

INTRODUCTION

Christmas Eve... how's it going? ~~unpleasant~~
For many of us it is not going well.

Celebrating Jesus

• **Harvard Medical School – 2016 – “Holiday Stress and the Brain”**

“The holidays are filled with both joy and stress,” says Ellen Braaten, PhD, an HMS associate professor of psychology at Massachusetts General Hospital and associate director of its Clay Center for Young Healthy Minds. This dichotomy is reflected in the findings of a 2015 survey conducted by Healthline, a consumer health information site based in San Francisco, Calif. Sixty-two percent of respondents described their stress level as “very or somewhat” elevated during the holidays, while only 10 percent reported no stress during the season. Among the holiday stressors listed by respondents were the financial demands of the season, negotiating the interpersonal dynamics of family, and maintaining personal health habits such as an exercise regimen.”

– Keeping many things up to date and changing, need elevated during holidays

• **National Alliance of Mental Illness - 2014 - “Mental Health and the Holiday Blues”**

“According to a recent survey, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) reports that approximately 24% of people with a diagnosed mental illness find that the holidays make their condition “a lot” worse and 40% “somewhat” worse... Approximately 755 of overall respondents reported that the holidays contribute to feeling sad or dissatisfied and 68% financially strained. 66% have experienced loneliness, 63% too much pressure and 57% unrealistic expectations. 55% found themselves remembering happier times in the past contrasting with the present, while 50% were unable to be with loved ones.

• This was all pre-pandemic! Sprinkle in some COVID on top for good measure.

• Today: conflicts abroad, conflicts in your life, home, and family.

Thanking Samir

Sometimes, when Christmas Eve comes, with all the fanfare and hype, at the end of the day it feels like we have tired answers and we are tired of waiting for a solution.

Prince of Peace - where is he? Is he working? Doesn't look like it...

We need to be very careful that we don't look to God to answer promises he has not made to us.

Prince of Peace - Jesus embodies and orchestrates peace, but not in the way our immediate self wants it. *- THE PEACE HE BRINGS IN GOSPEL. SURVIVING TO LOVE OF GOD*

PROMISE OF GOD IN JESUS

We will have peace without one day; We can have peace within this day.

PEACE WITHOUT ONE DAY

The world longs and aches for peace, but we have no real way to attain it.

- We want retribution, we want justice, but this does not equal true, deep peace.
- We want to cease from striving, but something always gets in the way.
- We want a lack of conflict, but there are more opinions expressed now than ever.
- We want leaders who rule well, but they are broken men and women... and your opinions change!

Until we are tamed by the Spirit of God, we are all going to scrape and claw for our version of peace at the expense of those around us.

- Peace in my home... but at what cost?

Until Jesus reigns in the hearts of men and women or until he comes again, we will have trouble in this world.

If Jesus is not reigning as the Prince of Peace, peace will feel and seem evasive, because it is. There's a reason we are despondent and frustrated... nothing else is working.

When will the Prince of Peace make it right?

This part of the promise has not come to pass yet... but take in this vision.

- **Isaiah 2:4** - He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.
- **Isaiah 11:6-9** - The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.
- **Isaiah 42:1-4** - Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.

One day, this will be the reality. ~~only~~ Only ushered in by this Prince of Peace.

So what is this Prince of Peace doing now? *Why talk about Peace if it's not here yet?*

- **Luke 17:20-21** - Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

PEACE WITHIN THIS DAY

The peace that comes from God is most often sought as a shift in circumstance that alleviates feelings.

The peace that is actually prescribed and given by God is the result of relationship with God. *Comfort vs. Hardship*

Why do we talk to much about Jesus? Because all of the good of the faith we celebrate is given to us because of him. Without him we are separated from the Father and receive no good thing from him. Common grace, but...

Sin separates, but faith in Jesus unites us with God and unlocks all the good he has for us!

Romans 15:13 - *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

- All of this good comes from God in Jesus Christ. We can't have it any other way, which is why we celebrate.

But look to Jesus!

Psalms 4:6-8 - *There are many who say, "Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord!" You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.*

- I hope grain and wine abound for you (in moderation...)
- I hope you have a Merry Christmas
- I hope you experience the joy, levity, and rest of the season. Truly, I do. *But not everyone can. not everyone will.*
- But my deeper hope is that when you lie down and sleep, no matter the conflicts, no matter the heartache, no matter the disappointment, no matter the people who aren't there, no matter the people you wish weren't there... you have peace that can't be taken from you because you have God in Jesus Christ.

What does the Prince of Peace offer? Receive it today