

December 20, 2020

Strategies for Finding Peace in a Troubled World

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to men on whom his favor rests."
Luke 2:1-14



It seems fitting to end our series on strategies for finding peace in this troubled world with a lesson from the Christmas story. God's gift of his peace to our chaotic world began with the birth of his one and only Son in that stable in the tiny village of Bethlehem.

In God's most beautiful gift, his Son, he created the opportunity for each of us to be eternally at peace with Him. That peace was born in Bethlehem and came to be in the death of God's Son on the cross of Calvary. As Paul wrote the believers in Rome, ***"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand."*** (Romans 5:1-2)

In God's greatest gift we can receive peace with our God and Father, but we can and really, we must, also find peace with one another as well. In Jesus, God gives his peace which surpasses understanding to the world and to each and every one of us if we would but choose it. And therein lies the problem doesn't it?

God has given me the opportunity to know peace, his surpassing peace, but I so seldom choose it. I am so often overcome with anxiety and fear and conflict because, quite frankly, I choose those things rejecting the peace of God. Yes, we choose those things, even if we do not always do so intentionally.

The simple truth is, I can choose to be content, I can choose to be untroubled, and I can choose to be at peace with my God and with my fellow man. But too often I do not make these choices and so I reject the peace that was born in a manger in a stable in Bethlehem.

Why would I make such a horrible and personally destructive choice; not once but over and over again? My choices are part of my human nature. I am driven by that inherent selfishness that lives within me constantly insisting on its own way to, quite literally, reject the surpassing peace of God. My God and Father offers me peace and I choose anxiety. My God and Father offers me peace and I choose discontentment and disappointment. My God and Father offers me peace and I choose conflict and bitterness and hatred.

Paul concludes, ***"You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ... So I say, live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature..."*** (Galatians 5:6-26)

As is always the case, the power to experience all of the blessings that God offers is found not in his ability to deliver on his promises, but in our willingness to choose to receive those blessings. On that star-lit night all of those years ago in the fields around the village of Bethlehem our God and Father offered everlasting peace to his children and announced his gift with the combined voices of all of the host of heaven. Can we hear it yet?

So, in the midst of all that is happening day by day in this chaotic and troubled world will I choose God's surpassing peace or will I reject it? Will you? ***"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, do that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."*** (Romans 15:13)