



PEACE

ADVENT | Week 2

Peace is one of those words that we are all familiar with, whether it is used to describe a calmed spirit, the ceasing of war, or a casual greeting. Peace has its own iconic symbol that can be seen on bumper stickers and at the center of social movements.

It is a word that is also significant to the biblical story.

The angels announce “peace” to the shepherds on the hillside the night of Jesus birth (Luke 2:14).

Seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus Isaiah prophesied, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end...” (Isa. 9:6-7).

The Gospel writer Luke records the days when Caesar Augustus was summoning the world under the name of peace to increase the burden of taxes. God was summoning the world to fulfill His Word, to establish the throne of His Son, and to make the way for a peace that will have no end.

God’s glory is revealed in the coming of His Son Jesus. God’s peace comes everywhere His Son is received. And the eternal promise is, of the increase, there will be no end!

Isaiah is looking forward. Luke is looking back. Both are looking at the same event. Both are seeing the same day. Isaiah writes with hope. Luke writes of fulfillment. Peace is announced. Peace has come!

Who or What Do You Fear?

"The Lord is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?
When the wicked advance against me
to devour me,
it is my enemies and my foes
who will stumble and fall.
Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
even then I will be confident.
One thing I ask from the Lord,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the Lord
and to seek him in his temple.
For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent
and set me high upon a rock."

Psalm 27:1-5 (NIV)

When days of trouble come, what steals your peace?

- The military representative that comes to your front door when you have a family member who is serving in active duty in a war zone.
- The school secretary that comes to get you out of class when your mother is in the hospital in the final stage of cancer.
- When some of your children have chosen not to walk with the Lord as adults.
- When a long and satisfying marriage becomes more difficult.
- When your spouse or child suffers with depression and anxiety or another mental illness.
- When your life as a younger or older adult doesn't look like you thought it would look.

What steals your peace? You can fill in the blank.

Many things may have stolen Mary's peace. Being chosen to bear the Messiah was the highest honor, but it also created questions and probably some anxiety in Mary's heart. Being engaged and pregnant (not in the 21st century when it is culturally more acceptable), traveling far from home by foot or donkey when nine months pregnant, no place to stay when tired and close to giving birth, labor and delivery in an unsanitary stable, fleeing to Egypt when Herod threatens your child's life. Who else would know that her son was the Messiah? What would life look like with this special person in the family? Even the mother of the Savior must have had some moments of stolen peace.

Lawsuits, lenders, jealous co-workers, unfair bosses are all modern day enemies. People who work in law enforcement face real enemies who wish to physically destroy them. As believers, we face a real enemy, Satan, who is like a lion and desires to devour us (1 Pet. 5:8). But in all these things, we can be confident and go through the day unafraid. The Lion of Judah has already overcome, and walks with us.

“The Lion of Judah has already overcome, and walks with us.”

If you trust in your strength or your wisdom, then you have plenty of things to fear. If He is the stronghold of your life, and you don't fall back on your own understanding, then you should fear no one and no thing. This yielding is a daily battle. Our prayer must be, *Lord, on this day, please help me to put all my confidence in you alone.*

A life free of fear isn't easy to grasp. It involves the daily discipline of asking and seeking to be in Christ. It is a present desire and a future desire. If it includes “all the days” of my life, then daily renewal is essential. While we dwell with the Lord, we can trust that we are safe, even if that means pain and suffering on this

earth. When we feel threatened, we should gaze on the beauty of the Lord and trust in Him.

God offers all of us light for a dark and uncertain path; salvation for those who seek and ask; a stronghold of protection from attacks that will come; safety and peace in His dwelling; shelter in the form of His provision and comfort; perspective and wisdom in the midst of fear.

“In essence, there is only one thing God asks of us—that we be men and women of prayer, people who live close to God, people for whom God is everything and for whom God is enough. That is the root of peace.” *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, by Brennen Manning.

Prayer

Lord, as Mary found her peace in trusting You, may we daily trust You with our lives. Be it big struggles or daily anxieties, let us find our peace in You. We trust in Your promise to meet us where we are and to give us light for our dark paths. Thank you Lord. Amen

Further Reflection | Individual Study Questions

1. Who or what do you fear?
2. What can you do today to deal with that fear?
3. How can we focus on God and not on what we fear? (See Ps. 27:4-5.)
4. What can we do to dwell in the house of the Lord?

Further Reflection | Family Study Questions

1. What is something that has been hard for you this week?
2. Is there something that makes you feel afraid?
3. What does it look like to give the hard things to God?

Notes:

Year: _____

Year: _____

Year: _____

