

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday December 23, 2019. "Advent: Rest in Peace".

A. Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message this past Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper in your own spiritual walk.

Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

B. Recap.

Well...it's the last Sunday of Advent before Christmas Eve. We've hit the topics of; **Hope, Love, Joy**, and then this past Sunday Pastor Lamar hit the final topic of **Peace**. For you with some history celebrating Advent, you know some traditions will do Peace the second week and Love the fourth week. These two are often interchangeable and you'll see them in either order. Just F.Y.I.

If you want to go back and recap each of the specific themes, you can do that thru the app or website at the sermon link. It does provide some continuity to see all four of these themes together.

C. Sunday.

Lamar began his message Sunday with a look at the lack of a 'felt' sense of Peace from the book of Micah. Micah is from the Hebrew scriptures, (O.T.- And for those of you who are wondering why we're using the term Hebrew scriptures, it's simply a sign of respect to Judaism to not refer to their holy scriptures as 'old', but rather with an understanding that it's their sacred book). Anyway, we saw from Micah 5:2-5a, that the people were unsettled, unfulfilled, and uneasy, (we will so miss Lamar's alliterations). And all of that added up to missing a sense of Peace...or Shalom. The feeling of wholeness, completeness, of being undivided....peace.

So let's begin with some questions about peace before we dive into the central scripture surrounding the birth of Jesus.

How do you define peace?

How does the world, our culture, define peace?

Using Lamar's words; unsettled, unfulfilled, uneasy, describe how you experience a lack of deep shalom type peace?

D. Scripture.

The primary passage centered around the story of Simeon, a fringe character in the story of Jesus, but with so much meaning in this story. Read the account in **Luke 2:25-32**, and then we'll drill down deeper into the meaning of it.

Simeon had found his purpose, the meaning for his life...it was his connection to God. Simeon had devoted his life to meeting in the temple. And in this life of continual service, he had not only found

peace in his work, in his purpose, but he had found peace that his work, all of his effort would not be in vain. He felt God had promised him he wouldn't die until he saw the predicted messiah. And then he would be released from his responsibility of serving. Now serving was not a burden or an unwelcomed chore. He reveled in feeling God's pleasure in his work. But he knew someday this work would come to an end, he would be released from it, and he would know all of this BECAUSE of the peace he would feel when he knew he was finished.

Simeon had spent his entire life trusting God, and serving out of this trust. And it's in the devotion and commitment he found the peace in both fulfilling the purpose of his work and being finished with it.

Lamar shared some concepts that help us gain peace, or threaten our ability to feel peace.

He said that regretting- not allowing ourselves to be used by God, holding onto, (retaining) what should be let go, and restlessness, or unsettledness of not being in alignment with God can sabotage our peace.

So let's talk about these specific threats to peace.

Have you ever been in a place in your life where you feel out of sync with what you're supposed to be doing? You may not be involved in doing anything bad or sinful, you just don't have that sense of being or doing what you're supposed to...that peace.

Could you describe it as a feeling of restlessness...if you can, how so?

And the million dollar question.

Can you link this lack of peace to being out of alignment with God, and how did you know?

A life of peace is the life God so desires for each of us. Everything you can find in the scriptures, instructional or commanded, by God, can be linked to God wanting us to experience both Joy and Peace. **God's sole purpose in creation was for us to share in all of who he is, and the gifts of creation**. To just experience the Joy and Peace of a life, full of purpose, as few regrets as possible, and just lived well...like Simeon. And for some reason we seem to find more and more creative ways to sabotage this peace and joy God wants for us. And when we mess things up, then God has to find some new way for us to experience this life he desires for us.

And this is the story all thru scriptures, and especially seen in the story of the birth of Jesus. The ultimate sacrificial act of God's unconditional desire to show, prove to us, how much he actually does love and desire the best for us.

And as we stand at the edge of Christmas Day, we have the opportunity to make this year different, meaningful, powerful, and lasting.

So...to wrap this all up, what could you incorporate into your everyday, ordinary, walking around life that would help you eagerly receive and embrace the Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace that God so desires for you?

Let me encourage you to do all you can to make it happen this Christmas season.

And just F.Y.I, there will be no devotion for December 30th. We'll pick this back up on Jan. 6 2019.