

## Why We Need Christmas “We Need the Peace of God”

### Part 4

**Intro:** Let’s face it, peace is in short supply today. We certainly do not have **peace on the world** stage (North Korea test firing missiles / ongoing fight with ISIS in the Middle East). We don’t have much **peace here at home** (political and moral chaos / wildfires raging in California / mass shootings at concerts, schools and churches). Our **personal peace** is always threatened (financial issues – sickness – uncertain future – relational difficulties – Oh and Christmas...not the most peaceful time). Peace can start feeling like a myth. Yet, peace is exactly what Jesus came to bring to our lives.

*Is. 9:6 “For a child is born to us, a son is given to us... And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace.**” (NLT)*

- Jesus came so we could experience His peace in us. He is the Prince of Peace.
- Even that night outside Bethlehem when the angels announced to the shepherds Jesus’ arrival, they announced the reality of His peace.

*Luke 2:13-14 “Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, “Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth...” (NLT)*

- Jesus came so we could experience peace. The prophets foretold it and the angels announced it. If this is true, where is the peace? Peace certainly does not describe humanity’s existence on planet earth. Yet, peace can define our lives.

Maybe you could use a little more peace in your mind and heart today. How can we experience the peace Jesus came to bring?

### 1. Faith in Jesus creates God’s peace in you

*Rom. 5:1 “Therefore, since we have been made right in **God’s** sight by faith, we have **peace with God** because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.” (NLT)*

Jesus came to deal with the relational issue between humanity and God that hinders peace.

- Peace with God precedes peace from God  
Before we can ever expect to receive the peace that comes from God, we first must have peace with God. Why do we need peace with God?
  - Jesus came to deal with the barrier to peace. Something was in the way that was keeping us from a relationship with God. The Bible tells us that it was our sin that actually made us hostile towards God.

*Rom. 8:7 “For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God’s laws, and it never will.” (NLT)*

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- It's pretty tough to have relational peace with someone who is hostile towards you. Have you ever had this experience? You try to be nice to this person yet they keep treating you with resistance and animosity? This is how the bible describes our relationship with God before Jesus.
- Our sin made us hostile towards God. Now I know this sounds extreme. It would be easy to think; "I'm not hostile towards God!" Lighten up the verbiage a bit.
- Yet, sin's nature is to always rebel against God. It walks away from God. It rejects God's path, God's truth and the need for relationship. Whether this is done aggressively or passively, it is still hostile towards God.
- I have seen this for years talking with people about God. You have this nice conversation about God and spirituality and then you mention something about sin...and people get angry, defensive and you see the hostility come out.

*Is. 59:2 "It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore."* (NLT) Our hostility makes it impossible for God to have any type of relationship with us. This is the dilemma Jesus came to address.

- Jesus came to reconcile the world back to God

*II Cor. 5:9 "For God was in Christ, **reconciling** the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them..."* (NLT)

- This was the entire point of the Christmas story. This is why the angels announced there could finally be peace on earth. Jesus came to reconcile the world back to God. To reconcile is to bring relational peace. Jesus came to end the hostility.
- This is why Rom. 5:1 says, "*we have **peace with God** because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.*" What did He do for us? He did more than show up in a manger scene.
- Jesus died on a cross in our place. Jesus took the punishment for our sin so we could be reconciled back to God. Jesus' death removed the barrier and created a pathway back to God.
- What is the pathway? Jesus is the pathway. A person is the pathway. If we accept our need for forgiveness and receive Jesus as God's pathway back, then the relationship is restored. We have peace with God through Jesus.
- This is why Jesus said; "I am the way, the truth and the life." Religion is not the way back...going to church is not the way back... but only Jesus. Jesus removes the hostility of our sin and replaces it with Himself.

Do you have peace with God today? We all want the peace that comes from God but it begins with peace with God. It always takes two people to reconcile. Jesus has already moved towards you. (The story of Christmas.) He has already chosen to have a relationship with you. Now, it's your choice.

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There are many people who have made this choice to have peace with God yet they still don't experience the peace that comes from God. Sometimes we can live in a way that actually hinders the peace of God in our own lives.

## 2. A lifestyle of peace creates God's peace in you

*II Cor. 13:11* "Dear brothers and sisters, I close my letter with these last words: *Be joyful. Grow to maturity. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you.*" (NLT) If we desire God's peace we have to do our part living at peace with others. If we live in a way that rejects peace, then how can we expect to have it? What does it look like to live at peace with others? Notice this verses tells us to "live in harmony and peace... **THEN**...the result of this choice is the God of love and peace will be with you. God's love and peace will be your reality in your relationships. Who wouldn't like more love and peace relationally? HOW?

- Living in peace means we choose a pathway of peace

God will never bless your life with more peace if you are not walking in a pathway of peace. You can pray for it all you want but it will never be your reality. Jesus multiplies the things you obey Him in. If you want more peace then commit yourself to peace.

Jesus did say that, "blessed are the peacemakers..." Are you a peacemaker? God blesses peacemakers. What is a Peacemaker?

- Peacemakers reject behaviors that destroy peace
  - Gossip / slander / revenge / holding on to grudges /unforgiveness / judging others / pride / self-centeredness / selfishness / verbally demeaning others / criticizing / an unwillingness to listen to a differing viewpoint – All these things destroy peace and multiply relational hostility.
- Peacemakers embrace behaviors that build peace
  - Unconditional love...unconditional acceptance. This is the environment of peace. This is the environment we desire each person to experience here at Foothills. For you to be at peace you need to know you are loved and accepted as you are. When you know you are not judged for your struggles, failures and flaws you experience an internal peace.
  - Just watch what happens to all your relationships if you decide to love and accept those around you. What can you do to better demonstrate you unconditionally love and accept people? If you want more relational peace you have to choose behaviors that create peace. Hostility does not create peace.

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- Living in peace means we forgive

There is no peace without forgiveness. Remember it is through forgiveness that we have peace with God. Therefore, to have peace with one another we must be committed to a lifestyle of forgiveness.

- Forgiving others is the best gift you can give to yourself  
Unforgiveness makes it impossible for us to experience God's love and peace being poured out into our lives. WHY? Because there is no room for His peace. Unforgiveness takes up emotional space. (**Illustrate with jar**)  
Unforgiveness always does more damage to the one holding the grudge.
- Who do you need to forgive? Forgiveness makes relational peace possible  
When we forgive we are being peacemakers. Forgiveness makes it possible for reconciliation to happen.

- Living in peace means we value differences

Peace is not the result of us all being the same. Peace is not the result of uniformity. Peace comes from valuing the differences that exist and choosing to work together valuing those differences. This is why I love the word "harmony". Harmony doesn't exist without differences. (Musical term)

- Musically, it is the different notes working together that create beautiful harmony. You cannot have harmony without differences. The reason you do not have harmony in your marriage is you have yet to discover how the differences work together to create beautiful music. You can apply this principal to every other relational environment. (work / church / sports /
- Differences do not divide us. What divides us is a demand for uniformity. We demand everyone plays the same note. When we demand everyone to be like us we destroy peace.

Will you commit to a lifestyle of peace? One of the realities of experiencing His peace is choosing to walk in it. Jesus empowers these choices. Jesus empowers us after the choice is made not before. Just think how different your Christmas could be this year?

### **3. Prayer creates God's peace in you**

*Phil. 4:6-7 "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. <sup>7</sup> 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." (NLT)*

This is a peace that is not connected to favorable circumstances. It is God's peace placed inside us. It is a peace that guards our emotions and our thinking. (hearts and minds) Prayer connects us to the Prince of Peace. What kind of praying results in this type of supernatural peace?

- When our prayers are a lifestyle it results in peace

*Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything*

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If we pray about everything this is a lifestyle of prayer not a religious ritual. Praying about everything means we pray about everything. The areas of our life that are not exposed to the Prince of Peace will be exposed to worry and anxiety.

- Lifestyle praying means we live out our entire lives prayerfully. Prayer is more than my five minutes when I get up or go to bed. Lifestyle praying is an ongoing, never ending conversation with Jesus throughout the day. You are involving the Prince of Peace in everything you do.
- If we involve Jesus in our everyday lives then we have His peace in our everyday life. Don't reserve your prayers for only the big stuff. Pray about everything. He cares about every detail of your life. (Try it)
- Jesus shows up where He is invited. Are you inviting Him in to everything?

- When our prayers are needy it results in peace

*Tell God what you need,*

Are you needy? God is never surprised about our neediness. He is never bothered by it / irritated by it / or hope we someday outgrow it. He wants us to be very in tune with our desperate need for Him. Jesus said; "Without Me you can do nothing." That makes us all pretty needy for Him.

- A lack of awareness how needy we are creates prayerlessness. If you don't think you're that needy you don't have a high motivation to pray and tell God what you need.
- BUT, the more awareness we have of our need the more we pray and the more peace we will experience. Neediness does not create stress. It is our lack of dependency on Jesus that creates stress. The more we depend on ourselves to be all we need the more stress we will experience.
- Are you exposing your neediness before Jesus? Are you telling Him what you need. Dependency = peace.

- When our prayers are thankful it results in peace

*thank him for all he has done*

Including gratitude in our praying reminds us of God's faithful track record in our lives. It might be tough right now, but He has come through many times and I am thankful for His reality in my life. The longer you follow Jesus the more you have to be thankful for. Gratitude does not make you feel worse. Gratitude multiplies peace in us.

- Try to spend time every day thanking God for what He has done and watch what this does to your heart.

Are you experiencing Jesus as your Prince of Peace?

- Do you have peace with God through Jesus?

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- Will you commit to a lifestyle of peace?
- Will you pray inviting Jesus into every piece and part of your life?

Peace does not have to seem like a myth. Jesus came to be your peace.

Prayer time:

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