

THURSDAY: Thankfulness and Peace

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE: *Philippians 4:6-7* ⁶ *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* ⁷ *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

TODAY'S MEDITATION: Anxiety is common to all of us. We may not feel life and death stress like the Apostle Paul, but we can still relate. We, too, live in a culture of anxiety that can either weigh us down or lead us to a deeper trust in God.

When the cares of life hit—job changes, cancer, broken relationships—Paul says we have a choice. It might be strange to get advice on finding peace from someone in jail. But Paul is worth listening to because he is an expert on giving thanks, and experiencing peace when circumstances are out of your control.

Paul teaches there is hope for our anxiety that is rooted in the process of consistent, thankful prayer. As we make the choice to pray—then place our trust in God—over time, peace will replace anxiety.

Finding peace comes from praying to God over and over. From trusting him for who he is and the gifts he gives us that flow from his very being.

Invest time today and write down three things you are thankful for that flow from God's being. Continue to pray through a thankful heart in your daily routine.

FRIDAY: The Gift

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE: *2 Corinthians 9:15* *Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!*

TODAY'S MEDITATION: It's not easy to buy the perfect gift for someone. Clothes are a nightmare of inconsistent sizes. Books can be a safe buy, but should you go with a mystery, a biography, or a cookbook? Food could be a good gift, but what if you don't know about someone's allergies? No wonder we so often resort to giving gift cards.

As Christmas approaches, I'm excited to gather around the tree with my family and share the presents we've carefully wrapped, hoping they are the right gift. While most gifts can be described in certain ways, the greatest gift we've ever received (wrapped in swaddling clothes), is truly beyond words.

The message of Christmas is that our heavenly Father understands our deepest need: peace between God and ourselves. This peace isn't something we can earn, it's a gift, given through the birth of the Son of God in Bethlehem.

Accepting this indescribable gift has life-altering results. Jesus came to live among us to provide something we could never afford—the opportunity to receive what only He could offer: new life, eternal life.

Because He was born, we can be born again.



THEME:
BECAUSE JESUS IS PRINCE OF PEACE, WE HAVE PEACE

Isaiah 9:6

*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**.*

MONDAY– Glory and Peace

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:13-14 ¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

TODAY'S MEDITATION: This child, the Prince of Peace, entered Israel in a time of Roman oppression when rebellions and talk of rebellions were common. The only peace they knew was the peace brought about by the military of Rome. Into this occupied country, in a lowly stable, slipped the Prince of Peace.

The angels' words are a declaration of God's glory. He is the source of God's restoration coming in the form of an infant. It's fitting and good to worship him with everything we are.

Likewise, they're proclaiming peace to any who will receive the rule of King Jesus in their lives.

Jesus came to reconcile all those who are at odds with God (which is everyone). Those who receive his reconciliation will experience true peace. Only when Christ rules in our hearts can we experience the peace he came to give us.

Let us worship God simply because he's worthy! May this be the essence of our relationship with God. He's the King and the source of all goodness in this world. And may we experience his peace by surrendering to his perfect rule in our hearts.

Today, listen to the Christmas Hymn *Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*. Charles Wesley gives a picture of Jesus as the gift of peace to us.

TUESDAY – Relationships

TODAY'S SCRIPTURES: Romans 12:18 *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

TODAY'S MEDITATION: In a Peanuts comic strip, Lucy was saying that Christmas is a time for kindness and a time to forgive one another. Charlie Brown says: "Why do that just at Christmas? Why can't we have the Christmas spirit the rest of the year?" Lucy looks at Charlie and says, "What are you, some kind of religious fanatic?"

Holiday seasons, often rather than promoting harmony, are a time of conflict. All families have difficulties, jealousies, grudges, resentments and misunderstandings.

As we reflect on God's peace this Advent season, may we be reminded of our role: to actively make peace as we await the fullness of God's peace through the second Advent of Jesus Christ. How can you help usher in God's peace this Christmas season?

WEDNESDAY - Eyes to See

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:30-31 *"For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations."*

TODAY'S MEDITATION: Let me ask you, how is your Christmas season going? If we're honest, we might choose words like busy, hectic, or even frantic to describe our lives this time of year. Maybe it's an overloaded calendar that robs you of peace. Or maybe it's pressure at work, loss of a job, illness. You name it. We have many options to choose from.

Luke 2:22-38 presents the story of Simeon and Anna meeting the baby Jesus when Joseph and Mary bring him to the temple. The temple was the bustling hub of the Jewish faith. With so much coming and going, Anna and Simeon seem to be the only two who recognize the identity of the baby. They were so in-tune with the Spirit of God that they saw what others missed. They recognize and worship Jesus for being the long-awaited Messiah.

It isn't a coincidence that Simeon and Anna had the wisdom to see Jesus amid the temple chaos. Luke gives us the impression they were dedicated to God and sensitive to the moving of the Spirit. They had given themselves to God and cultivated a relationship with him.

The holidays are often like the bustling temple. In a season initially dedicated to Jesus, we focus on so many other things. We can be like the rest of the people who overlooked Jesus or choose to be like Anna and Simeon. How will you choose to experience the Prince of Peace this season?

