



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!

The Word and the Light

"Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light for my path.
I make a solemn vow to
observe your righteous judgments."

Psalm 119:105-106 (NASB)

Can you remember a time when you were in total darkness? No nightlight, no stars, not even the red power light on the television. Without a source of light, when the darkness is all consuming, the way to go is unclear. We are left to stumble blindly, groping about and guessing what it is we are surrounded by. What a difference a light makes! Even a small amount of light can shatter the darkness, giving shape to one's surroundings and making the pathway clear.

Psalm 119:105 is nestled in the longest chapter in the Bible and tells us that God's Word is the light that makes our path clear. When otherwise we would be lost in darkness, when we do not know the way, His Word guides us and shows us the next right step.

But this is not often how we live. Rather than turning to His Word, we look to friends, self-help books, Google, Netflix, or ESPN to provide advice or escape. By contrast, the author of Psalm 119 writes, "O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day" (v. 97), and "the law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces." (v. 72) In fact, almost all of the 176 verses in this chapter mention God's Word. The author of Psalm 119 clearly has a high view of God's written word.

We see evidence of this in verse 106: “I have sworn and I will confirm it, that I will keep Your righteous ordinances.” Not only does the author swear an oath, he confirms it. He pinky promises and crosses his heart. This is a reference to Nehemiah 10:29. The Jewish exiles had returned to the promised land, the wall was finished, and now they were inspired and determined not to fall back into their pattern of forsaking God. They took “on themselves a curse and an oath to walk in God’s law...to keep and to observe all the commandments of God our Lord, and His ordinances and statutes.” If they failed to walk in God’s law, they were inviting a curse on themselves. We know from Nehemiah 13 that these promises were not kept. Even though they knew it was valuable and to forsake it would be inviting a curse, they were unable to keep God’s law.

How often do we do the same thing? The way of God *is* winsome—it is beautiful and perfect and right, it restores the soul, makes wise the simple, causes the heart to rejoice, is more desirable than gold and sweeter than honey (Ps. 19). It *should* inspire in us a desire to seek it, to learn it, and to drink from it deeply. But

“The way of God... restores the soul, makes wise the simple, causes the heart to rejoice, is more desirable than gold and sweeter than honey...”

oh, how fickle we are! How quickly we forget that the things of this world will not satisfy, that the messages our culture inundates us with are lies. God’s Word is not the problem; *I* am the problem.

Hundreds of years later after Psalm 119 was penned, the apostle John introduces his account of Jesus’ life with these words: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Jesus Himself is the Word referenced in Psalm 119, the Word that illuminates our paths. He Himself shows us the way. John continues, “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it” (vv. 4-5). John portrays Jesus as being a double fulfillment of Psalm 119:105: He is both the Word *and* the Light.

Jesus does more than just show us the perfection and beauty of God’s law; He enables us to “fulfill” verse 106. Where previously we were left helpless, without peace, torn between our desire to follow His perfect way and our inability to follow through, Jesus came and made a way for us.

By living a perfect life, dying on the cross in payment of our curse, and rising from the dead to sit at the right hand of the Father, He allows us be dressed in *His* righteousness, in *His* perfection. When the angels appeared to the shepherds on that first Christmas two thousand years ago, they proclaimed, “On earth, peace among men with whom He is pleased” (Luke 2:14). The good news of Christmas

is that we can have peace both with God and within ourselves because the perfect Light and the perfect Word has come.

Further Reflection | Individual Study Questions

1. When I feel lost in darkness, what do I turn to for light and guidance instead of God's Word?
2. Do I feel the constant strife of doing what I know I shouldn't and not doing what I know I should? Am I continually making new promises to God to do better next time? Why is this futile?
3. Do my actions demonstrate that I trust that what Jesus did is enough?

Further Reflection | Family Study Questions

1. Try to enclose yourself in total darkness. If any light is present, can darkness overcome it? How much light does it take to shatter the darkness? How does this help us understand Jesus as the Light of the World?
2. What competes with God's Word to show me the way to go? Can you think of a time where God's Word has proven itself better?

Notes:

Year: _____

Year: _____

Year: _____

