

Advent: Peace

Day 1

Basics

We spoke this week about peace being the making of something sound or whole. This change from lacking into wholeness or soundness starts with our relationship with God and radiates out from that point. What does it mean to have peace with God? Check out this article to make sure you know the basics of having peace:

<https://learn.ligonier.org/guides/peace>

Verses: Colossians 1:20, Matthew 5:9, 2 Corinthians 5:19

Prayer Topics: Adversity, Steadiness, Strength

Day 2

Connect the Dots

The death and resurrection of Jesus on the cross, and the covenant that Jesus offers that applies those things to us, achieve for us a reconciliation with God, an end to the hostility between us. For many people, while this is certainly good news, they struggle to understand how this affects their experience of peace on a daily basis. How does this relate to the anxiety I feel over paying my bills and finding the right person to marry? To understand the link, we need to look back to the garden of Eden. In the garden, Adam and Eve were in the presence of God, the source of all goodness and blessing. In the presence of God there can be no lack, no want, and no evil. Our experience of these things is tied to the distance from God that is part of the

enmity between us, caused by sin entering the world through the rebellion of mankind. When we are reconciled to God, we can rest assured that the blessings of God flow unhindered into our lives. If this is the case, why do I still have bills to pay? God is using all of your challenges and the lack of blessings that often accompanies us in our physical life to grow us spiritually. God uses a physical lack of blessing to give us spiritual blessings that are far greater, and eternal. The question for us is really one of trust. Do we trust that God is for us? Do we trust in his desire and his ability to bless us? To learn more about that trust, check out the following article:

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-secret-to-peace-and-contentment>

Verses: Luke 12:22, 30-31, Philippians 4:11–13, Proverbs 3:5

Prayer Topics: Trust, Reconciliation, Unity

Day 3

Propitiation

Ephesians 2:14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility

This passage tells us something very powerful. Jesus is not just a source of peace, a way of peace, or knowledgeable about how peace can be attained. Jesus is peace. How is this possible? In the Bible, there is a concept known as propitiation, and it is the reason that Jesus himself is peace. To understand this concept, check out this informative article on propitiation:

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/propitiation/>

Verses: Hebrews 2:17, 1 John 2:2; 4:10, Romans 3:25

Prayer Topics: Atonement, Appeasement, Redemption

Day 4

Results

God has made Jesus Christ our peace through the propitiation of His wrath in the substitutionary atonement of Jesus upon the cross. What are the results of this atonement? How has Christ become our peace? How has Christ not only taken away the enmity between God and man, how has he secured the blessings of peace for us? John F. Walvoord, former president of Dallas Theological Seminary, had this to say about the topic:

God is justified in forgiving sin. The history of Christian theology has demonstrated that it is difficult for sinful man to realize the absolute necessity of a holy God judging sin. Propitiation is God's answer to this problem arising from His own heart of love. Through the death of Christ God has received satisfaction in full for every sin. On the basis of this sacrifice He can freely and justly forgive sin because the penalty has been paid. Forgiveness as found in God is not an emotion, nor is it directly a matter of expression of love and affection, but is rather one of divine justice. God is acting justly in recognizing that the judgment upon sin has been accomplished by the death of His Son. At the same time God acts in complete harmony and satisfaction in respect to His love which prompted the gift of His Son and the whole plan of redemption. The basis of the gospel invitation and of all divine mercy is found in the fact that the death of Christ is a propitiation for our sins.

God is justified in bestowing righteousness. The act of propitiation not only permits God to impute all sin to Christ, but also makes possible the imputation

of the righteousness of Christ to the sinner. This is sometimes related to the sweet-savor aspect of Christ's offering as foreshadowed in the sweet-savor sacrifice in the Old Testament. The merit of Christ now has become the possession of the believer. In keeping with this freedom not only to forgive, but bestow righteousness, God can justify the sinner, and can proceed unhindered in all the program of salvation and sanctification. God on the basis of the death of Christ can take the foulest sinner and make him as pure in holiness as His own Son. This is the foundation of all effective gospel preaching which on the one hand fully sustains the concept that God is holy, and on the other that such a God is able to welcome sinners to Himself.

God is justified in bestowing all grace on sinners. Not only is forgiveness and imputation of righteousness possible for a propitiated God, but there can come into the realm of the believer's possession an experience of the full blessings of God, though totally undeserved. All the blessings of God as manifested in spiritual enablement and ministry, prayer, fruit, spiritual food, illumination, service, sanctification, and glorification are possible. While the full measure of divine blessing is reserved for the eternal state, it is a fundamental factor of the spiritual life that God stands ready right now to bless abundantly those who come to Him. There is no withholding by God of any blessing that can be given. The doctrine of propitiation properly understood may be regarded as the open door to greater understanding of the person of God and His attitude of love and grace toward the world."

We can have confidence in our peace with God, because it was not earned by our good deeds but by Christ's sacrifice. Go out and live a life of peace, being bold in your trust in what Christ has achieved on your behalf.

Verses: Ephesians 4:32, Mark 11:25, Matthew 6:15

Prayer Topics: Harmony, Forgiveness, Love

Day 5

Thanks to Sylvester Warsaw, Jr for our devotional today

Within the human experience there is this longing within for peace. Men try to recreate the garden of Eden from human ingenuity by creating spaces of tranquility of what their minds think is beauty. Beauty oftentimes is associated with peace, the lack of tension,

the lack of conflict, a physical place of refuge and security that you physically have to return to for enjoyment. Creating physical spaces of tranquility doesn't erase that inner hunger to be connected. The spirit within man knows it belongs to something greater than itself otherwise there wouldn't be this longing for belonging. Man even tries to usher in peace with military force and aligning themselves with other nations for a false sense of peace that only benefits those in power. This was Israel's problem aligning themselves with foreign people who didn't have a relationship with God. Israel traded God for the gods of this world, Jeremiah 2:9-13.

Jesus as He wept over Jerusalem said this, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes," Luke 19:42. As long as man takes pride in his own understanding he will never

experience true peace because man associates peace with power and might when God says that's not true power, Zechariah 4:6. In Isaiah 9:6-7 this truth is recorded, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." True peace that last can't be manufactured by man because it doesn't deal with the issues of the heart. Only God knows the heart of man because man doesn't know his own heart.

True peace requires being connected being in relationship with God the Father in and through Christ Jesus. The peace that man manufactures still operates in rebellion because God isn't the foundation, the source the starting point. When your starting point is finite, that which is physical you'll never achieve the lasting peace hearts quest for. Paul says it like this in Ephesians 2:14-22, "For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the

whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."