

Sunday 24 December 2023

Life Group Leaders' Notes

Series: Living Without Fear

Title: Why We All Need To Discover The Prince of Peace

Key Text: Luke 2:13

On October 7 this year, the peace of small communities in Southern Israel was suddenly shattered when invading Hamas terrorists killed 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals in their homes and quiet neighbourhoods. Men, women, children and babies were butchered in the worst atrocities against Jewish people since the Holocaust.

Since then, a brutal war has raged with great devastation, resulting in great upheaval in Israel, thousands of deaths in Gaza and protests around the world. At the same time the brutal war in the Ukraine grinds on relentlessly having already claimed many thousands of lives.

Peace, without doubt, is one of the greatest needs of our world today. We need peace between nations and within nations. We need peace in communities, families and in countless individuals.

So many people are stressed and agitated today. You see it on the roads. You see it in shopping centres. You see it in schools. You see it in the workplace.

Bestselling author and pastor Rick Warren said: *"I talk to thousands of people. I meet people who are active, who are busy, who are stressed, who are tired, who are ambitious and have great dreams, ...I rarely meet people who are totally at peace... people who at peace with themselves, at peace with the world, ...people who are literally walking in peace. It's a rare quality."*

Are one of those rare people who are walking in peace or whether you are in serious need of peace. Is your mind overloaded right now? Can you ever switch off from thinking about problems and responsibilities? Is there stillness or a storm on the inside of you? Do you need God's Christmas gift of peace?

The good news is that through Jesus you can have peace in all situations. 700 years before He was born, Jesus was described by the prophet Isaiah as 'the Prince of Peace, Prince of Peace, of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end' (Isaiah 9:6-7).

When Jesus was born, the angels praised the Saviour who would bring peace to all who received Him (Luke 2:13). One of the central messages of Christmas and of Christianity is that Jesus Christ is the ultimate source of all true peace. Only He can bring real peace on earth. Because of the Prince of Peace:

1. You can know peace with yourself (John 14:27; Colossians 3:15; Philippians 4:6-7)
2. You can know peace with others (Hebrews 12:14; Galatians 3:26,28)
3. We can know peace with God (Romans 5:1, 6-9)

Apply

1. You can know peace with yourself. The peace of God is a peace that is strong and enduring. It stops our hearts being troubled and removes our fears (John 14:27). The Jewish word for peace is 'shalom'. Shalom means well-being, harmony and serenity. The apostle Paul, who himself survived shipwreck and many other negative experiences, discovered how to have inner peace in all circumstances (Colossians 3:15; Philippians 4:6-7). How is this possible? Well the peace of God is not like a temporary and fragile human peace. It is a supernatural peace which defies logic and circumstances. It's a peace that literally stands guard like a soldier and it is interesting what it guards: your hearts and your minds. When our minds are attacked and our hearts are wounded we must learn to be quick to come to the Lord and receive His peace that steadies us and protects us. The Prince of Peace stands ready to give us peace within ourselves. Today whatever it is that is bringing unrest to your heart and mind, you need to know too that you can have peace with yourself.

2. You can know peace with others. You can know peace in every relationship (Hebrews 12:14).

- You can know peace in your marriage: A study has shown that January 8th is the busiest day of the year for divorce lawyers when up to one in five couples will enquire about divorce after the pressures of Christmas. But it doesn't have to be this way. When the Prince of peace come into your marriage, His presence will cause anger and bitterness to melt away. Instead of rows and tensions, you will come closer together with a new gentleness and love towards each other.

- You can know peace in your home: Sadly, today the home, instead of being a haven of peace, is more like a battle ground with visible or hidden conflict between children, parents and partners. Some families are so used to shouting, arguing and backchat that they think this is normal life. But this isn't God's plan for your home. You can all learn to appreciate each other. You can know new joy and peace in your family. You can laugh together and cry together and be there for one another. If your family is struggling right now, don't give up. God's peace can come to any home and it takes just one member of the home to have the peace and to speak peacefully for that peace to spread.

- You can know peace with all people: The nearer we come to God the closer we can come to one another. All division and discrimination can be broken down when we have the peace and love of Christ hearts.

As Christians we are called to live differently in a world of agitation, sexism, racism, and anti-Semitism and social, economic and political divisions. We are to have love and respect for all people. Everyone matters. Everyone is loved by God even though they may not walk with God (Galatians 3:26,28). So this is all very good news: when we discover the Prince of Peace, we ourselves can personally experience new peace.

3. We can know peace with God. Peace with God is the foundation for peace in every area of life. When you don't have peace with God it affects everything else. When your relationship with God is right everything else can line up right. When you get your relationship with God in order, all other relationships fall into place. One man who led a very wild and immoral life later became one of the great leaders and thinkers of the Christian church after turning from his sin and committing to follow Jesus. His name was Augustine and he told how he had hungered for inner peace. He finally concluded that: "our heart is restless until it rests in You." You too may have a God sized gap in your life. Maybe you never realised it or maybe you did and ran away from it. But either way making your peace with God is the biggest and best

decision you will ever make in your life. The Bible teaches that not only that there is a God but also that Jesus alone can bring us into fellowship with God. Jesus came to restore peace between us and God. When He died the heavy curtain in the Temple in Jerusalem which separated unholy people from a holy God was torn in two from top to bottom. We have peace with God because of what Jesus has done for us (Romans 5:1). We can't make peace. He is the ultimate peacemaker. Jesus came to give his life to pay the price of our sins that separate us from God (Romans 5:6-9). Today is a moment for you to discover the Prince of Peace. Make your peace with God and enjoy the peace of God in your heart and mind and in every experience in life.

How much peace is there in your life? Do you need to have peace with yourself? Do you need to be more peaceful towards your husband, wife, family and others? Do you need to make your peace with God? You can when you ask the Prince of Peace to still every storm in your life and let His peace rule your heart and mind. Today receive the greatest gift of peace.