

Transformational Peace

Finding a sense of peace is very important to people's mental outlook. We each have our own way of seeking it. Perhaps you like to be the first person up in the morning, enjoying a cup of coffee while you quietly read. For many, sitting in a balcony lounge chair, listening to the ocean waves gently washing ashore provides a feeling of peace. Or, perhaps you like a mountain top view enjoyed in solitude. In each of these environments the prerequisites to a sense of peace are a lack of distractions and being one-on-one with your thoughts. Peace is relaxing but also helps us recharge ourselves as we take a break from our fast-paced world.

As enjoyable as the alone time is, God offers a sense of peace at other times. His peace doesn't need solitude but prevails throughout our day. Peace is the 4th Advent candle because it is foundational to Jesus' ministry. In preparation for Peace the three previous candles are Hope, Love and Joy. When you have these three you have the ingredients for peace 24/7.



Peace involves three different dimensions. Here is my perspective on these dimensions:

- Peace with God
- Peace With Others
- The Peace of God

Peace with God: I try to make peace with God through daily prayer. Being at peace with God is the intent with my own personal confession before taking communion each Sunday. I know that God hears my prayers and He is willing to forgive. In our communion liturgy, after a time of confession, the pastor announces the forgiveness of my sins by saying, "... all of your sins are forgiven." Hearing that, I breathe a sigh of relief and I am at peace with God.

Peace With Others: I seek peace with others first by forgiving them. Peace with others is relational: how I relate to others in a loving way, even when they go against me. I make an effort to not hold grudges, instead looking at the good side of people. Thirdly, I do my best to act as a peacemaker between people who have a difference of opinion. My goal is to help others find a sense of peace.

Peace of God: Now comes the hard part. For me, the Peace of God is the most difficult to achieve. The Peace of God involves trusting God to carry me through difficult situations. It is human nature to try and solve everything ourselves. Feeling the peace of God involves trusting that if I turn my life over to God He will help me. I just have to give up control. It is important to give it completely up to God, and not still try to hold onto what is bothering me. Either you give it completely to God or you don't achieve a sense of peace. Seeking the Peace of God is really a test of my faith. Christian writer Oswald Chambers said "It is like having two masters: God and ourselves. As long as we have two masters there will be difficulties combined with doubt and confusion. As soon as we let it go, everything becomes clear as daylight to us." That daylight is the Peace of God.

What often makes it difficult is the unwillingness to forgive our self and to have guilt feelings. I seem to overlook that God has already forgiven me. Now, I have to forgive myself. Our culture makes that difficult. It drives us to expect perfection from ourselves and to overcome all odds to achieve. We are taught to exceed expectations at work. Anything less is a failure. We all know that perfection is impossible this side of Heaven but we are reluctant to let ourselves off the hook, creating a sense of anxiety. God invites us to *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you (1 Peter 5:7)*. God loves us and He wants us to live in peace. He sacrificed His son so that we could live in peace. So, accept the gift of Jesus Christ to reap the benefits God desires for you. Whatever is troubling you, let it go. Trust God to carry you through the situation you face and embrace and mirror His forgiveness when you fall short. Seeking peace is synchronizing your mind and heart with God. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Let the peace of God transcend the pressures you are feeling and let His peace transform your life. As the Pastor sends the congregation out into the world each Sunday his final words of the benediction say, "and give you His peace."

Question: What is the most difficult dimension of peace for you? How do you seek to have peace in your life?

Prayer: Most Holy God. In this difficult world let us find the peace that Jesus sacrificed His life for us. This is possible if we turn our lives over to you. Let us seek forgiveness from you, others and ourselves, so we can live in peace. Amen.

Peace With God verses:

- *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 (John 14:27)*
- *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we^[a] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).*
- *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).*
- *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 (Isaiah 9:6).*

Peace With Others verses:

- *Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14)*
- *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God (Matthew 5:9)*
- *I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world (John 16:33).*
- *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).*
- *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone (Romans 12:18).*

The Peace of God verses:

- *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful (Colossians 3:15).*
- *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7)*
- *Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests (Luke 2:14).*
- *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.*
- *The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you (Romans 16:20).*
- *For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).*
- *The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.*