

“THE PEACE THAT CHRIST BRINGS”
Isaiah 2:1-5, Psalm 34:11-18, Colossians 3:12-17, Luke 1:26-38
December 7 & 8, 2019

“A wife called the doctor one morning, saying, ‘Doctor, come quick! It’s my husband!’

“What’s the matter?’ he calmly replied.

“Well, he got up this morning and took his vitamin pill. Then he took his appetite suppressant, his anti-depressant, and his tranquilizer. He also took an antihistamine and some Benzedrine. Then he lit a cigarette, and there was this explosion!”¹

THE THINGS WE DO TO TRY TO FIND PEACE! If it’s not about making our bodies look better, it’s about reducing our stress level and picking ourselves up, or about improving our health, or so many other things. We resort to try the quick fixes that get us excited, but they don’t really work for us. In our world today, there’s a pill or medication for just about everything in our lives that we might find wrong with us. But many times we get so excited about the next fad solution that we overdo things and get ourselves into trouble. So where can we turn to find the peace that our bodies and minds and souls are longing for?

For many, We trust in other people to make us happy and bring us peace. We either unload our problems on them, or we invite their advice to try to solve the problems in our life. But they are often just as mixed up and confused about life as we are; even the “professionals” don’t get it sometimes. And we can spend thousands of dollars in seeking the advice of other people of what we should do to try to find peace in our lives, sometimes with tragic results.

For others, we turn to various strategies – Yoga, Transcendental Meditation, or Tai Chi to try to ease our minds and find that “inner peace” we so desperately desire. Many turn to exercise as an escape from the troubles of the world, and then wear themselves out and beat themselves up trying to find peace, yet there is always something missing, a void that they cannot fill. And others turn to illegal drugs or elicit sexual activities to try to ease the pain in their attempt to somehow find “inner peace,” but

¹ (Robert J. Morgan, *Stories, Illustrations & Quotes*, [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publications, 2000] pg. 604)

these things will always increase their stress and hardship and troubles. They never diminish or eliminate the trials they face.

Comedian/evangelist Mike Warnke put it like this when he was searching for that peace in his life: “Everything was a mess: the rent was due, other bills were outstanding, and we didn’t have any food. We looked at each other and said, ‘Well I guess we’ll get high.’ And when we came down from our drug trips, we were now two months behind in our rent, there was still no food in the refrigerator, and now we had bill collectors pounding at our door. Nothing got better, but they became drastically worse. Drugs are a trap – they’re a trap! They don’t solve your problems; they only make them worse.”

And others seek to find peace in the accumulation of material possessions. Big houses, big boats, big fish tanks, luxurious vacations, fancy cars, expensive clothes and jewelry, everything their hearts desire, yet nothing satisfies and nothing brings them peace. There is always a hole in their hearts that nothing of this world can fill. And while these things can possibly bring us short-term fixes in our pursuit of peace, do they really give us the full peace we are longing for? Not a bit!

We can try so many different things, Yet, we have troubles that continue to rock our world and cause us to be up-side-down in our life. Nothing we do on our own through our own human interventions will ever bring us the peace that passes all understanding and allow us to be confident of absolute peace in our lives. So where does that leave us? Are we hopeless to obtain the peace that our lives so desperately crave? Are we destined to remain in turmoil and chaos our whole existence? No!

In my life’s experience I have found that THERE IS ONLY ONE PLACE TO FIND COMPLETE PEACE! One place that we can turn to and cast all our anxieties and worries and troubles and find complete peace. That is the Lord Jesus! In Isaiah 2 we see that God attempts to direct the people back to Him. Isaiah foretells a time when the people of the world will recognize the Lord as the answer to their problems.

But Isaiah first warns them to be careful, “*Put no more confidence in mortal men. What are they worth?*” (Is. 2:22). Please correct your worksheets this morning, as the word is **mortal** men, not

moral men. But it really doesn't matter. As we just saw, confidence in one another is futile and without rewards, whether or not the people are moral, because we are mortals – we end up just as empty and lacking peace as the rest of the people of the world. It's not people that we are going to find peace from. So where?

Isaiah tells us where to find peace, *“Let us go up the hill of the Lord, to the Temple of Israel's God. He will teach us what He wants us to do; we will walk in the paths He has chosen”* (Is. 2:3). Yes, it is the Lord who knows the best for us. He is the One we can turn to in order to find peace. He is the One we can learn from and follow in order to obtain the peace that our souls desire. When we walk in the paths He chooses for us, He guides us to His peace, which is beyond all understanding.

But Isaiah has more to say about it. *“He will settle disputes among great nations...”* so that they don't have to prepare for battle any more (Is. 42:4). When the Lord is our God, peace not only takes place inside of us, it also influences the rest of the world. World peace can only come to the earth when we faithfully follow the Lord and obey His guidelines and live according to His commands.

But interestingly enough, Psalm 34 asks a similar question, *“Would you like to enjoy life? Do you want long life and happiness?”* (34:12). That pretty much calculates to having peace! The psalmist then gives the answer, *“Then keep from speaking evil and from telling lies. Turn away from evil and do good; strive for peace with all your heart”* (34:13-14).

You see, those who do evil are against the ways of God. They go outside of His commands to say and teach what is contrary to the teachings of the Lord God. God is *“opposed to those who do evil”* (34:16) because God desires that we speak the truth, live lives that are righteous, and follow His ways. So we hear a great promise from the Lord in verse 18 of Psalm 34, *“The Lord is near to those who are discouraged; He saves those who have lost all hope.”* He wants to remind us that we have a source of peace, but only in the Lord our God. All those who put their trust and faith in Him and follow His ways and live according to His commands are the ones who are lifted up when life around them falls apart, when the chaos and confusion and turmoil seeks to overwhelm and destroy them. God is there when we

put our hope in Him, and we find His peace even when the trials of life want to tear us apart. When all hope is lost, we can turn to the Lord and He will save us and lift us up and bring us His peace.

In our New Testament lesson of Colossians 3, the Apostle Paul refines the avenue to peace. He, likewise, says that it is not in the earthly desires that we find peace. It's not in sexual immorality, indecency, lust, evil passions and greed that we find fulfillment and peace within us (Colossians 3:5-7). Those are contrary to the things of the Lord God, and therefore lead us away from peace. The new life we have possible for us is found only in Jesus Christ, and when we receive Jesus Christ into our lives, we begin the process of finding peace, since He is the Prince of Peace.

So having received Christ Jesus as Lord of our lives, Paul tells us, "**YOU ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD**; *He loved you and chose you for His own*" (Colossians 3:12). Since we are the people of God, it demands that we make changes in the way that we live so that we then conform to the ways of God, and not continue to live according to the ways of the world. If we want to find the peace that Christ brings to us, our lives need to become more in line with Jesus. So Paul gives us ways that we can begin to find peace as the people of God.

Since God has loved us and chosen us, we then are to live differently than the world around us. Paul invites us then to change the way we look, not so much with outer clothing, but the qualities within us. Paul says, "*Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience*" (3:12). That is in contrast with the anger, hostility, selfishness, rudeness and impatience that we see in the world. These don't produce peace in our lives, but compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience do bring peace to us. So just the shift of personality can bring us peace when we let Jesus work in us to make those changes.

Then Paul lifts up three important qualities that bring peace to us that are key elements for the lives of those who follow Jesus Christ. First he says, "*Be **TOLERANT** with one another*" (3:13). Now tolerance is putting into action compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. None of us is alike, and we do things differently. Rather than getting frustrated with each other because we are not

exactly alike, we are to show love and accept the fact that none of us is perfect, and that we do things in different ways. What I think should be done, could be done in a variety of ways, so I need to allow that variation and tolerate the differences. Yet in love, there are things that need to be confronted if a person is going to be hurt by what is going on and others will be impacted in the process. Dealing with others gently is always better than rudely demanding compliance. So our tolerance of one another is always to be kept in focus with the ways of the Lord Jesus. That tolerance can bring us peace.

Second, Paul tells us You must FORGIVE “*one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you*” (3:13). How many of you are perfect? Me neither. We all make mistakes, we all wander away from God’s ways, and we all have selfish ambitions that get us into troubles with others. Rather than holding onto the anger or frustration or bitterness that it brings to us, forgiveness of the sins brought against us, brings us peace. When I cannot forgive another, that hurt or anger begins to tear me up because I keep reliving that event over and over. That doesn’t bring me peace, but more and more turmoil and strife and hurt. But when I forgive another and give it to the Lord Jesus, HE now is the one that can do something about it and I am relieved of the stress that it once brought me. Forgiveness brings peace through Jesus Christ.

The third thing Paul calls us to as followers of Jesus, living differently than the world, is we are to Add LOVE “*which binds all things together in perfect unity*” (3:14). Even when people do terrible things to us, we are to be so different than how the world responds by showing love even in the hardship. It means that we still treat them with respect and dignity, since we often do not know why they are doing what they are doing to hurt us. To love, even in the face of hatred or evil can change the situation drastically. When we show tolerance, forgiveness and love in the name of Jesus Christ to those who we think deserve it the least, it could change their life, but it always brings peace to us.

You see, “*the peace that Christ gives is to guide you*” (3:15) so that no matter what may take place in your life, His peace will direct you to do what is good and right, so that you might show compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. These are the qualities that are most lacking

in our world today, so when you show them to those around you, not only do you live in peace, but you help others to live in peace, too. And we do that as we “Let Christ’s ... message **LIVE** in your hearts (3:16), allowing it to so fill us that peace becomes prevalent within us and around us.

So to find real peace in our lives it is important for us to consider this, “Do **EVERYTHING** in the name of the Lord Jesus (3:17), allowing Him to rule in our hearts and guide us to do His work, and to have genuine peace as we work for Him. This way we make such an example for all the world to see who Jesus is and openly fulfills the promise of Jesus’ peace being with us (John 14:27).

So how can I help you to understand the peace that Christ brings? How can I help you to understand **PEACE, EVEN IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULT TAKS?** Let me read the Gospel lesson for today, Luke 1:26-38 so that you can see the peace of Jesus. (READ Luke 1:26-38)

Here we see Mary’s invitation from God to become the mother of Jesus, the holy Son of God. Mary is shocked about God choosing her to do this wonderfully difficult task. She is first taken aback by the angel’s greeting, and then even more confused by the message that He brings to her. His greeting doesn’t make much sense to her; yes, she believed the Lord was with her, and that He had greatly blessed her, but why would it be so important that it would take an angel to come and tell her about it? And I can only imagine what it would be like to actually see an angel of God? They are not the little cherubs we see on Valentine’s Day. They are not meek and timid creatures as is often displayed in sculpture and paintings. Angels are the messengers of God, fierce warriors ready to do battle against the forces of Satan. They are ready to do the will of God whenever He commands. Why would God be sending an angel to her, a teenage woman pledged in marriage to a man living in Nazareth?

And then, what the angel Gabriel is telling her sounds completely impossible in human standards. How can a woman become pregnant without “knowing a man?” And how can the magnificent, wonderful, mighty God become confined in in the body of a human, even one cell that starts every human life? And how can a human be made a king forever, with his kingdom never ending?

It's all too much for her to understand at that moment. And certainly the news Gabriel was bringing to her was not peaceful news.

You see, it was not acceptable at that time in history for a woman pledged to be married to her husband to suddenly become pregnant. The consequences of such a thing happening could easily end in her being put to death by the community. It was not socially acceptable! And if the husband agreed to still marry her, the assumption would be made that the two of them just couldn't wait for the 1 year betrothal period to be finished before they started their family, so both of them would be ridiculed, ostracized and even banished by the community. This was not something well received.

But how else could the child born be called "holy?" How else could God become like us, only without sin? How else could the "Son of God" enter into the world and be accepted as one of us? Though the task God was inviting Mary to do would be unique and special, it would be looked upon by the world as scandalous and sinful and wrong. And how could Mary possibly do this on her own? Certainly she needed Joseph to become a part of the situation. Surely she would need someone to encourage her and strengthen her and prepare her for the task ahead of her.

So Gabriel tells Mary about the marvelous work God did for her cousin Elizabeth, who though she was very old, had now conceived a child and was in her sixth month of pregnancy. If God could give a woman a son when she is well past child bearing years and allow her the strength to carry him and raise him, couldn't He also give a woman a son who was too young to be bearing children, AND conceive without the help of a human male? Yes, God can do wonderful and marvelous things even in and through us if we are willing. *"For there is nothing that God cannot do"* (Luke 1:37).

In the middle of this invitation to do a tremendously difficult task, Mary is reassured that if God was calling her to do this great thing, He was also going to arrange all the other details in order that it would be fulfilled. Her faith and understanding of the greatness of God brought her peace so that she could do this great thing God was asking her to do. She knew that the journey ahead of her was going to be difficult, but her trust in the Lord being able to accomplish it through her, brought peace to her. So

we hear these great words from this young woman accepting God's invitation, "*I am the Lord's servant,*" Mary said; '*may it happen to me as you have said*' (Luke 1:38). In the face of a tremendously difficult task, Mary received God's peace, knowing that He was a great and awesome God who could do anything!

Now we can easily say, "Well, yes, but that was Mary! But how in the world am I going to be able to have peace in my life through the stuff going on in me? Where am I going to find peace?"

Well friends, we find peace in the same One that Mary trusted. We find peace in the child she bore to become our Savior, Jesus Christ! As the angel gave Mary peace to do the great task God was giving to her, so God gives us that same peace so that we can do His work here in our own day as we put our trust in Jesus. We, too can find Peace even in uncertainty for us.

"F. B. Meyer describes the Christ-life as this: *A rest which is full of work, but like the cyclone, all the atoms of which revolve in turbulent motion around the central cavity of rest, so do all the activities of God revolve around His deepest heart which is tranquil and serene. And so it is possible, if you and I learn the lesson amid anxiety and sorrow and trial and pressure of work, always to carry a heart so peaceful, so still, so serene as to be like the depth of the Atlantic which is not disturbed by the turbulent winds that sweep its surface.*"²

This is the peace that Christ brings to us. There might be hardships, struggles, burdens and trials taking place all around us; we might be called to do what seems to be the impossible; but when we have faith and trust in Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord, He brings us peace in order to accomplish the task.

Let me close today with an old poem that lays this out beautifully.

*In the center of the whirlpool, while the waters rush around,
There's a space of perfect stillness, though with turmoil it is bound;
All is calm, and all is quiet, scarcely e'en a sense of sound.
So with us – despite the conflict – when Christ His peace is found.* (R. J. Morgan, *Stories...*, pg.606)

All to God's glory in Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

² (F. B. Meyer, *The Christ Life for Your Life*, [Chicago: Moody Press, n.d.], 115-116, found in Robert J. Morgan, *Stories, Illustrations & Quotes*, [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publications, 2000] pg. 606)