

#71
May 5, 2019
Philippians 4:4-9
Peace of Mind

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.

⁶ Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. ⁷ Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus.

⁸ From now on, brothers and sisters, if anything is excellent and if anything is admirable, focus your thoughts on these things: all that is true, all that is holy, all that is just, all that is pure, all that is lovely, and all that is worthy of praise. ⁹ Practice these things: whatever you learned, received, heard, or saw in us. The God of peace will be with you.

It is not easy to preach on not feeling jittery as I stand here. My palms are sweaty and my blood pressure is up. So, why do I do it? The Word of God speaks to me and I am eager to share with you the results of my study and contemplation and to grow with you in the Lord.

Last Sunday we looked at Paul's mandate: "Rejoice in the Lord. I will say again, rejoice." In one verse, Paul repeats his commandment. Is it because we do not hear it and we do not get it? You do not wake up the morning and decide to be joyful. The source of joy is staying connected to God and the full realization of what God has done through Christ bringing our salvation from sin and death. Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. Praise be to God.

Paul continues in this same passage from Philippians: "Do not be anxious about anything." As we think of the 3rd fruit of the spirit what pictures come to mind?



This peace symbol became popular in the 1960's during the Viet Nam war.



Many of you know this gesture also from the 1960's.



One of the most ancient symbols of peace is the olive branch



And of course followers of Jesus have used the dove to symbolize peace ever since His Baptism.

What is peace? It is something everyone wants but no one really knows how to get. If they happen to get it, they don't know how to keep it.

We all have heard the song, "Don't Worry, Be Happy". Unfortunately, it does not tell us how to do that. It is impossible to ignore our difficulties and just be happy.

The false prophets in the Old Testament promised peace. Don't worry. Be Happy. Jeremiah 6:14, Jeremiah 8:11, Ezekiel 13:10, Ezekiel 13:16 are almost identical. "People say, "Peace, Peace", but there is no peace." Thus says the Lord God."

Jesus declared, "I did not come to bring peace, but to bring the sword and to divide households."

It was not picnic for Christians for the first 400 years. No one knows the number of martyrs. Even today, in some parts of the world, Christians are tormented and killed.

So how can we talk about peace? In John 14 Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." By the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus promises a different peace – a peace of mind and soul – which the world cannot give.

Jesus predicted tribulation but told us to be of good cheer because he has overcome the world.

Jesus said to take no thought about tomorrow. God knows all about you and your life. We are familiar with I Peter 5:7: "Cast all your cares upon God for He cares for you."

We know we are called to live and trust and not to worry. Yet, every one of us have to admit that we fret and stew, if not all the time, at least some of the time. Why do we choose to worry?

Is it really possible to have a peace that exceeds all understanding?

Epictetus, a philosopher of the first century, wrote in response Caesar's boast of peace throughout the Roman world: "While the emperor may give peace from war on land and sea, he is unable to give peace from passion, grief and envy. He cannot give peace of heart, for which man yearns more than even for outward peace".

One of the church fathers, Augustine of Hippo, wrote this prayer in his journal: "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless, until they can find rest in you."

The art gallery sponsored a contest. The prize was for the best picture of peace. Many artists submitted their paintings. One was of a meadow with deer feeding by a gentle stream with fluffy clouds in the sky. Another was a sandy beach with palm trees and just enough wind for the sail boats in the distance. Another was a calm lake reflecting beautiful tall mountains and forest and a snug cabin with smoke curling out of the chimney.

The judges chose the picture of rugged bare mountains of granite. Above was an angry sky from which torrential rain fell and lightening flashed. The trees below were bent in the tornado-like wind. Down the side of the mountain tumbled a foaming waterfall. It did not look peaceful at all.

A closer look showed a tiny bush growing in a crack in the rock behind the waterfall. In the bush a mother bird had built her nest. There in the midst of the rush of angry water, sat the mother bird in her nest.

The judges chose this picture. Why? Because peace does not mean idyllic serenity with no noise, trouble or hard work. Peace means to be in the midst of raging storms of life with all the trials, calamities, and difficulties and still be calm in in your heart.



Of course, we know that every believer who has been born in Christ has peace with God. In the book of Romans 5, verse 1, it says, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." If you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior, peace has been established between you and God. You have peace with God.

The heavenly host of angels fill the night sky and sang to the shepherds. "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace."

Some will make the distinction between peace with God and the peace of God. You cannot have one without the other. Peace is the frame of mind we have when we are right with God.

None of us get up in the morning and say, "I am ready for a catastrophe." Nobody gets up in the morning planning to go to an emergency room. There is a way, though, to be prepared with the armor of God. The most important thing you can do in the morning is start it with God. Every minute counts. Even if you give two minutes is better than none.

The cause of worry is forgetfulness. We worry when we forget God's protection in the past. God has never let us down before. He has always protected and provided. *"His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me."*

The essence of the anxious person is attempting to control the uncontrollable. When I remove God from the center of my life, I put yourself in the center of universe.

It is a sobering thought to realize your life is not under your control. You are astonishingly vulnerable in countless ways. There are so many reasons you should be anxious that you haven't even thought of!

Queen Elizabeth 1, who reigned in the 16th century, once told a man that she wanted him to go on a voyage to the New World because they needed his skills on this voyage to make it a success. The man looked at her and said, "I'm a small businessman and my business has been floundering. If I go on it, I'm sure it's going to sink." She looked at him and said, "My dear friend, you mind my business and I'll mind your business." And this is exactly the way it works with God. "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33).

Isaiah 9:6 tells us that Jesus is the Prince of Peace. How do we get out of the wilderness of worry and into the palace of peace?

We get our first clue from verse 8: "From now on, brothers and sisters, if anything is excellent and if anything is admirable, focus (other translations say- fix) your thoughts on these things: all that is true, all that is holy, all that is just, all that is pure, all that is lovely, and all that is worthy of praise."

The human mind is so constructed that you cannot think about two things at the same time. The way you get rid of the bad thoughts is to fill your mind with good thoughts. The way to fill your mind with good thoughts is to saturate your mind with the Word of God.

You will never have peace if you are dwelling on:

- **All your problems,**
- **All your pains,**
- **How everyone mistreats you,**
- **How rotten the world is,**
- **How imperfect other people are,**



If you dwell on the thoughts like these, -you are going to be a very, very sad person.

Most of your emotional battles are won or lost in your thought life. Your thinking itself is a very powerful tool. If we invite the Holy Spirit in our mind and continue to bring light and make a choice to dwell on what is above, we will notice that we have more peace. Here is why prayer is so important.

Fix your mind. Think through the perspective of God. Always bring blessing as often as you think of another person. You will bless yourself with that peace. I know there are many who are the saint makers around us. At least in your thoughts you want to tell them what you think about them. Choose, even if you do not want to or do not feel like it, to bless them. Trust me, I know how hard it is.

On my birthday... before I continue, I do want to say how grateful I am for such a wonderful celebration I had last Sunday. Thank you for all the cards, hugs and all the cheesecakes you brought. Thank you.

On my birthday I received one unexpected, surprise birthday greeting. It was from Lithuania. It was from my God mother. She is my dad's sister. It is a little bit different here than it is in Lithuania. God parents that your parents choose for you at your baptism are very important. They should be big part in your life. They are supposed to help you grow in faith and support you. I had never heard a word from my God mother. She was never a part of any event in my life. It is probably because of my parents divorced when I was seven. Now, for the first time in 40 years wished me a Happy Birthday. I was furious. I did not even know I had that anger and that pain. I deleted the message immediately. I did not tell anybody about it. After a while I had to ask myself: "What is that?" I did not have peace about it at all. The peace of God starts in your thoughts. In my thoughts I had to start to pray for her, to bless her and forgive her. I knew I could not have true peace as long as I harbored this bitterness.



The next step, after knowing the Bible and praying, is examining your relationship with others

In the Amplified Bible we read: "Let your gentle *spirit* [your graciousness, unselfishness, mercy, tolerance, and patience] be known to all people.

Another version says: "Let your moderation, your willingness to yield to others and live for others be known unto all."

Are you able to let others be right? Even if you disagree, even if you are convinced that they are wrong can you yield? Especially in the community of believers, we have to agree that we will disagree. Can you support, help and let not go your way? I have to tell myself, that is such a little thing, let it go.

Be gentle, even when you disagree.

Think right, do right and you will feel right. Paul writes: Practice these things: whatever you learned, received, heard, or saw in us". Practice what you know, what you learned.

One of the biggest dangers for us Christians is when we forget the big picture. God call us to be and to make disciples. Every single meeting, every single ministry, we need to ask ourselves: Are we making disciples?

The Loaf ministry is great. How do we turn this into an avenue for discipleship?

Like love and faith and joy, we cannot manufacture peace that passes understanding. It comes as a result of our relationship with God through Christ Jesus. Are we allowing the Holy Spirit to use us to bring the peace of the heart, mind and soul?

Join us as we will not just give the food, but we will make lunch for them, we will give them our time and we will share the joy and peace of God.

VBS is another tool we have. It is away to reach kids that are in our neighborhood and make disciples? Yes. Please join us as we will be planning to do the Fun in Fairland to reach the kids with the word of God.

If you need more information please pick up our newsletter on the way out.

Peace comes as we bring the peace of God to others.

Here is your homework assignment for next week. The word "peace" is found in 26 of the 27 books of the New Testament. Which one does not have the word peace?