

Monday, December 2, 2019

The Advent of the Christ Brings Peace

Philippians 4:4-9

- Peace Through The Power of God (4-7)
- Peace Through The Person of God (8-9)

Monday, December 2, 2019

(Philippians 4:4–9 ESV) Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

PRAYER

Finding peace at Christmastime ought to be one of the easiest things to do, and yet, somehow, during the holidays, in our own homes it can be the hardest thing to find at times. Everyone is cycling high and the extra busyness of visiting families, work parties, special events, and other extra curricular activities seem to create an environment where stresses are a little more intense, patience is a little shorter, and peace seems to disappear quickly.

As we continue in our advent series, The Advent of The Christ, we looked last week at the promise of the Christ, and this week we will look at the peace that Christ brings. Paul speaking to the Church in Philippi, points out the need for peace in our lives and then shows us where that peace is found. Our reading from earlier in the service alluded to this for us. The picture of the shepherds on the hillside watching their flocks at night, and the startling entrance of the angels rejoicing and singing, announcing the coming of the Christ brings with it the announcement of peace on earth. It's been over 2000 years and we look around at society and culture and its easy for us to recognize, that peace seems to be a bit absent on earth, and yet, even in the chaos of the holiday events and hustle, there are little pockets of peace that we find. They take on different forms, but they are little reminders that there is a peace out there, and we are looking forward to understanding it more fully at the second advent of the Christ.

Paul is going to help us remember the peace we know that exists and is coming in fullness as he points us to Peace in the Power of God and Peace in the Person of God.

Peace in The Power of God

The passage here begins with a command to rejoice, and then the command is repeated, this is connected to our passage but also to the previous passage. There is an encouragement here for the people who make up the family of Christ to get along. The elders of the church are called on to help Eudias and Syntyche work through their

Monday, December 2, 2019

differences (4:2-3). And why? Paul points out the reason for them to get along their names are in the book of life. The end of their story is already written. They are sisters, believers, they are saved, baptized in the same waters of testimony and therefore, should work through their issues, because they are going to spend eternity praising God together as the bride of Christ, and their lives, as they wait, should be a testimony of God's grace to us, with each other. Because their names are written in the book of life, Paul then instructs his hearers "Rejoice". This is good news. We rejoice together knowing this truth. Then he says (Philippians 4:5 ESV) "Let your reasonableness be known to everyone." So the context of understanding all this is community life. This is the way we care for one another in the church and how we interact with those outside the church. What does "letting your reasonableness be known to everyone" look like? It is about looking out for one another. It is the idea of gentle forbearance for your neighbor, inside and outside the church. Basically stated, this is the essence of being at peace with each other. We suffer together, we rejoice together, we deal with the quirks and idiosyncrasies that both endear us to one another and at the same time get under the skin of one another. And all the husbands and wives said amen? This is supposed to be what characterizes us all with one another and the world around us. I'm ashamed to say unfortunately, this is not always the case with us. We are much more prone to silently hold grudges and talk about one another than we are to exercise this kind of forbearance and work on our relationships together. We need to collectively come under this teaching and be changed by it. Why? Paul continues, "The Lord is at hand."

How do we let our reasonableness be known to man? By submitting ourselves, our anxiety, our frustration, our needs in faith to God. Don't be anxious when you're tempted to fall into that trap to be overwhelmed by conflict, when you're scared to have that conversation, when you're worried about how something might come across, don't be anxious, but instead Paul directs us to prayer. In all things, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. The answer to personal conflict and frustration with another person is to work it out, not sweep it under a rug. Euodia and Syntche weren't dealing with their conflict properly, and it creates schisms and factions because people gossip and take sides. This is the body of Christ, and God is one. Do you know that the Holy Spirit in you is the same Holy Spirit that is in your neighbor. The Holy Spirit in me isn't going to tell me to have nothing to do with the Holy Spirit in you. The Holy Spirit in you isn't going to take sides against the Holy Spirit in your brother or sister. Rather, the Lord of all longs for us to be united and come together as one body, glorifying him, because that's his image we're living out. Because the Lord is at hand, because his return is eminent, because he glorifies

Monday, December 2, 2019

himself through his bride, the church, we act in faith and turn to him. It is by faith that this happens. Now maybe you're looking at this passage saying, wait a minute pastor, where's the faith here? There's a four letter word there that tells us about it. "With". With thanksgiving. We can't be thankful for something we don't believe in. We don't spend time praying to God to help us with things we don't actually believe he can make a difference in. When's the last time you gave thanks for a meal that wasn't on the table. We present our requests to God with thanksgiving, because we know his power is real and true and that God is able to act on our behalf, because the Power of God is able to bring us peace, we can submit our requests to him, in faith.

Because of the very fact that Christ is returning soon, because of the second advent, we need to have our lives transformed by this teaching, just like the Philippian church did. Because we know this future reality, we start living this truth today. In doing so, Paul says we're going to experience another reality, (Philippians 4:7 ESV) "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." God's peace, described here as beyond what you and I can understand, that peace will be a protector for our hearts, our inclinations, and our minds, our understandings. Simply put, God enables us to do more than what we think is possible, and transforms our hearts to do what is contrary to our human nature, when we put our faith in his completed work for us on the cross in history past, and apply it to our relationships today. How we treat one another now, is a testimony about what we believe about God's power to work in and through us. This is peace through the power of God.

Peace Through the Person of God

(Philippians 4:8–9 ESV) Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Now we see a list from Paul. He says that our minds should be set on this list of things. These are worth thinking about.

Truth, honor, justice, purity, loveliness, commendable, excellent, praiseworthy. Eight different concepts that we look at and we'd say in agreement, yes, things that fall in these categories are worth thinking about. But let us take that list into consideration for a minute. What is the greatest truth? Who is supreme in justice. Who is perfect in purity? What is the standard for loveliness? What is commendable that we would never

Monday, December 2, 2019

regret commending? What is the standard of excellence? What in the whole world is of the greatest value of praise? These are all characteristics of God. Whatever it is we are setting our minds on should be things that point us to God.

So with our minds fixed on these things that point us to God, then Paul's command for the church is to practice the things that they've seen in Paul. (Philippians 4:9 ESV) "What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things."

This isn't the only time that Paul has said "imitate me". It's not even the first time he's said this in this letter. Back in chapter three he said (Philippians 3:17 ESV) "Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us." Also (2 Thessalonians 3:7–9 ESV) "For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate." And also (1 Corinthians 11:1 ESV) "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." What's the point he's making? You should be looking to Christ, but looking at the invisible is hard, so watch me as I imitate him. The more you focus on the characteristics of who God is, the better you're going to know who God is. This is incredibly important for us to grasp, because we all know exactly how easily distracted from God our hearts can be. Therefore we need to be constant in our work at setting our eyes, and hearts, and minds on the things that are of above. Just like that list that Paul gave us, and also, to recognize that we can be pointers for one another, just as Paul was to the church, we need to be for each other.

Paul tells the church to look to him, consider him a model to follow to help them follow Christ. What you have learned, and received, and heard, and seen. What is it that Paul is teaching, and giving, and speaking and doing that the church should be practicing? Walking in the light of truth following the Father. That's what Paul is doing, even in his own flawed manner, and he encourages the church to follow in that example as well.

Now the last part of this verse. (Philippians 4:9 ESV) "and the God of peace will be with you."

Do this, imitate the character of the person of God and the God of peace will be with you. Two great calls to action. Rely in faith on the power of God, Act in faith in the character of God, and the result is the same, the Peace of God will be with you.

That peace is our focus today. The passage that was read earlier in the service is all about the peace of God.

Monday, December 2, 2019

The angels made a proclamation about the result of the Messiah coming.

A savior is born, who is Christ (messiah) the Lord. Because of this, hope is now realized. Peace is now available on earth to people he favors. The favor of the Lord, and the peace that comes to the favored ones. The result of the coming of the Messiah is peace, but not for everyone, others will miss out on this, but for those who believe that Jesus is the Messiah, that salvation is found in him alone by grace through faith, they are the favored ones of God who will know that peace.

The advent of the Christ helps us know this same peace today, the very same peace that angels sang of 2000 years ago, we sing of today. We celebrate and rejoice in this peace because God has made a way for us to be with him. Because we know this greatest of all peace, we can imitate Christ by making peace with one another. We are to be mimicking Christ, by sacrificing our own desires for peace with others. As believers, we are trusting in faith that the one Holy Spirit that is within each of us, is working out his will for his own glory and our own joy. Which means, we can let go of our insistence that things work out the way that we want them to and trust the Lord to accomplish his purposes perfectly through the flawed toll we all are. In some cases this means we need to apologize and step back from areas where we have been persistent and demanding of one another. Some of us need to be obedient to God and go and mend relationships that have been broken, because since we have peace with God, and our names are written in the book of life, our salvation is secure, we can approach one another, knowing that we have all been humbled before the cross because of our sin, and find peace with one another in this common truth.

For those who don't yet know that peace, I want to tell you today, that Jesus came so that you could know it. His desire is to be reconciled with you and he lowered the bar. There is no need to make yourself right first before you can come to the Father, no the punishment for your sins has already been suffered by someone else. Jesus, the righteous one, took on your sin upon himself, and bore your punishment so that you could stand before our Holy God and be declared righteous. You can know that peace today. Peace with God when perhaps you haven't ever known that peace. Jesus is calling you to himself, and wants to be in relationship with you. He is a loving God, because the perfect picture of love is exactly what Christ did for us. He was innocent, and he took our punishment for us. He stepped in and took our pain for us, saving us from ourselves and sin. We want you to know that today.

PRAYER