in allthings.org/righteousness-and-peace/](http://allthings.org/righteousness-and-peace/)

August 11,  
2017

James Calvin Schaap

## Daily Scripture Texts

[Psalm 85:8-13](#)

[I Kings 18:17-19; 30-40](#)

[Acts 18:24-28](#)

I shouldn't bring it up. It's from another day and another time, and likely has zero reference to church-going as we know it.

But one line in today's reading seems almost oddly cartoonish. The psalmist remembers the Lord's munificence in years gone by (vs. 1-3), and uses that history as a kind of model for what he's asking for now, again, in another day and another time (vs. 4-7). Then, almost abjectly, he claims he can live with whatever the Lord measures out to him and his people, presuming, upon his belief about God's very nature, that God will deliver, just as he has in the past. The psalm is gorgeous, a model of how I too—and you?—should be talking with God: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and, yes, supplication (the old ACTS acronym). It's all passionately there.

The story I shouldn't tell is scandalous, so let me apologize first, and then tell it. Sorry.

In another land and another time, a young-ish member of First Church came to worship in something somewhat too revealing, or so most men and women said when she took a seat. *Scantily-clad* goes too far; we're not talking bikini. Put it this way: most of the women that morning had more on beneath their full skirts than she had wrapped around her upper-body portions. It was, they thought, obviously inappropriate.

All of this is another place, another time—remember. It just so happened that the all-male consistory met that week, in which the young woman's fashion flare was discussed in decidedly chilly tones. Consensus was reached, despite the protests of one of the elders (let's call him Benny) who warned the others that if their disfavor were expressed to her, the aforementioned young woman would likely never darken their front door again.

First-hand reports claim Benny protested with such admirable grace that the other elders determined he would be best to visit with the young lady and convey the consistory's disapproval. Benny's soft answers had quelled the others' wrath, but not the ardor of their righteousness.

Despite his own views, Benny accepted the mission because he considered the consistory an agency of the Holy Spirit. He could have stormed out; but he chose to do as instructed.

And when he did, the young lady, fashionably but altogether too alluringly dressed, never returned to their church.

It's a museum-quality story with hundreds of ancestors but, I judge, few contemporaries. It's almost impossible to believe any church today would do what First Church did. Millennials will think it medieval. In truth, it's not that old, and there are contemporary manifestations.

Verse ten of Psalm 85 is an odd one, isn't it? "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

Such smooching seems strange, doesn't it? —righteousness and peace *kissing*?

What came to mind when I read those words was the old First Church story, because that consistory, as medieval as you might think, was confident that they were acting under the banner of righteousness: we just can't have that

kind of dress in the House of the Lord. They believed the young woman to have forsaken the paths of righteousness, paths they wanted her walking.

Benny argued for grace, for a broader acceptance at First Church, for open doors, and gentle smiles. Benny knew the young lady wouldn't return, and he wanted grace.

I'm sorry for telling an old story, but it happened to step out of the lines of this fine psalm because what the psalmist desires from the Lord God almighty is an end to tribulation, a time so good "that glory may dwell in our land," when righteousness and peace "have kissed each other."

It's not something any one of us knows in the vale of tears. It is a vision of the kingdom, when lion and lamb, like righteousness and peace, lie down together.