

**Discovering Peace In An Anxious World**  
**Tell The Whole Story: Peace (Bethlehem) Candle**  
**Pastor Jonathan Schaeffer**  
**December 3, 2023**

Really glad to have you here today and so thankful for our youth. Wow. I'm just thank you, God, again for what you're doing. And our youth group and some of you are proud parents or grandparents, aunts and uncles and. And thank you for the way you're investing in your and your youth and also entrusting them to our youth ministry here at Grace. Just lots of good things happening.

Hey, before we dig our message, let me just mention this is the service that gets a little more crowded and which is we love having the worship come together, but the parking also gets a little bit crazy. And I want to let you know that in case you're not aware, you're newer to grace, We have three campuses.

We have Lorain Correctional, which is hard to attend unless you're a volunteer. And then we have two that are more easily attend a bowl and one is this one. And then Olmsted falls. If you're wondering where's once it falls, that's what the outside of the building looks like. It's at 6941 Columbia Road, the same service, same message, worship leaders.

And then you go inside and in a few, that's what it looks like on the inside. So if you hadn't been there, like, wow, I don't know, was that big? And so they have probably 350 people from grace who are part of that campus. So if that ever works for you, that's 10:00 every Sunday morning and you'll even see on Christmas Eve services.

We have 10 a.m. M and 7 p.m. at Olmsted Falls and then here, Middleburg, we're going to have nine, 11, one and three, and so I'll speak at five of those. I'll miss one will be on video, but so I want to let you know about that. Okay. Good to have you here. So this past April, about 40 some people from grace, we we took a a trip to Israel, to the West Bank and and just got to see the places that you go.

Wow. This is the real place. Like Abraham and Sara or that Jesus, you know, raise this person from the dead or that he came back to life. And you just it it was really cool. Which also makes us feel more keenly

what's happening there right now. There is a word, though, when we were there that we grew to love.

It's a greeting that is a Hebrew term that many of you know that when you see someone in the street, you go, Hey, shalom. Right? And so I say to you, shalom. And you say back, shalom. And it's this Hebrew word that you find all through the scriptures that is peace. And it's not just like a peace man.

How you doing it? It's not just the absence of conflict. It's this term. Shalom. Is this all encompassing Like I want favor on your life. Like I want you to be well and every way. I want you to be a harmony in your relationships. You can even speaker for creation Shalom that all of the brokenness and the stuff that's wrong.

You go, I want this to be made whole. And so you tell people, Shalom, shalom. It's really what we long for, isn't it, that in this anxious world that we could say, if I can just experience peace within. I think we all long for that, right? That's there's it's a heart desire and yet we look at the news and whether it's in Cleveland or our nation or then you see things like there and Ukraine and the atrocities and unjust war, or then you move to the Middle East and you think of the brutal attack on an innocent civilians in Israel.

And now so many children and parents who are losing their lives in Gaza and every single person matters to God, every one. And we just we cry out God. We long for peace. A rediscovered a poem by a guy named Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Maybe you remember that name. He lived in the 1800s, and he wrote a poem called Christmas Bells, which he wrote on Christmas Day in 1863, right in the height of the Civil War.

His longing for Shalom was personal. In 1861, Henry's wife, his second wife, his first wife had died. His second wife, Frances, of 18 years. She died in a tragic fire in their home from Burns that took her life. Two years later, in 1863, In March, he found out his son was gone and he found out his 19 year old son, Charlie, had had secretly gone off to fight for union forces Within months.

Was shot in the back, was not killed. But it was it was a severe wound. He ended up coming home in December of that year of 1863 to to

recover from a significant injuries two weeks later on Christmas Day. Henry, this writer sat down and wrote a poem reflecting on this, a yearning for peace. And you can almost only hear his words.

You just you feel the sense of fear and anxiety in his words. Here's just one stanza. He writes this and in despair about my head. There is no peace on earth. I said, for hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on earth. Goodwill to man, no peace on earth. He said he's thinking of what happened the night Jesus came into the world when he said peace on earth could, you know.

And he says, Hate us strong and mocks the song. So desperate Lament for Peace. Isn't it going to come back to him because he doesn't finish there? Nor will we. But it's a cry for peace. And it's not just what's happening out there. It's within our own souls, right? It's reading. An author recently, Gavin Orland and Gavin said this.

He put it this way. He said, If I had one word with which to describe the world right now, it might be the word anxiety. Sometimes it feels like there is a gnawing angst everywhere. I think especially younger people are experiencing this, he writes. I wonder what it is for you that creates anxiety. Could be that you just go My life, just overall, just stress I'm spinning so many plates.

There might be financial pressures where you're feeling stuck or maybe under a weight of debt. It could be health concerns with the doctor's given news to you or for someone you love and you go, wow, I just maybe it's anxiety over people that we really care about. I'm being transparent. That's me. I have some people in my life that I love a ton that are in a season of their life that I long to see a new chapter be written.

And sometimes as I pray, I just feel my own sense of powerlessness. It's not that I don't trust God, but I long for another chapter. B There's anxiety. There's the epidemic of loneliness. And, you know, sometimes we think loneliness affects just like older people maybe who have left their jobs and a lot of their friends, or maybe they're with people who die.

And. But did you know that I read this week that Gen Z, Gen Z years are twice as likely to experience the sense of feeling lonely than people over 65. In fact, maybe you saw on the news this week it came out from the CDC that in 2022 that more Americans committed suicide in that year. The last year for which we have records than any other year in record in our history.

And to make matters even worse, maybe you have seen, like whenever they talk about someone took their life and you see there's the number, the suicide crisis hotline, they go, Hey, if you're feeling kind of, you know, this, you know, here's a number and call. They took 2 million calls in 2021, and yet there were 300,000 unanswered calls.

We long for peace, don't we? For some of you, this is personal. I talked to a guy this week who told me about his son dying by suicide and my heart ached for him. And it's so many other things. It might be like, man, it's just my workplace is crazy. And we long for shalom, right? Friends, Can I tell you, I am so grateful that that's what Christmas is all about.

That we have this candle that we lay, this second candle of the advent wreath, and that candle signifies peace. That the child who was born into that Bethlehem stable would break into our sins. Sick world to bring peace. Shalom is why Jesus came. So what I want to do here is I want us to look at the problem.

What does the Bible say about the diagnosis? And then what's the solution We're going to wind up. I know I've begun sort of like, Well, but. But we have anxiety. But but Jesus came to to free us from that. Let's take a look. Isaiah Chapter 48. Isaiah 48 is sort of a some have said like a CliffsNotes version of the Bible.

There are 66 books in the Bible, 66 chapters in Isaiah. There are 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 in the new and Isaiah 39 chapters of of Judgment. And you have 27 chapters of good news of God's restoration. So that's why some have called this the Gospel according to Isaiah. It's a book that's quoted in the New Testament about 80 times, and it's written 700 B.C. So it's a long time before Jesus comes.

But let's take a look. By the way, if you didn't get notes on the way in, you can also check out our website, Gracy. Mayorga Just download the Grace app and you'll see the message notes there. We're going to see our ultimate hope for anxiety and how you and I can experience the wonder of Shalom not just at Christmas, but today and all of our tomorrows.

So Isaiah, Chapter 48. Welcome to all of you who are with us from Lorraine Correctional and also those of you who are watching online from lots of different places around the country and around the world. We love you. We're glad to have you with us today, Isaiah chapter 48. Here's what the lawyer says to his people. He says, If only you had paid attention to my commands.

Your peace that is yours. Shalom would have been like a what? A river. Some of you know songs use those words your well-being, like the waves of the sea. Now, that's if we follow the Lord. And if we don't drop down to verse 22, he says this There is no peace says the Lord for the wicked. Do we hear God's heart?

He says that He wants to pour out peace like a river, a river of shalom. He says it's like waves that just keep on coming, like the peace just keeps on coming in on the shore, you know? But he says, when we get outside of God's plans for our lives, we lack peace. When we ignore him, no peace.

And so the people of that day, like our own, had this collective longing for shalom and God in his infinite, you know, grace and just his limitless love for them and for us. He makes a promise. Some 700 years before Jesus arrives, God makes a promise that there would be a prince of peace. A prince of peace. Let's see how if you go back a number of chapters to Isaiah, Chapter nine, God speaks through the Prophet, announcing the coming of this majestic figure, one who would heal and restore and reign.

And here's what we read in Isaiah chapter nine, verse six. We read four. To us, A child is born to us, a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace of the greatness of His government

in peace, there will be no when he will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom.

One of his four titles is what the Prince of Peace. The word there is SA Shalom, S.A.. I want to say it with me. SA Shalom. It's Prince of Peace. And what that means is this that he's the one who can remove all peace, disturbing factors and secure the peace. It's something that sets this this messiah apart from every other human ruler.

I mean, who else can say that I'm going to. I'm going to secure peace. Only the Prince of peace can say that. The only lasting peace. Listen to this. The only lasting peace will ever have in our lives or in the world is found in Jesus Christ our savior. Remember what the Angels announced the night that Jesus becomes one of us?

A human, a little baby is born into poverty in this obscure village miles away from Jerusalem. The only reason we know about Bethlehem is because we sing about on Christmas carols. But in that day and even today, it's a pretty small little town. Luke records the eyewitness accounts like this Luke Chapter two. He says this suddenly a great company of the heavenly Host appear with the angel praising God and saying, this is a like, I don't know how many angels might have been hundreds or thousands.

And it says this They sing Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth. What peace This principle said come peace on those on whom has fever rest. It's why you came. Not not only for people in that day, but for you and for me. Peace and shalom. For all who put their trust in them. Let me just be clear here.

When we talk about Shalom and Jesus coming as a prince of peace, he doesn't remove all of your problems the day that you put your trust in him, but he gives us peace in the midst of our problems and our crises and our disappointments. To overcome anxiety, he he meets our deepest needs and gives us a picture and a confidence that that he's bigger than anything we face.

So what kind of peace does he bring? What does that shalom look like? Well, we said earlier, when you say shalom to someone, you're not just talking about, you know, like a peace you know, you're talking about, it's

all encompassing every part of life. So here's a summary of what Jesus brought as SA Shalom. Four areas that you and I need peace and for areas where Jesus provides peace first and you'll see these in your notes from the Scriptures.

Here's what we read first. He provides us peace with our heavenly Father, that Jesus overcomes the distance between us and God. If you ever feel like that, God just feel so far away and that that Jesus came to bring peace between us.

And our Father in heaven. Let's turn over to Isaiah Chapter 53. Isaiah 53 You almost is 700 years before the time of Christ, but it almost feels like it was written after Jesus lived and died and came back to life. Tells the story of Jesus atonement that is his provision for our sins, our guilt, how he provides forgiveness.

Let's read the first six verses here of Isaiah 53, verse one, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord that is His strength been revealed. He grew up this Messiah before him like a tender shoe, like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him.

Nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind. A man of suffering and familiar with pain, like one from whom people hide their faces. He was despised. And we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering. Yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment here it is that brought us what peace was on him in by his wounds. We are healed. We all like sheep. Here's our problem have gone astray. Each of us has turned to our own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

What an amazing portrait of Jesus, right? His hero says in verse five there about the peace giver. He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace. Jesus is the cure for every regret in your life, every bit of shame in your life. Jesus is the one that brings us peace with the God whom we know.

We've all failed. Received a letter from a person who came to grips with failure in their own life. Here's what this person writes Young person to listen to. To listen to the shame of 20 years old. And I've reached a point in my life where I no longer want to live in sin. I've seen in the past by participating in casual sex and binge drinking.

But I want to change. I find it hard to accept that God may be willing to forgive me for my sins when I can forgive myself. Are we supposed to feel guilty about our sins forever? Is this what God wants us to feel? How do we know that He has forgiven us? I want to be a better person.

I'm just worried. Too much damage has already been done. Some of your life. You know what? I could've written that myself. You feel shame. You're not peace. Can I just speak to you a word for a moment? He asks the question. He says, Does God want me to feel guilty about my sins forever? Absolutely not. Jesus is our peace, right?

He wants to give you. Not only does he want to give you freedom, peace from from your guilt, he wants to bring you to a place of freedom, from whatever habits you know are, turn you down. You don't have to stay stuck. This past Thursday night, I met with some leaders from Seven pillars, a sexual integrity group here at Grace that has dozens and dozens of guys.

And this was just the leaders. And so they went around the table and they sort of just told their stories and brief. And I just I came home and I was like I told Mary, I said, I am so grateful for how Jesus sets people free. He doesn't just forgive us. He releases us from the chains that hold us down.

I want to tell you today, if that's you and you're like, I don't think I'll ever be able to change just who I am. As you know, it's in my that's a lie from the enemy. And Jesus can set you free. And we have new groups beginning for both men and women. And it's in your online bulletin today.

Just go to Gracie Mayorga and click. It says Online bulletin there. And you scroll down, you'll see it. It's confidential. It's a safe place. We have so many people here who've said, I'm not just forgiven, I'm free, I'm And there are peace. Because of what? Because of Jesus. That's what Jesus



came to do. In fact, here in verse six, in Isaiah chapter 53, it says in the Lord has laid on him this Messiah, Jesus, the iniquity of us all.

That little phrase on him appears twice in verses five and six. Our iniquity, our sin was put on Jesus, our punishment was placed on him too. You know, sometimes you go, Yeah, I took the fall for that. You know, I, you know, they me for something that was somebody else. Jesus did a voluntarily. Jesus had all of your punishment.

And my punishment placed upon him so that we could be free and we could be at peace with our Father in heaven. Here's how the New Testament confirms, as it says in Romans chapter five. Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have what? Peace with God because of what Jesus Christ has done for us.

Shalom with our Father in heaven. One of Britain's best known secular humanists and novelist bargain eater Lasky, an atheist, set in a moment of surprising candor on television. Not long before she died, she said this. She said, What I envy most about you Christians is your forgiveness. I have nobody to forgive me. What a sad commentary, right? I have nobody to forgive me.

And friends. That's precisely what the gospel is all about, that when Jesus came and Isaiah 53 talks about it, Romans five confirms it. He comes in, he he takes our place as a substitute and Jesus gives us peace. Shalom. It's a gift of Christmas. Another kind of shalom. Is is this It's peace within ourselves. Jesus lifts up our eyes, you know, beyond the relational tension and unexpected crises that come in life or physical suffering that I want to ask you this.

What would you say? This is your question. What issue in your life right now causes anxiety in your soul? We all have it. I've got it in my life. What for you, would you say when I wake up at night and it's hard to get back to sleep? Here's what I'm thinking about when I wake up in the morning, I'm in the shower and I started thinking about I just get anxious about about about this ought to be for you.

I want you to listen to what Jesus says to those who trust him. This. This is for us. It's the night before he goes to the cross. And in John, chapter 14, verse 27, here's what Jesus says. Can we can we read this together

aloud? You ready? Worse as I am leaving, Let's read it together. Ready? I am leaving you with a gift.

Peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid, friends. That's the kind of peace. It's not just peace out. There's not only peace vertically with God, your father, it's peace within. You might go, Jonathan. Do you need that? Yes. Funny thing happened to me this week.

I'm studying these passages, working on my message about, you know, like the second candle of peace and how it responds to the anxiety of our world. And I had this cascade of issues this week of people going through hard stuff in their lives. And I end up in a funeral and I visit someone else and they die about 12 hours later.

And then I had something every night and I began to feel anxious about my message and anxiety. How do you like that? And I'm like, Lord, you know, this is exactly what I'm talking about. And I and it was I can't tell you how many times like I knew months ago what the topic would be for today and how many times I'll be working on it.

My message and I'll be just digging the God's word. And it's almost like the Lord says, Jonathan, I want to speak to you first. I'm still the one who can speak to the violent waves and the howling winds and say, peace be still and they listen in your life, too. I'm still the one, Jonathan, who, when you come to me with prayer and petition with Thanksgiving, I'm going to give you a peace.

That what transcends understanding. Will you trust me? Do I need this as well in my life? I absolutely do. And it's what God wants to give the Prince of peace that he just says, Will you invite me into your life to forgive you, to lead you, and to give you the peace that overcomes anxiety? And so I pray for you the verse at the top of your notes, my friends.

What I prayed for myself this week. Second Thessalonians. Now may the Lord of Peace himself give you peace when at all times how in every way, what a great prayer. Another way that Shalom is expressed is this. It's peace with those around us. You know, Jesus, when he came, it wasn't only so my relationship with God, my father could be restored.

It was so that the relationships around me could be restored as well. We have so much brokenness. Maybe you felt that last week at Thanksgiving or you're anticipating Christmas and you go, It's in my own family, it's in my own house. You know, Ephesians, to listen to this for Christ himself has brought peace to us. Listen to the miracle he did.

He united Jews and Gentiles, that is, Jews and non-Jews into one people in his own body. On the cross. He broke down the wall of hostility that separate into friends. He's still doing it today, right? He Breaks down every wall of division at the enemy, tries to set up in the Middle East. Right now there are churches today where you have Israelis and Palestinians worshiping together.

That's that's the power of Jesus Christ right here, a grace one I, I we've prayed God give us greater diversity when we see people of lots of different colors and saying, Lord, this is this is beautiful to you. You love this. You've broken down walls and he wants us to be agent of peace. Can I ask you this?

If there's tension between you and somebody else today, Jesus died to break that wall down. And here's the way the Apostle Paul says in Romans chapter 12. He says, As far as it depends on you, if it's at all possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with what everyone, everyone and friends. It's that kind of peace.

When we model that together, people go, Wow, there's something about like, how do you. And it's a beacon of light and in a dark world, so there's horizontal peace. I can be a peace with other people. As far as it depends on me. There's vertical that I'm in peace with, with the Lord, there's inner peace within. And then there's something else or one last one.

There's there's a future peace, a peace that will happen in our world when Jesus arrives the second time. And I absolutely believe he will, because Jesus has never broken one of these promises yet. And he is going to eliminate all evil and restore peace and perfection. Shalom to all of creation. Here's what Jesus promises. And John, Chapter 16.

He tells his followers this I've told you all this so that you may have peace in me here on Earth. You will have many trials and sorrows. Now, listen again. He doesn't say all of those are going to melt away somehow in this life. Trusting Jesus doesn't mean a pain free suffering free existence. But he does say this.

He goes on, it says, But take heart, because I have what overcome the world. Take heart. Don't give up. The best is yet to come. Jesus will bring a forever peace. Even the lion of says will lie down with the word with the lamb. The sense of shalom will be complete. Now what a day that's going to be.

Remember I told you the poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, which you wrote on Christmas Day in 1863, in the middle of the Civil War, and the one verse we rather sit in, in despair about my head. There is no peace on earth. I said, for hate is strong. He closes the song on a different note because Henry was a follower of Jesus Christ.

He ends with this confident hope that because of Jesus, the Prince of Peace songs Shalom, the Peace is coming so we can say with confidence. And here's the verse, he says, then pealed the bells more loud and deep. God is not dead, nor Duffy sleep the wrong shall fail, the right prevail with peace on earth, goodwill to men.

Can you imagine what it's going to be like if you belong to Jesus? You put your trust in him. There is going to come a day when you will never be anxious again. Ever want to be amazing. You'll never have a meltdown, nor will the people you love if they're believers in you know you're in heaven. No panic attacks, no sleepless nights, and you will live in a world where there's no divorce, no tension, no war, no making amends.

And no regrets. Why? Because you will have total peace. And it's all because of Jesus, right? And it can begin today and a portion of it. Anyhow. We can experience the peace of Jesus. Because when he comes, he's the prince of peace who comes into our lives. And here's what he's telling you and me today. I'm leaving you with the gift.

Peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid. So here's the question. Have you put

your trust in the prince of peace? Let's thank him right now for what he's come to do. Lord Jesus, what a gift that you would come in to our broken world.

Lord Jesus, and become one of us, so that in this anxious, broken, crisis filled world, that you could you could just bring rivers of peace. Lord Jesus, I pray for my sisters and brothers here. Pour out your peace. Those engaging in line wherever may be. Lord, would you pour out your peace into their hearts? We know that it says that the fruit of your spirit living within us is love, joy, and it's peace so Lord, we just invite you, your presence into our lives come Holy Spirit, and may we be people of peace in this anxious world.

Lord, we can't do it on our own. But we trust in you. And we thank you for how freely you give that peace that shalom. And we pray in your name. Amen. What a great savior we have. Let's stand together and sing this hymn that declares that about his river of Peace.