

# God's good news

There's a lot of bad news in our world. Poverty, disease, violence, injustice, cruelty, war, famine, fire, flood—each day the news seems to be filled with these things. It's easy to be discouraged by all this, even to despair for our future. It can also be easy to blame God for it all—after all, God's in charge, right?

**But this is not who God is, and this is not what God wants for the world. In fact, God has some very good news for us.**

## Jesus came to liberate us from these powerful forces and to bring about God's vision for the world.

Jesus of Nazareth showed us God's vision for the world. He taught God's way of love for all and of peace through nonviolence. He freely healed and forgave people. He shared meals with those considered "sinners" and denounced those who oppressed the vulnerable. He was killed by the powers-that-be for living out God's vision, but God raised him from the dead to a new life untouched by sin and death. In doing so God declared Jesus to be "Lord" over all powerful forces.

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*"Jesus came proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'" (Mark 1:14-15)*

*"You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Messiah Jesus—he is Lord of all...God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day..." (Acts 10:34-43)*

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## God loves the whole world and has a beautiful vision for our future.

God our Creator loves all creation—you, me, every person, all living things. Because of this, God wants true justice, lasting peace, and flourishing life for all people together, where every person has their deepest needs met, no exceptions. God wants the earth and the water and the sky to be healthy and whole, so that all living things can thrive. This vision for the world is what Jesus called "the kingdom of God," or "the kingdom of heaven" come down to earth. It's what the Bible also calls "salvation" and "eternal life."

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*"God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good." (Genesis 1:31)*

*"I praise you, God, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." (Psalm 139:14)*

*"God is love." (1 John 4:8, 16)*

*"The kingdom of God is justice and peace and joy." (Romans 14:17)*

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## We are under the sway of powerful forces that keep us from fully realizing God's vision for the world.

The Bible talks about "sin"—it's what we need "salvation" from. Sin is the harmful things we think and say and do,

## If we resist these forces at work in us and in our world, and we commit ourselves to Jesus' way of love, God's vision for the world will become a reality.

Jesus calls us to "repent": to resist our own sin, all those ways we harm others, and to resist the evil we see in the world through love, without violence. Jesus calls us to "believe in God's good news": to trust in God's love for us and to commit to Jesus' way of love in solidarity with others. When we do this, God's presence is with us to make real God's vision for the world: true justice, lasting peace, and flourishing life for all. We will share in Jesus' new life—even his life beyond death.

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*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength." And "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:28-34)*

*"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." (Luke 6:27-36)*

*"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:21)*

*"We know that we have passed from death to life when we love one another." (1 John 3:14)*

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but it is also harmful patterns of thought or behaviour, deep ruts of dysfunction we fall into and can't seem to escape from.

These harmful patterns of thought or behaviour also show up in groups of people, even whole societies. A group can do terrible things that none of those people would do individually. Sometimes these harmful patterns become a part of the very structures and systems of a society—in unjust laws, for example.

The result of all this is what the Bible often calls "death": not just physically dying, but also living in guilt, shame, fear, hostility, violence, oppression, and more. The Bible talks about all these manifestations of "sin" and "death" as "powers" that control us, that we seem to have no control over. They keep us from experiencing the life God wants for us.

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*"Our struggle is not against flesh and blood enemies, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against cosmic powers of this present darkness, against spiritual forces of evil." (Ephesians 6:12)*

*"All people are under the power of sin." (Romans 3:9)*

*"Sin pays us death as wages, but God gives us eternal life through Jesus." (Romans 6:23)*

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*"The kingdom of God is like the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." (Mark 4:30-32)*

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## Will you allow God's vision for the world to be planted in your own life, in your own small corner of the world? Will you trust in the God who loves you far beyond what you can even imagine? Will you commit to living out Jesus' way of love?

*If you want to accept Jesus' invitation to follow him in his way of love, here are some suggested first steps in the journey:*

- Join a faith community that is committed to following Jesus. In North America check out [home.mennonitechurch.ca/churches](http://home.mennonitechurch.ca/churches) or [mennoniteusa.org/find-a-church](http://mennoniteusa.org/find-a-church).
  - Read the Bible to learn more about Jesus, his teaching, and his way of life. Try starting with the Gospel of Mark, and then read the other Gospels. Read online at [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com).
  - Pray regularly—being aware of God's presence, communicating with God—in a way that works for you. Check out the "Take Our Moments" and "Common Prayer" prayer apps for your smart phone.
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