

WEEK TWELVE: "THE WAY OF PEACE"

MONDAY**READ JOHN 14:27**

Peace is no easy thing to find. Our world is not a peaceful place. It is loud. It is in a constant state of change and movement. We are forever at odds with the pace we keep to survive in this culture. We just can't seem to find peace no matter where or how we search for it!

I love that little children's book called "5 Minutes Peace" by Jill Murphy. It's the story of a mama elephant, Mrs. Large, and her children. The chaos that is her everyday life fills her with such frustration. She can never seem to find any time of silence and calm. Her desired retreat to just take a bath by herself...for just 5 minutes peace...just doesn't happen. The children are relentless. They all come to join her there in the tub! No peace for Mrs. Large. She resigns herself to it. She grabs a smiggin' of "peace" here and there, but never a full 5 minutes.

Jesus promises us a different kind of peace. We have our own expectations about peace. But our Savior says that His peace is not like the rest of what the world can give. God's peace is an absence of fear and a troubled spirit. Peace is not merely quietness, and a calm atmosphere around us. God's kind of peace can be found even in the midst of a storm! It is the anchor that holds us. It is the calm assurance that we are held in His hand, safe and secure, regardless of circumstances. Silence and solitude are wonderful things. And we should plan space in our life to relish those times when we can be alone with the Father. But sometimes, in our families, our jobs, our lives...that kind of "peace" is more like Mrs. Large's: illusive. So, today, listen to Jesus' words recorded by John about not having a troubled heart, and being afraid. We can rest in His peace. The only peace that lasts.

TUESDAY**READ MATTHEW 5:9**

Peacemakers are not the people who simply want peace or long for peace. They are not the governments that pass laws on peace, or legislators who write policies on peacekeeping. Peacemakers are those whom the Lord God uses to bring reconciliation to a fallen world. As Christians, we have peace with God through faith, and have been made ministers of reconciliation. God uses us to bring other sinners back into relationship with Him through Jesus. Christ came to earth to reveal God's goodness and grace, and His death on the cross opened the way for fallen people to find peace with God - to be reconciled back to Him through faith in His Son.

We who believe on His name have been entrusted with a life-work that proclaims the gospel of grace to a lost world. Our job is to engage with those who are dead in their sin and estranged from God, so that they may know the truth, be saved by grace through faith in Christ and find peace with God. We are called to be His peacemakers.

Man seeks after empty happiness and longs for peace in a world at war, but the child of God who has been saved by grace through the sacrificial work of Christ on Calvary's cross, gains more than happiness. He is blessed to be reconciled to God and to have peace with Him through the forgiveness of sin. But there is so much more, for we who have peace with God, in a world at war, and we have the peace of God within. We have been promised when we rest in Him and walk in spirit and truth, His peace will guard our heart and guide our path.

Our initial salvation brings peace *WITH* God but during our walk of faith through the journey of life, we can enjoy the peace *OF* God - God's continuous, divine peace in our hearts, "Let not your heart be troubled," Jesus told his confused disciples just before He was to walk to the cross, "Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in Me."

We who believe, can receive that peace that passes understanding as we remain in right relationship with the Father, through faith in the Son. But we are also given the authority to go into all the world as God's peacemakers. We are to be witnesses to the truth that peace with God IS possible by His grace, through faith in Christ.

There is a blessing that is pronounced on peace-makers. "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*" Godly peace-makers are indeed blessed folk who seek to live peaceably with everyone, through prayer, and to actively intervene to make peace, when strife and animosity raises its ugly head. As God directs, they follow after peace without any spiritual compromise, while binding up the broken peace of others, which is caused by depression, disease, divorce, and distress.

Peace-making is not the attitude that cries 'peace at any cost, so let's not rock the boat', nor are peacemakers those who march around carrying banners or sit around selfishly seeking their own well-being with little interest in the distress, discomfort or discordant lives of others. True peace is not found in a ten-step meditation program, a walk in nature, thinking about nice things or relaxing on a beach, although these activities may provide certain benefits. Nor is it discovered in a psychiatrist's chair, the massage parlor, or a cup of green tea or whatever beverage with friends.

Blessings of peace come from the Father of peace, and the blessedness of peace-making rests on the Prince of Peace, Who has become both Founder and Finisher of all our peace, and imparts His eternal peace by His Spirit of Peace, which flows out of us to others as we rest in Christ and permit His peace to flood our heart. "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." is Christ's promise to us.

May we who have made peace with God by believing on His Son as Savior, continue our Christian journey by walking in spirit and truth, maintaining that blessed fellowship and peaceable communion with God our Father. And may we become ambassadors of God's peace in a world at war, through our ministry of reconciliation - through Him Who is our one and only mediator between God and man - Jesus Christ our Lord.

(From <https://dailyverse.knowing-jesus.com/matthew-5-9>)

WEDNESDAY

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 13:11, COLOSSIANS 3:13

Peacemaker. That is what God is to me.

For God to forgive me and forgive you when we still choose to betray Him and His covenant over and over again – it's nonsensical, preposterous. For you to forgive, for me to forgive – it's 100% counter-culture. A rebel yell of Jesus-culture.

It's an act of brazen defiance against my own flesh. Choosing soft-heartedness, choosing to be one who advocates peace, is choosing to have your heart tenderized with a meat mallet. It's painful. It's bloody. It changes the shape of you. It changes your malleability. *Lord, whatever you have to pound out, pound away.*

But, it's something we must do out of obedience to God. And it is for our benefit. What do we get out of choosing to forgive others, out of choosing to make peace?

FREEDOM!

Freedom from the tarry, malevolent parasite of resentment, anger, bitterness. Freedom to love those around us wholeheartedly. Freedom to dream of and pursue happy reunions and beautiful reconciliations. Freedom to live the abundant life (John 10:10).

Choosing to bring God's peace to our relationships is hard. But it's so good. Who and where do you need to "choose peace" today? Take a tiny step. Give it a go. Make a move toward peace.

(From the book: "Getting Out of Crazy Town: The Scandal of Forgiveness" by Sarah Young and Laurie McClure)

THURSDAY

These are stressful times. Everywhere you look you can find people in political strife, marital struggle, financial distress, difficulty with kids, loved ones struggling with suicidal thoughts, and troubles beyond bearing. How, as Christians, do we respond? First and foremost, we turn to God our Father who loves us and is in control. Then, we dig into His Word wherein we can find peace. Let's pick one or two of these verses to memorize and one or two to send to friends and family who need peace, too!

You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You
Isaiah 26:3

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." **John 14:27**

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. **Philippians 4:6-7**

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **Romans 5:1**

Lord, You will establish peace for us, For You have also done all our works in us. **Isaiah 26:12**

"For you shall go out with joy, And be led out with peace; The mountains and the hills Shall break forth into singing before you, And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." **Isaiah 55:12**

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." **John 16:33**

Mark the blameless man, and observe the upright; For the future of that man is peace. **Psalms 37:37**

He shall enter into peace; They shall rest in their beds, Each one walking in his uprightness. **Isaiah 57:2**

For the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. **Romans 14:17-19**

Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble. **Psalms 119:165**

But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. **Psalms 37:11**

I will hear what God the Lord will speak, For He will speak peace to His people and to His saints; But let them not turn back to folly. **Psalms 85:8**

Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. **2 Corinthians 13:11**

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. **Colossians 3:15**

Ask the Lord to place within your heart the hunger to trust Him. Depend on His wisdom to guide your life so that you might know God and His peace.

(Excerpted from *God's Promises for Your Every Need* by Jack Countryman, copyright J. Countryman.)

FRIDAY

READ EPHESIANS 2, 1 PETER 4:7-11

It's no secret that political polarization is at an all-time high right now. Many of us feel the sensation of living within two Americas, one on the Right and one on the Left, and yet fitting neatly into neither. Many of us have lost relationships this year, not due to COVID-19, but to differences in belief and politics. Our culture is quicker than ever to disregard, divide, and demonize over politics.

And it sadly even happens among the Family of God, the Church. We disagree. We draw lines. We refuse. We pull away. We are in conflict over many things that are not essentials of the faith. And yet we continue to divide, desert, and stir up division. Peace is nowhere to be found. The family is at odds with each other. And this is not good.

And while the digital age has caused it to intensify, political polarization and disagreements are nothing new. Into a world of *tribe-against-tribe* hostility came Jesus of Nazareth, who literally died to turn enemies into family, who said in his Sermon on the Mount: "*Blessed are the peacemakers.*" Jesus had an uncanny ability to turn enemies into guests and guests into family. He did this through "radically ordinary hospitality," just eating meals around a table. The word we use for "hospitality" came from *philoxenian* in Greek. It's a compound word: *Philo* means love, *Xenos* means stranger or foreigner. Hospitality is the exact opposite of xenophobia. It's the love of the stranger....the welcome of all as a guest.

We ache, hope, and work for the healing of our divided nation. We long to heal our divided churches. We want whatever will draw us back together again into "peaceful living". It needs to happen with strangers, and with those who we know and consider (*or at one time considered*) as family. Scripture has a simple way to begin...

Few practices are more effective to this end than hospitality. How can you express hospitality to someone this week? Who is someone in your world that you do not get along with, that you disagree with on some issues? Would you consider having them over for a meal?

And then, how can you enjoy each other's company without causing turmoil? The way to peace begins with simple respect and friendship. Speaking truth bathed in overwhelming love. Reach out, share a meal, share life. Share the love of Christ and watch what happens.