

December 21, 2020

Week 4: Day 2 Peace

Bible:

I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord." Our feet are standing in your gates, Jerusalem. Jerusalem is built like a city that is closely compacted together. That is where the tribes go up—the tribes of the Lord—to praise the name of the Lord according to the statute given to Israel. There stand the thrones for judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:

"May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels." For the sake of my family and friends, I will say, "Peace be within you." For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your prosperity.

Psalm 122

Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

How long will you people turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods? Know that the Lord has set apart his faithful servant for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him.

Tremble and do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent. Offer the sacrifices of the righteous and trust in the Lord.

Many, Lord, are asking, "Who will bring us prosperity?" Let the light of your face shine on us. Fill my heart with joy when their grain and new wine abound.

In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.

Psalm 4

Devotion:

The word for peace used here in the original language, Hebrew, is: שלום .

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

Luke 2:1-21 (NIV)

Devotion:

Merry Christmas! There is a peacefulness that comes with slowing down and stopping. There is peace today. This was the peace described here. This peace is a sense of peace from fighting, but it's more than that. This peace is a state of your soul. It is a connection to Christ that leads to a peaceful life.

This day is one that is special because, for today, the world basically stops. In a busy world that never seems to stop, on this one day it stops. Today, breathe deep. Pause... ..slow down and reflect on the peace that comes from Christ and breathe it in. Go about your day, being intentional about creating space for this peace.

Talk About it:

What is one thing you can do today to feel peaceful?

How does the arrival of Jesus make you feel?

Further Reading:

Luke 1-2:21, Matthew 1

December 25, 2020

Week 4: Day 6 Peace

Bible:

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

This word for peace goes beyond what we typically define peace as: freedom from war and conflict. The word peace here does have a surface level meaning of freedom from war, but it goes deeper to mean completeness, friendship, safety, and soundness. What David wrote in today's passage about peace talks about completeness that only comes from a relationship with God. David describes this peace from God as a wall and as a night of sound sleep. These descriptions conjure up images and feelings of security and tenderness. This word was also a phrase Jewish people would use as a salutation, a way of reminding them that God's peace was with the other person.

Are you relying on God for peace and completeness, or are you searching for peace somewhere else? So often we try to seek our completeness from other sources only to find they leave us emptier than before. Like the city wall described in the first passage, peace from God will bring us safety and tranquility. Today, where will you find your peace? Will your peace come from a God who completes you and surrounds you like a wall, or will your peace come from an external source that will always fail to bring you peace?

Talk About it:

How would you define peace? How do you believe God defines peace?

What do you use as a source of peace instead of God?

How does complete peace from God make you feel?

Further Reading:

Matthew 5

December 22, 2020

Week 4: Day 3 Peace

Bible:

I rejoiced with those who said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the Lord.”
Our feet are standing
in your gates, Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is built like a city
that is closely compacted together.
That is where the tribes go up—
the tribes of the Lord—
to praise the name of the Lord
according to the statute given to Israel.
There stand the thrones for judgment,
the thrones of the house of David.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
“May those who love you be secure.
May there be peace within your walls
and security within your citadels.”
For the sake of my family and friends,
I will say, “Peace be within you.”
For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
I will seek your prosperity.

Psalm 122

Devotion:

Have you ever experienced chaos and tumult in your own home? Chaos within the walls of your own home can cause a lack of peace outside of the house. When these times of chaos come, how does it make you feel? Does it make you feel anxious, helpless, and insecure? Do you feel like you have lost control?

In today's passage, David speaks of peace in the house of the Lord. This peace comes from God and permeates through all of

from that time on and forever
The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.

Isaiah 9:2-7 (NIV)

Devotion:

We often go without peace in life. We rush from place to place. We worry about what may happen tomorrow or about the ones that we love. We live in a world that is the most connected we've ever been with the best medicine and the greatest technology, but what we seem to lack is peace.

We often associate peace with a vacation or with time off, but this isn't the peace we are reading about here. This peace extends throughout our life. It is complete peace. A peace that has no end. This sounds too good to believe, doesn't it? This peace only comes from God. The passage also tells us about how God 'shattered the yoke that burdens them'. This is because we're not meant to bear all the concerns we carry. By taking these concerns on ourselves, we are forfeiting our peace. Instead of living in peace, we find ourselves frustrated, anxious, or miserable. God calls us to cast our burdens on him instead of holding our burdens in.

Talk About it:

Are there concerns you're holding on to that you need to give to God?

Do you believe that God is big enough to take your concerns and worries?

Name the times that you find yourself without peace (Ex. Morning, tired moments...)

Further Reading:

Isaiah 9, Matthew 24:3-14, Revelations 21:1-8

December 24, 2020

Week 4: Day 5 Peace

Bible:

The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.
You have enlarged the nation
and increased their joy;
they rejoice before you
as people rejoice at the harvest,
as warriors rejoice
when dividing the plunder.
For as in the day of Midian's defeat,
you have shattered
the yoke that burdens them,
the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor.
Every warrior's boot used in battle
and every garment rolled in blood
will be destined for burning,
will be fuel for the fire.
For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness

Jerusalem and the Jewish people. David prays that this peace would be in the entire culture because he knows that when there is no peace, there is extreme chaos and disarray. David knows that this peace can only come from God who has all control.

When we have peace in our homes, communities, and in the family of God, we all prosper. But the opposite is also true. When there is chaos in these areas, we all suffer. The problem comes when we try to force peace instead of looking to God to be our source of peace. We can find ourselves promoting peace in our own minds but causing chaos around us. When we accept that peace comes from God, we can experience peace inside our own walls.

Today I pray that you would have peace from God in your homes and communities, and I would challenge you to pray the same.

Talk About it:

Has there been a time when you tried to force peace on someone else? What was the result?

Have you ever had peace forced on you? What was the result?

How does peace within your community cause you to feel?

Do you think that God can provide peace in a home? In a church family? In a community? Why or why not?

Further Reading:

Romans 14, James 3

December 23, 2020

Week 4: Day 4 Peace

Bible:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.
Philippians 4:4-23

Devotion:

Sometimes, talking to God can feel useless, but it can provide peace in the long run. When we realize that God hears us, that he cares about us, and that he works on our behalf, we can have a peace that goes beyond our situations. Paul here is talking to the Philippians and tells them that God's peace can transcend their bleak situation. Paul tells them to rejoice always and to give over to God every situation that we are faced with, good or bad.

Even when our current situations in life feel chaotic, we can rely on God to be our source of peace. God alone can provide peace in a turbulent circumstance. No matter what you are going through, God wants to give you his peace and comfort today, but this only comes through constant communication with him. We must be willing to give up control of our current situation to receive God's grace in our lives.

Talk About it:

What is one thing that you are faced with that you need to give over to God today?

What is one thing you can rejoice in God about today?

How can you remain in constant communication with God throughout your day?

Further Reading:

Colossians 1, Galatians 5:13-26