

## **Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.**

**December 4, 2022 "Advent: You will need PEACE."**

### **I Intro.**

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. And you can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We're in the season of Advent and into December. Our children's program is thriving and we're still tweaking ways to love on them well. We also have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all that through our new website, upgraded app, and social media sites. We're so encouraged by your love and presence when you gather with us. A great group of familiar and new faces join us each Sunday. If you're joining us online, we appreciate your presence also. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions, please pass them our way. We know the future is still uncertain, but we are committed to making our virtual congregation as central to NCC as our in person group.

### **II Recap.**

It's our second Sunday of Advent. A reminder of what Advent is. Advent is an ancient practice built into an annual church calendar that walks people through different emphases during the year. I won't get into all of the other emphases, but Advent is always the four Sundays before Christmas. It's designed to prepare us for the coming of Jesus. We typically already do all the work preparing for the holiday of Christmas. We plan, shop, decorate, and more for Christmas. But we tend to not spend the same amount of energy and time preparing ourselves on the inside for why we have Christmas...the birth of Jesus. Last week we talked about the first theme of hope, and how boldness can grow a real, meaningful hope within us. And that's basically from following what may feel like the contradictory teachings of Jesus, rather than the world's definition of hope. Today we talk about peace.

### **III Sunday.**

Okay we're going to start this conversation with two parallel threads of questions. First, since today's Advent theme is peace, we'll lead with that.

**How do you define peace? What do you think of when it comes to peace?**

**What is internal peace for you?**

**What does peace in the world look like for you?**

Most of us have a fairly well thought through understanding of what peace is. We'll unpack that a little bit later. Now let's hit our second topic, which will help us more seriously wrestle with what true scriptural peace actually is. So, our second topic is...ta da!!! Contradictions.

**How do you define contradiction? What is a contradiction?**

**What do you do when you encounter a contradiction of something you believe?**

**Can you think of an example where a contradiction could be good and even helpful?**

We're going to meld these two ideas together, but let's plow through a difficult passage first and try to make sense of a teaching of Jesus. The passage for Sunday is found in John 16, and we need to frame our reading of it in some of the context Jesus is speaking from. This is near the end of the life of Jesus, and he's said a lot of hard things to his disciples. He will in this passage too. He's trying to

paint a realistic picture of what their life will be like without him. But to encourage them to not lose hope and they can experience true peace no matter what. Definitely a tough task for anyone. Read **John 16:19-33**, and then we'll do our best to look for the deeper truths within the passage.

**What jumped out to you from this passage?**

**What frame of mind do you believe Jesus was in?**

**What contradictions did you pick up on? You may have to read it again.**

**In beginning to think about Jesus trying to instill in his disciples that their life was going to be difficult, how do you see him trying to lead them towards peace?**

Just a couple of thoughts from this passage that can help us understand a life truly dedicated to following Jesus, and this peace that Jesus promised his disciples. Even in the midst of so many contradictions that would lead people to believe there is no way to experience true peace.

### **1. We learn to accept the complexity and contradictions of life.**

M Scott Peck begins his book "*The Road Less Traveled*" with these words; "*Life is hard.*" We often say it to other people who are going through a difficult time. But when it comes to our own lives...well you know how it goes. We have a tough time accepting the truth; '*life is hard*', when we face difficulties. Jesus paints a picture of what his disciples will experience and how it will stand apart from how the world experiences these same events. This HAS TO BE the starting point to finding peace. Accepting the reality life will be difficult. Once we can say that out loud we can begin searching for peace.

**What have you been through that's forced you to accept this truth of life?**

### **2. We learn to fully understand and embrace what it means to follow Jesus.**

This is a constant battle for longtime Christians. Following Jesus often becomes simply agreeing to a particular set of beliefs and presubscribed position on the important issues. Jesus never said "*Believe what I believe.*" He said, "*Come follow me.*" "*Believe in me.*" And we have to work continually making our walk about how we live and not just what we believe. True peace can only be found when we understand what it means to follow Jesus.

**In your life, for you, what does it mean to actually follow Jesus. How does this bring peace?**

### **3. We learn to believe the peace Jesus promises will be a contradiction to the messages of the world.**

The world constantly tells us peace and security comes from making sure certain material and safety needs are taken care of. We have a nice house, live in a decent neighborhood, have a good job, enough money in the bank, you know the drill. We do the things the world says brings peace, Taking care of those things will bring peace. On the other hand, Jesus teaches that true peace comes from a life dedicated to the more difficult things. The life of following Jesus. This is the commitment we make.

**How have you found that the life following Jesus brings a deeper peace than how the world says you find peace?**

### **IV Challenge.**

There is a huge but natural contradiction in how Jesus says we experience peace, and how the world says we find peace. Following Jesus is more difficult, challenging, but is the only path to real peace.

**What are some habits following Jesus could you take on to find the peace Jesus promises?**