

## The Gift of True Peace

Sunday December 5, 2021

### Peace vs. Affluence (Phil. 4:6-7, 11-13)

*I want you to imagine with me a picture of what it means for your life to experience true peace.*

- *Have people share their pictures.*

A lot of times we will picture peace as circumstantial:

- We equate “peace” with feeling comfortable and lacking stress/conflict.
- Reading on the dock at the cottage on vacation is a peaceful experience.
- Having time, means & margin to engage in meaningful, enjoyable tasks.
- This isn’t really a definition of peace, it’s more an indicator of affluence.

Circumstantial “peace” is a liar:

- It’s possible to have easy circumstances, affluence and lack true peace.
- It’s possible to be comfortable & conflict-free and battle fear & anxiety.
- Some of the wealthiest people are the least peaceful people.

On the flip side: It’s possible to be needy (without adequate food/shelter) surrounded by conflict and experience true peace.

*How is this possible? Because peace is not circumstantial. The truth is, peace is available to all of us. We have all been invited to experience peace.*

TRUE PEACE is a person. He offers us WHOLENESS, WELL-BEING and HARMONY in whatever circumstances that we find ourselves in.

One commentary I read describes PEACE as “a psychological & holistic sense of fulfillment, well-being and flourishing.”

The apostle Paul writes (Phil. 4:6-7, 11-13), “*6 Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7 Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*”

This is something Paul obviously lived out because, just a few verses later he says, “*I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. 12 I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. 13 For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.*”

Unfortunately, many of us reject this offer of TRUE PEACE in pursuit of circumstantial peace. Which is a good reminder to us as we dive into the Second Week of Advent.

- Physical things & favourable circumstances do not bring TRUE PEACE.

### Filled with Glory (Is. 9:1):

Our theme for this Sunday is PEACE. Not circumstantial PEACE, but TRUE PEACE: wholeness, well-being, fulfillment, and flourishing.

This Sunday we are going to dive into one of the prophet Isaiah’s prophecies about the coming Messiah:

- Isaiah was written during a time when Israel turned its back on God
- Israel was in danger of being swallowed by the Assyrian Empire.
- Isaiah foretold of the hardships that Israel would face in captivity.
- Wasn’t all doom & gloom: Isaiah also told of the coming Messiah/Peace.

One of these “pivot passages” of gloom to hope is found in Isaiah 9:

*Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory.*

Zebulun and Naphtali were Jewish tribes that were situated in the northern portion of the county of Israel in Galilee:

- It was the first territory that was attacked when the Assyrians invaded.
- This happened in 733 BC (a number of years after Isaiah wrote this)
- Assyria carried off a number of Jews from Galilee in exile to Assyria
- Assyria then brought in Gentile people to re-populate the area.
- The area became known as Galilee of the Gentiles because of this.
- Gentiles were prevalent in Galilee in Jesus’ day: Samaritans & Decapolis.

As you know, Jesus did the bulk of His ministry in the area of Galilee. Because of His ministry, Galilee of the Gentiles was filled with glory.

*Because of the trauma of what happened in Galilee during the Assyrian captivity, the light of the glory of Jesus shone even brighter.*

That’s the beautiful thing about Jesus: Just because we experience DARKNESS and DESPAIR, it doesn’t mean we miss out on GLORY. Jesus makes HOPE and TRUE PEACE possible.

### Peace in Chaos (vv. 2-3; Jn. 8:12)

*<sup>2</sup> The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine. <sup>3</sup> You will enlarge the nation of Israel, and its people will rejoice. They will rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest and like warriors dividing the plunder.*

The circumstances of captivity would have felt like darkness:

- Being under the rule of a foreign entity & displaced from their home.
- They would have felt without hope, direction or true peace.
- Restlessness, lack of contentment, fear, anxiety.

### ***Have you ever experienced this sort of dark hopelessness before?***

- It closes in on you so that despair becomes your only reality.
- It deprives you of vision, perspective, enjoyment and community.
- But Isaiah speaks of the promise of LIGHT.
- LIGHT was a symbol of the presence and favour of God. Of Shalom.

In John 8:12 Jesus offers us Himself to us as the LIGHT, *“I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”*

The offer of Jesus is a take it or leave it offer:

- *If you follow me... then you won’t have to walk in darkness...*
- Light in life is contingent on following Jesus.
- He’s the TRUE PEACE in the midst of difficulty.

You either want Jesus or you don’t:

- If you don’t want Jesus you need to be content in the dark.
- Or... Try to convince yourself that you can produce your own light.

C.S. Lewis, *“God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from Himself because it is not there. There is no such thing.”*

### **Destroying Despair (vv. 4-5)**

*4 For you will break the yoke of their slavery and lift the heavy burden from their shoulders. You will break the oppressor’s rod, just as you did when you destroyed the army of Midian. 5 The boots of the warrior and the uniforms bloodstained by war will all be burned. They will be fuel for the fire.*

Isaiah shifts from talking about darkness and light to oppression and freedom. What’s interesting is that since the writing of Isaiah, Israel never experienced true national peace and true independence has only come in the last 50 yrs. *Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Romans...*

What’s clear is that when Isaiah speaks of *“the yoke and slavery and heavy burdens and oppressor’s rods”*:

- He’s not speaking about physical, circumstantial oppression...
- He’s not even speaking about the physical nation of Israel.
- He’s talking to you and me and our inner soundtrack of despair.

Those hurts, habits and hang ups that rob you of wholeness, well-being, harmony, fulfillment and flourishing, Jesus wants to lift off of you and break into pieces.

*When your spirit tells you that you are not enough. That you don’t measure up. That you need to try harder, strive, be perfect to please God. That you should just give up because you’ll never deserve love or peace...*

Jesus wants to lift those lies from you and replace them with His

truth and His pleasure, His peace and SHALOM. Jesus offers us the opportunity for true peace and freedom from the lies that keep us in captivity and darkness.

*I love the imagery that the tools that were used to oppress us will be used as fuel for the fire. I think of judgement that is reserved for Satan and his angels... The lies he used against us will stoke the fire of his destruction...*

True peace isn’t OUT HERE... true peace is IN HERE and it only comes from the PRINCE OF PEACE.

### **Prince of Peace (vv. 6-7)**

*6 For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

*7 His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven’s Armies will make this happen!*

Jesus offers us His rule and reign and the TRUE PEACE and well-being that comes with it. The peace that Jesus offers isn’t a circumstantial peace, but a deep personal and spiritual peace. We will still have to navigate a broken world, conflict and broken relationships, but we can do so with a(n):

- Wonderful Counselor – who gives guidance and perspective for life.
- Mighty God – who no enemy can stand against us – victory.
- Everlasting Father – unconditional love, acceptance, and wisdom.
- Prince of Peace – Wholeness, well-being, fulfillment & flourishing.

In John 14:27 Jesus tells His disciples, *“I am leaving you with a gift— peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.”*

This Christmas, don’t look for peace in presents, in belonging, or even in family. The peace that Jesus offers us, the world cannot give.

Accept Jesus’ offer of TRUE PEACE and invite Him to direct your life and bring you the perspective that you need to navigate this broken world.

*Phil. 4:6-7 “6 Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.7 Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*

### **PRAYER**