

“All About Peace”

Isaiah 9:2-7; John 14:25-27

December 8, 2024

Introduction

- Advent can be a glorious time of self-reflection and spiritual growth.
- It can also easily get subsumed into the broader Christmas season, allowing for little to no peace.
- You see, everyone’s anxiety comes up during the Christmas season.
 - o As such, a pastor is often working alongside some very stressed-out individuals.
 - o It can be a difficult time.
 - o I recall once, around year three of being a pastor my atheist friend called out of the blue.
 - He caught me in a moment of thanklessness in which I lamented, “I really hate the Christmas season” to which he replied, “I love the Christmas season.”
 - It was then I became aware I needed an attitude adjustment.
- But my bitterness was understandable.
 - o I was lacking peace in my life due to the stresses of the season.
- But that’s not the way it’s supposed to be, not at all.
- But there always comes a time, it used to come powerfully at the end of the midnight service where peace would descend like a river flowing in full abundance.
 - o It only makes sense that peace would arrive at Christmas,
 - After all, in the Old Testament, Jesus is hailed as the “Prince of Peace.”
 - In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus’ birth is heralded by a heavenly host proclaiming he will bring *“peace on earth and good will towards men.”*
- On this second Sunday of Advent, we celebrate the peace that our Lord Jesus Christ delivers.
 - o Do you remember in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus and the apostles board a boat on the Sea of Galilee?
 - Jesus immediately goes up to stern of the ship and goes to sleep.
 - Then, as they are wont to do, a storm whips up, tossing the boat violently to and fro.
 - The followers of Jesus feared for their lives, they woke Jesus.
 - Do you remember what happened next?
 - Jesus rebuked the storm saying, *“Peace, be still.”*
 - And immediately, the storm was calmed.
 - o I believe Jesus can have the same effect on our lives if we’ll but let Him.
 - If we will allow it, Jesus will rebuke the storms in our lives, bringing us to a peace that Paul tells us passes all understanding.
- I’ll never forget a night long ago, long before I could be called a Christian being in bed one night.
 - o It was a terrible time, I was struggling, unemployed, mostly hopeless.
 - o But I went to God and said, essentially, I can’t handle this anymore but I believe you can.
 - I drifted off to sleep for the first time in years.
 - The next day, my mom invited me to come to church.
 - My life changed.
 - But it began with that peace that came in the midst of the storm.
- So, I know Christ’s peace is possible and probable and powerful and I want you to experience it as well.
- At the end of Philippians, Paul writes:
 - o *“The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*
- Today I want to talk about the peace of Jesus Christ and how it impacts our lives.

- We have peace with God.
- Peace with ourselves.
- Peace with others.
- Peace with our circumstances.

Peace with God

- I heard a man a few years back utter that at one time in his life, he was 50% scared that there was no God and that everything was meaningless and 50% scared that there was a God who was no doubt mad at him for all the bad things that he'd done.
 - I fear many people feel just the same way.
 - How do I know that?
 - How else would you feel if you didn't go to church?
 - Notice, the majority of Americans aren't coming anymore.
 - While the numbers of people claiming to be Christian has started to wane precipitously, attendance at church is even worse.
 - If you're not hearing the Gospel, what are you listening to but the voices of the world which drive you either toward atheism or fear-based beliefs about God.
- As Christians, we believe that Peace with God is forever established through the life, atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - This Savior that we greet and remember coming into the world on Christmas morning came for a reason.
 - We humans were trapped in our sins, every day adding more and more to our debt with God.
- God, in the beginning, gave us a point and a purpose.
 - We were to be God's stewards in this world, giving glory to God through his works and bearing his image in the world.
 - But it was there in paradise that we strayed, listening to the false voices of the world.
 - The did the one thing that God told them not to do.
 - Sounds very like me.
 - Tell me not to touch a hot stove and, I guaranteed, that stove is getting touched, no matter what.
- The Bible teaches us that we're sinners but that God has acted.
 - John 3:16 reminds us that: *"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."*
 - 1st Peter puts it this way – *"He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds, we are healed."*
- We are healed through Christ's atoning death.
- Peace with God is given by God, not something to be earned.
 - If you live today with the belief that you've got to get your life in order before you go to God, you've got it wrong.
 - Christ died for you.
 - Forgiveness comes first, it's what impels you change not the other way around.
 - You don't change first.
 - You are forgiven first and, in light of that forgiveness, you change.
 - Hear these words from Romans – *"But God proves His love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us."*

Peace with God leads us to be at peace with ourselves.

Peace with Ourselves

- Story about Marinara sauce on shirt.
- Peace with ourselves comes when we realize that we don't have to be perfect.
- In fact, perfection isn't possible.
 - We are still sinners, imperfect people.

- It's why there's such drama in the world.
- Peace with ourselves begins with the knowledge that we are not God and that the only perfect person in the entirety of creation was Jesus Christ.
 - *In short, He was perfect so we wouldn't have to be.*
- Friends, we're all going to make mistakes, even in Christ, we're going to fall short of the mark.
 - But when we do so, we can tell someone else or our God about them and then make things right.
 - 1 John 1:9 – *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."*
- Yes, when we look down and see our marinara stained shirts, there is something we can do.
 - We can confess our sins.
 - This is something we do every Sunday; we confess our sins because it is a vital point in our lives.
 - We draw near to God and He draws near to us.
 - We are a forgiven people.
- Peace with ourselves arises from accepting us as we are.
 - Imperfect people being sanctified by a Good and Holy God.
- Peace with ourselves also includes the awareness that we are exactly the way God chose to make us.
 - Hear these words from Psalm 139 – *"For You formed my inward parts; You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; my soul knows it very well."*
 - God has blessed with me a decent mind, a quick wit and a great sense of compassion.
 - But guess what, God has not blessed with a fade-away, top-of-the key jump shot, nor has He gifted me with the ability to code an app like SnapChat although I confess at times, I wished He had.
- Peace with ourselves includes the sure knowledge that God loves us just as we are and has given us the necessary gifts to build up his kingdom on Earth.
 - If you want peace with yourselves, find those gifts and use them to the Glory of God. Don't chase after gifts God did not intend you to have.

Peace with Others

- Two-fold
 - Seek reconciliation.
 - Be forgiving.
- What do I mean by seek reconciliation?
 - I mean going out and trying to make right that which you have done wrong.
 - If having peace with ourselves means acknowledging our sin, then it also includes making right what our sin turns wrong.
 - We clean. Up our side of the street in order to find peace with hers.
- John Thompson story
 - Chef at the Lamplighter, fired me.
 - It took me years to see the truth, I deserved to be let go.
 - I was talking badly about him behind his back and generally not being very manageable.
 - I cursed the man's name for years.
 - Then, one day, after being a Christian, I ran into him.
 - We chatted it was awkward; I told him it was okay; I deserved to be fired.
 - Now I look forward to seeing the guy in public, I am at peace because God led me to be accountable for my misdeeds.
- In the Sermon on the Mount which can be found beginning with Chapter 5 of the Gospel of

- Matthew, Jesus says this – *“So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”*
- Reconciliation PRECEEDS WORSHIP.
 - This text suggests we should make wrong all that we’ve done in order to find the peace that Jesus offers us.
 - We can do that because we know we’re not perfect (Peace with God) leads us to peace with others.
- The second part to having peace with other people is to be forgiving.
 - Why are we forgiving?
 - Because we ourselves are not perfect.

Peace with our Circumstances

- This can be hard, at times.
- You know, a lot of times you’ll hear it said that God never gives you more than you can handle.
 - It’s a nice sentiment but it is actually a misinterpretation of Scripture. In First Corinthians, Paul tells us that God won’t TEMPT us beyond our capabilities but that’s different than presenting us with more difficulties than we can handle.
- In fact, looking at 2nd Corinthians, Paul tells us:
 - *“For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.”*
- Did you hear that? God will give us more than we can handle BUT He will deliver us from it.
- There is a peace in knowing that, no matter what comes our way, our God will save us from it.
 - Whether that be our circumstances, ourselves or even death itself, God in Christ is providing for us.
 - When faith comes in and says, “You’ll get through this” no matter what “this” may be, peace flows in like a river. And, once you get to the other side of whatever is vexing you, you will proclaim the name of the Lord, your Deliverer, from the very rooftops of your lives.
- Best of all, God is with us!