

Finding Peace in Present Times

It is not a place, it is not stillness, it is not quietness. Then what is peace? Stay with us for this second week of Advent as we find peace in present times.

Introduction

With so much uncertainty in the world today, it is hard to imagine that peace can really exist. People are divided on every topic. There is division within countries, division in communities, division in workplaces, and homes. It seems that finding peace is a rarity in today's modern society.

Today, we celebrate the second week of Advent leading up to Jesus' birth on Christmas Day. We are going to make peace our focal point as we discuss finding peace in present times.

There are so many things fighting for our attention. From the time we wake up in the morning, we see headlines of wars, crime, and tragedies. The radio, TV, and social media are competing for our attention through advertisements, thought-provoking data, or attention-grabbing headlines. At work or in school, people are fighting for our attention, they want an explanation or an answer. It is very difficult to find peace and to find quiet in the midst of all the noise.

Finding solitude or a place to turn the noise off is not peace, it is just quiet. This is the peace the world thinks about. This peace is temporary and is accompanied by a change in the environment that is quiet and calm.

True Peace

Peace can also be described in our culture as the absence of violence. While this definitely brings an aspect of peace, it is not what the Bible talks about when it describes the peace of God.

Shalom is the Jewish greeting. It is the Hebrew word used for peace, but the meaning is so much more than what we comprehend as peace. It is about wholeness and completeness in God. It is about knowing that God is in control of your life and no matter what happens, he is with you, and nothing surprises him.

Jesus came to bring us peace. Acts 10:36 says:

Acts 10:36

(36) You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

The Good News brings peace. The Good News is that our sins are forgiven through Jesus Christ. God gives us peace through his son.

God's will is perfect and good. This is the peace that Jesus brought when he was born on Christmas Day. This peace reminds us that no matter what life brings, we have hope in eternity. This is the peace he gives to us as prophesied in Isaiah 9:6 which reads:



Isaiah 9:6

(6) For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

This child to be born that was prophesied to be the Messiah, the Savior of the world is the Great Counselor who administers peace in turbulent times. He is God in the flesh, the Prince of Peace.

The Promise

As a priest, Zechariah's turn finally came to serve in the temple. This was a rare event for priests, and most did not get the opportunity. But when his number was called, little did he know that his service to the temple would play an important role in all of humanity.

Zechariah was the father of John the Baptist., he and his wife Elizabeth had just about given up on ever having children of their own. They were old and far along in years. However, an angel appeared to Zechariah one day when he was serving in the temple.

Let us read this exchange between the angel Gabriel and Zechariah in Luke 1:13-18

Luke 1:13-18

(13) But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. (14) He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, (15) for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. (16) He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. (17) And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (18) Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

Zechariah was receiving a promise from God that their prayer of having a baby was going to be answered! He was being told that this baby would be not only a delight to his parents but to others as well.

The angel gave specific instructions about this baby to be born. He was going to be filled with the Holy Spirit before he was even born. His whole purpose was laid out for him before he breathed his first breath! This child was to prepare the people for the arrival of the Lord.

Zechariah was a typical person and questioned the Lord, knowing that he and Elizabeth were getting older. The angel's reply to him proved the validity of the angel's message.

Let us continue reading Luke 1:19-20

Luke 1:19-20

(19) The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. (20) And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time."



Zechariah now has incredible news to share with his wife when he gets home but cannot speak! He must have been frustrated, excited, and full of joy, all at the same time. Zechariah was a priest; he knew the prophecies about the one who would come from the wilderness to prepare a way for the Lord.

Elizabeth and Zechariah knew God's plan for their son. An angel had spoken directly to them on behalf of God. I would imagine that they were at peace once the shock wore off and the acceptance came. As parents, before John the Baptist was born, they knew his purpose. They knew he would be a delight to them and a blessing to others. They had peace knowing God was in control of their son's destiny. They had nothing to fear for the Creator had a plan for their son's life.

The Miracle

This is the peace we can experience in present times. This is the peace that is promised to us when Jesus said in John 14:27:

John 14:27

(14) 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.

This peace was what Jeremiah speaks about in Jeremiah 29:11:

Jeremiah 29:11

(11) For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

This peace is what gives us hope for the future.

Through Elizabeth's pregnancy and the preparation of a newborn, Zechariah was silent. He had to write his thoughts and requests to those around him. It was not until it came time to name his son that he received his voice back.

Luke 1:59-64 records this miracle.

Luke 1:59-64

(59) On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, (60) but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John." (61) They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name." (62) Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. (63) He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." (64) Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God.

Having peace does not mean that life will be easy. Experiencing the love of God and allowing his peace to fill your heart just means that you know everything will be okay because God is in control, and he is good. Although our world is divided and confused, we can experience peace knowing that God is in control and has a plan and a purpose.



As terrifying as it must have been for Zechariah to lose his voice, he knew God had a plan and would fulfill his promise in his life.

We will all face difficult times. The storms of life can seem overwhelming. If we choose to trade our anxiety, uncertainty, and fear, for peace; then we can experience the fullness of Christ. Although evil may be prevalent and it rips apart families, communities, and cultures, rest assured, God is still in control.

God will send and administer his peace to all who accept his son as Lord and Savior. Romans 16:20 tells us of this victory.

Romans 16:20

(20) The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

When Zechariah's tongue was set free and he began to speak, he praised God. Zechariah rejoiced and gave God all the glory as soon as he was given the voice to do so. Because he held on to peace knowing that God had a plan for him and his little boy, he could experience joy when the miracle came.

Sometimes we can get so wrapped up in the circumstance that we miss the joy of the miracle. Peace this Christmas is what we can choose when we have Jesus. He is our peace, he is our hope, and he is our joy.

Conclusion

Peace is a gift that cannot be explained unless you have Jesus. It is not a place, it is not stillness, it is not quietness. It lives within you through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is peace wrapped in hope and encompassed with the love that Jesus has for you.

