

[00:00:00] Speaker A: My topic for today is cultivating a life of peace.

So, you know, when you approach a topic like this, you think, okay, well, what is peace? I guess is probably the first thing to think about.

And when you start to look in the Bible, actually a lot of the stuff in the Old Testament particularly is just about an absence of war. So Israel was a nation that was kind of came in, it was surrounded by hostile nations. And actually so much of the talk about peace was just an absence of war, but actually there's a whole bunch more to it as that. And there's some stuff in the Old Testament, some stuff in the New.

So if you go and look in the dictionary, peace might be described as something like a freedom from anxiety disturbance, either emotional, mental, or spiritual or inner conflict, calm and tranquility, absence of noise, activity, stillness, quiet, lots of different definitions. And actually all of these can be kind of speak into what it is we're looking at this morning.

So peace is really a personal state of calm, a lack of anxiety, it's a state of heart and it's a state of mind.

Now in the world we live in, actually, maintaining peace can be a challenge sometimes.

If you read the news, it's not always great. There's political and financial instability, there's wars happening in various places around the globe, there's financial challenges, there's attacks on human dignity, society becoming more and more polarized. And we can read all these things and, and they can really adversely affect our peace.

Closer to home, we might have worries about health or finances or family or relationships. There's so many things which can make us feel like our peace is maybe a little hard to grasp and to hang onto.

But the Bible is clear that actually peace is what we as Christians are, are heirs to in Jesus.

So I want to take a wee look at this peace that's promised to us as believers to help us first of all understand what it is, where it comes from, and then, you know, how can we live in it and how also to recognize the things that can steal that from us.

So I think the first and foremost, the first thing is that peace is a result of living in the spirit.

So Galatians 5, we know the verse incredibly well. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, etc. Etc.

So peace actually first and foremost is something which comes out of our life in the Spirit.

It's that natural overflow of walking in step with Holy Spirit.

And we also see Jesus when he was talking to his disciples, as he was kind of before the Resurrection and sorry, before his crucifixion and resurrection and ascension, he was kind of. He gave this huge download of all kinds of things. But right in the center of that, he said, peace, I leave with you. My peace I give you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled.

Do not be afraid.

So even though he was not going to be with them, he was talking about this in the context of sending the Holy Spirit.

And again, it's the Holy Spirit who is, I guess, the author of peace in our lives.

And Jesus knew about this. So he was described in Isaiah as being the Prince of peace.

So again, he is right at the heart of this.

So peace comes from us living in step with the Spirit.

Secondly, peace is a fruit of having a right mindset.

Now, I think that's something that's really under attack in our world, actually. We are bombarded with so many things, so many opinions, so many just distractions and temptations to, you know, go down all kinds of rabbit holes that can lead us to a place that really isn't peaceful.

But it says in Isaiah 26, you will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast because they trust in you.

Trust in the Lord forever. For the Lord himself is the rock eternal.

And that really is where our peace comes from, isn't it? Knowing that we have this eternal rock who is our security in the midst of all the things that are happening? Actually, he is the one that we can have absolute confidence in.

In Romans 8:6, it tells us that the mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the spirit, life and peace.

So our thoughts really are a key to living at peace. The devil will bombard us with all kinds of things. I'm not good enough. I'm not close enough to God.

I don't hear him. I don't have enough money. I've not got enough faith. So many things that he can. He will accuse us. He's the accuser of the brethren.

But it tells us in 2 Corinthians that we're to take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ.

And this is really the crux in our battle for peace.

It's recognizing those thoughts, knowing what it is that comes from the Spirit, comes from the Father, and what it is that's coming from somewhere that we don't want. And so, yeah, we need to rule in our minds. We need to take control of our minds.

Thirdly, peace is the fruit of a righteous life.

We don't think of this very much. You know, as I started looking into this, this was kind of a bit of a surprise to me in some ways. In Psalm 85, it says, Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Love and faithfulness meet together.

Righteousness and peace kiss one another.

His salvation is near to those who fear Him.

And then it says in Isaiah as well, the fruit of that righteousness will be peace.

Its effect will be quietness and confidence forever.

My people will live in peaceful dwelling places.

And it's not just an Old Testament idea either that a righteous life leads us into a place of peace. In Romans 2:9, it tells us there'll be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil.

First for the Jew, then the Gentile, but glory, honour and peace for everyone who does good.

Now, I'm not suggesting a legalistic following the rules type of righteousness here, but if we live righteously, we're pleasing to the Father and a blessing follows out of that, you know, as we just touch the Father's heart as we pursue him, as we love our lives in his, you know, in his way. Then actually there's a blessing that flows from that, following the heart of the Father. You know, Jesus said, I do what I see the Father doing, and we need to align ourselves with his purpose and with his heart.

And in that righteous living and pursuing his heart, there's a real place of peace.

And then the fourth thing is that actually peace is a characteristic of the kingdom. You know, we are here to release the kingdom of God in this city, this nation and beyond.

It says in Romans 14, for the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating or, or drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. So again, it's not down to rules, it's not down to following some rigid pattern. But actually it's living in the Spirit coming back to that.

Everywhere you look, it's coming back to this thing of living in step with the Holy Spirit.

So peace is a characteristic of the kingdom of God. And in Haggai, sorry, it talks about the glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former.

Says the Lord, in Almighty, and in this place I will grant peace.

And again, this is kind of talking. Oh, sorry, tripping on something there.

This again is just talking about the kingdom coming. You know, we are here as his house in the earth. And this present house, though, initially was talking about the restoration of the Temple of Israel. Again, it talks. It's kind of as a picture of the church as well.

And in this place, I will grant peace. You know, we are to be an oasis of peace for a world in turmoil.

You know, I believe, you know, as we're seeing around the nations, just this turning of people's hearts to church again, there's huge increases in church attendance, talking about 30, 40, 50% increases in church attendance. And I believe one of the things that people are looking for is a place where they can find peace, where they can make sense of all the stuff that is going on around them.

And. Yeah, so we are to be a place of certainty in an uncertain world.

So why is this peace sometimes feeling a little bit elusive? Well, I think there are things that can

rob us of our peace. And I would say that there are two main enemies of peace.

The first is unbelief.

If we're not. Again, this kind of comes down to our mind as we talked about a minute ago.

If we're in unbelief, if we're believing the wrong things, then we are not going to end up in a place of peace. And the second is fear.

And again, that I guess is almost a product of unbelief as well.

We need to be grounded in the truth of who God is, who he has made us to be.

Peace comes as we have confidence in who God is and his heart towards us.

And that confidence denies a place for fear in our hearts.

It tells us in Proverbs 14, a heart of peace gives life to the body.

So, yeah, as we.

Yes, so as we just tap into who God is, as we tap into his promises towards us, as we hear testimonies of what he's done and is doing, as we stir one another up and encourage one another as to his heart and who he is, then that leads us into a place of peace.

And for me, Psalm 23 is actually a blueprint for finding peace in all circumstances.

I think this is the second time I've talked about Psalm 23 in recent times. But it just comes back to this lovely thing. The Lord is my shepherd. I lack nothing.

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters. He refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right path for his name's sake.

We need to let Jesus be our shepherd. We need to let him lead us into those green pastures.

The pasture is a place of food and it's a safe place as well.

Now, green pastures, particularly, if you look around Scotland, the places where you find pastures generally, they tend to be in valleys quite often. You might need to make a bit of a journey to get there. But we need to trust Jesus in the journey to get to these green pastures, these places where there is food for our souls, food for our minds, food for our spirits.

And then those still waters. I love it when I get out in the hills and I just camp beside a stream somewhere and you just hear that trickle of the water through the night, and it is just so delightful. So I really get this picture.

There's just something great about hearing water running by.

And, yeah, these green pastures are a source of peace and of life. His refreshment leaves us energized. It leaves us in. In a place where we are ready for anything.

But then it goes on. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I'll fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

So peace, although it's something we need to put ourselves in a place to receive, is not dependent on the circumstances.

It's rooted in our confidence in the strength and protection of the good shepherd, as signified by the rod and the staff.

These were, you know, what the shepherd carried to protect the flock, to keep the flock, you know, on the right path.

So when things don't look good, we can stand firm in the knowledge that God himself has our back.

And it goes on. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows again. You know, whatever seems to be pressing in around us, actually, you know, we're feeling despair or oppressed, hemmed in. God has sustenance for us in the face of all these things.

We don't have to hide. You know, Anne talked about Gideon a few weeks back and just how he, you know, hid in the winepress trying to thresh when there was no wind to take the chaff away, and all kinds of stuff hidden in fear.

But actually, we don't have to do that. We have a God who prepares a feast for us in the sight of our enemies.

And then surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

You know, this is what we rest our confidence in, that God is good.

His intentions for us are good. He isn't angry. He's not cruel. He's not vindictive. He's not judgmental. He's our loving Father, and his heart for us is to dwell with him in his presence.

And, you know, worship is so key to us living in peace.

You know, it aligns our hearts to the mind, sorry, our heart and minds to who God is.

It leads us into a place of experiencing his presence and his goodness, and it turns our hearts towards the true source of life and peace.

As we live our lives in worship, we allow the Word of God to dwell in us richly and we'll have total confidence in him that breeds peace in our hearts.

I think the other thing is that actually we just need to fill our minds with scriptures, with, you know, just the good stuff about God.

You know, spiritual disciplines are maybe not one of those things that are very kind of sexy and in the moment, but actually there is something about just the word of God dwelling in us richly. It's a foundation which actually, you know, when these moments come, actually enable us to rise above because we know we're established, we're rooted in that place.

So I'm kind of running to a close, but I just want to speak some words over you, some words of scripture.

So I'd like you maybe just to close your eyes, just to open your heart and.

Yeah, let's just see what God does.

Romans 15 tells us this. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Philippians 4.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 3:15. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts and be thankful.

[00:19:21] Speaker B: Yeah.

Yeah, God.

Yeah.

[00:19:38] Speaker A: Yeah, God, we just open our hearts to you to allow your peace to flood in.

[00:19:53] Speaker B: Yeah.

[00:19:53] Speaker A: We take captive those thoughts that are in our minds which are there to distract us, to make us look away from you, to make us strive or worry or whatever. We take them captive now in Jesus name, and we lead them to the feet of Christ.

Yeah, Father, we turn our hearts towards you.

We worship. We come and sit at your feet like Mary who sat at your feet and did that one thing that was to draw on you. And Father, I just pray right now that for each person in this room that there will be a fresh realization that you have everything that we need, that all these other things are peripheral. All these other things are.

[00:21:06] Speaker B: Yeah.

[00:21:06] Speaker A: Noise, distraction.

Yeah, Father, help us to focus on that one thing.

God, we thank you that you Grant us to see your face, to catch your heart, to see your glory and God. I just pray for each one of us that that will be our experience, our focus, our one thing, our one pursuit to know you more.

[00:21:50] Speaker B: Yes.

[00:21:50] Speaker A: Andy's spoken over the past couple of weeks just about the presence of God.

God, we acknowledge that we need your presence above everything else.

God in the midst of all that's going on.

[00:22:08] Speaker B: Yeah.

[00:22:09] Speaker A: You are a one thing.

[00:22:12] Speaker B: You are a one thing.

Yeah.

Yeah. Thank you.

[00:22:38] Speaker A: The other thing I just want to say is that actually peace can come as an impartation.

You know, when Jesus sent out the disciples out into the communities to minister, he said, if the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it. If it's not, let your peace to return to you.

Was that just that sense that actually peace is something that can be released?

In most of Paul's letters, he always starts out grace and peace be to you.

Something about an impartation of peace. We carry peace to those around us and we can receive peace from those around us as well.

It's something that at work, so many people have commented, you know, when you're in the room, there's just this real sense of calm and of peace and people can't put a finger on it because they don't have a grid for it. But, you know, we carry peace and we can impart peace to those around us.