

Life to the Fullest: I Choose Peace

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Sunday, May 6, 2001

Boca Raton Community Church, Boca Raton, FL

INTRODUCTION

Peace--The World Talks About It

Hardly a day passes when we do not hear a feature story through the medium of CNN, MSNBC, FOX or some other news broadcast on peace or the need for peace. Our world gives great “lip service” and attention to the need for peace, but in reality, few know peace in our world.

Peace--People Seek After It

People are seekers of peace and search for it through various means: bottles and pills, sexual experiences, mindless entertainment, trips to exotic places, etc.

Peace--You and I Long to Achieve It

How can I have, know, and enjoy peace today?

Peace is a prominent theme in the Bible. In the Old Testament, the word *Shalom* refers to *wholeness, well being*. In the New Testament, the meaning is *tranquility* or *serenity*.

Peace = “the realization that God works through the disparities and contradictions of my experience and brings them into harmony.” —Eugene Peterson

Peace = “the inner tranquility and harmony enjoyed by the believer who is living in conformity to the will of God.”

—J. Oswald Sanders

When the Bible speaks of peace, “binding together,” it means having it together in life despite circumstances, hardships and challenges.

I NEED PEACE TO COPE WITH MY CONFLICTS

Because life is often lived in disruption and disturbance, we must discover peace.

Abraham Lincoln was walking with his two sons and both sons were fighting. One person asked, “What’s the matter with your boys?” Lincoln responded, “Exactly what is wrong with the whole world. I have three walnuts and each one wants two!”

James 4:1 tells us that much of the conflict in the world comes out of the conflict in us:

“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?” James 4:1

“Desire” = dissatisfaction

Our general sense of dissatisfaction with life causes us to share that dissatisfaction with others and to create a generally miserable existence. Our pride, our pursuit of pleasure, and our endless need to put others down in order to pick ourselves up causes enormous conflict in families, churches, offices, communities and nations.

“Human nature is indeed in the grip of an overwhelming ray of occupation. Its natural aim, it can truthfully be said, is pleasure; and when we consider the amount of time, energy, money, interest and enthusiasm that men and women give to the satisfaction of this aim, we can appreciate the accuracy of James’ diagnosis; and Christians can use it as a reliable yardstick by which to measure the sincerity of their religion. Is God or pleasure the dominant concern of their life?”

—R.V.G. Tasker

We have to get peace within us before we can have peace between us.

As good as we all look sitting in church, the reality is that there are many storms beneath the surface: unhealthy desires, conflict, different personalities, different interests, etc.

I NEED PEACE TO CULTIVATE MY CONTENTMENT

One of the most elusive of all qualities in our day is that of contentment—contentment in the enjoyment of what God has provided for us and confidence in what God will provide.

Just as conflict focuses on all the disturbances of life, discontentment and dissatisfaction focuses on what we don't have. When we are discontented, we lose peace and joy.

Contentment is a matter of trust.

Philippians 4:10-13

Two Convictions:

1) God loves me. God cares about my needs and meets them by His grace. Over and over, His care and love are affirmed.

2) I can trust Him. God is never going to cheat me.

Contentment is not necessarily satisfaction. Contentment is gratitude for and faith in the goodness of God regardless of the condition of my life.

“Life is full of disturbances. Without are fightings, within are fears. There is no peace. A dozen open doors beckon us to some kind of peace—escape, entertainment, alcohol, sex, drugs, hard work—and we run from one door to another hoping to find peace. What we need is Jesus Christ; for His name is Prince of Peace, and that takes care of the disturbances of life.”

—Warren Wiersbe

I NEED PEACE TO COMBAT MY CONCERNS

Worry. Fret. Fear. We are often prone to give into anxious thoughts and uncertainties about the future.

“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

To know and experience this peace, however, is not just a subjective thing. Feeling peace is more objective. It is when my thoughtlife directs my feelings.

How to have peace when you want to panic:

◆ Rely on God's love.

“. . . casting all you care upon Him, for He cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:7

◆ Review God's will.

“Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.” Isaiah 48:18

“. . . for to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” Romans 8:6

◆ Remember God's Word.

“. . . great peace have those who love Your law and nothing causes them to stumble.” Psalm 119:165

◆ Rest in God's care.

“. . . You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.” Isaiah 26:3

I NEED PEACE TO CLEAR MY CONSCIENCE

So many people live with flashbacks of things they have done, failures they have known, and sins they have committed. So

many live in the shadow of yesterday, overwhelmed by their seeming inability to step out of the shadows.

“Satan wants you to feel guilty. Your heavenly Father wants you to know that you are forgiven. Satan knows that if you live under a dark cloud of guilt, you will not be able to witness effectively or serve the Lord with power and blessing. Sad to say, there are some churches that major in guilt. They seem to feel that unless a Christian goes home from a service feeling like a failure, the services have not been a blessing. ‘Every time we go to church,’ a lady wrote me, ‘the pastor spans us. What should we do?’ To be sure, there is a place for proper spiritual conviction; but we must not major on guilt. To do so is to play right into the devil’s hands.”
—Warren Wiersbe

Peace is real and available that we may live freely and confidently. This is the promise of God found in Romans 8:28-29—to take the distorted, discarded and difficult things of the past and to shape us into the “image of Christ.”

I NEED PEACE TO COME TO MY CONCLUSION

Life ends in death and death is the enemy of all mankind. No place is there a greater need for peace than in the face of death.

So many in our church family have walked this way in recent days. I stopped to call one of our seasonal associates who has recently

experienced the death of a spouse. She communicated that God has used songs to minister to her heart and provide comfort. One, in particular, is “Be Still My Soul.”

*Be still, my soul—the Lord is on thy side!
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to thy God to order and provide—
In every change He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul—thy best, thy heavenly friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.*

*Be still, my soul—the hour is hastening on
When we shall be forever with the Lord,
When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
Sorrow forgot, love’s purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul—when change and tears are past,
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.*

Do you need a peace summit in your life?

You must have peace with God. Religion cannot give you peace. It will make you restless, but Jesus can and does give peace to all who come and call upon His name.

“... therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”
Romans 5:1-2

You can experience the peace of God.

“... and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”
Philippians 4:7

“And the God of peace will be with you.”
Philippians 4:9

This message was preached from the pulpit of Boca Raton Community Church, Boca Raton, Florida, on Sunday, May 6, 2001, by Dr. David H. McKinley, Senior Pastor. The complete message is available on audio cassette tape through the media ministry of Boca Raton Community Church. To order this message, simply email us at tapes@bocacommunity.org and specify the message title, date, and billing information. (\$4 per tape including shipping and handling).