

As we we enter into Advent – a time of preparing room for Jesus – we remember that Jesus is hope for the despairing, joy for the depressed, peace for the anxious and love for everybody. We unpack these one week at a time for our advent series, looking through the lens of John the Baptist and today, we look at peace for the anxious.

The Plan:

I don't blame people for being anxious these days. We live in a culture that drives anxiety. Inflation, in the past two years, has stolen 18% of your spending power. This is inconvenient if you are wealthy. It is downright crippling if you are not. How will I pay the bills? So many are asking. Your phone buzzes with notifications – distracting you and demanding your attention. Performance standards, athletic standards and fashion standards are at all time high.

If you are middle aged, you are probably responsible for you own well being, your kids well being, and possibly your parent's well being. If you work, you may have hit a management role where you are responsible for employees well being as well. This is a massive, but underrepresented stressor in life. Even kids have more stressors.

I was talking to some next gen people who said that 10 year olds have already learned from tic toc the fashion styles that are the best match to compliment their body type. I am 55 and didn't even know that I have a body type. Two arms, two legs, just like everyone else. But whether you are 10 or 40 or 70, there is a universal need for less stress and more peace.

Our series on John the Baptist demonstrates how John is pointing toward Jesus. Inviting us to prepare him room. To see his power and live his peace. one good news piece about Jesus is that he is the prince of peace. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to his people. Lets watch John as he continues his baptism ministry.

Surrender – the antidote to anxiety

²² After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. ²³ Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized.

Where was Aenon, you ask? Well, near Salim of course!
MAP And, can I just say that I have nothing significant to say about that. They went there because there was plenty of water there and if you are dunking people, you need enough to be dunkable... **Picture of Jordan**. Interestingly, the Jordan river is not that big. Some people think Missouri River or Platte River – but actually the Jordan is closer to the size of the creek behind the church. For most of the year, you can wade through waist deep for about 15-20 steps and you are on the other side. So, if it hasn't rained for a while, there might be need to move up river.



Also, it says Jesus and his disciples baptized. Later in chapter 4, John the Author clarifies that it wasn't Jesus, but his disciples who baptized.

²⁴ (This was before John was put in prison.) ²⁵ An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. ²⁶ They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him."

Pride and Jealousy lead to no peace.

- Subversive to friendships, businesses, marriages, parent-kid relationships
- And it kills our spiritual life. If churches compete, they focus on each other and their differences, not the mission. This is why I am so glad that we partner with churches all over Omaha with Within Reach in order to reach more people with the gospel and fight less about people who are already saved!

²⁷ To this John replied, "A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.' ²⁹ The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. ³⁰ He must become greater; I must become less."^(b)

Friends, John here gives the key to peace. The key to not having pride or jealousy is to keep your focus and others on Jesus. I love the best man illustration that John comes up with. The best man is not the one getting married. His job is to enjoy the groom in the groom's big moment. He is so happy to see the groom. And if the groom needs you to carry his bags, run an errand, check him into the hotel, decorate his car... you just do it, because you know it is not about you.

And John takes it a step bigger. "He must increase and I must decrease." All of our focus – whether you are an electrician, a lawyer, a salesman or a financial analyst – it to point people to Jesus. He must increase and I must decrease. And here is the broader truth. You might be a big deal for a little while here on earth, but you will die. And what stays behind and lasts forever is how you pointed people to Jesus. And there is a side benefit.

Surrender to Jesus leads to peace. God's greatness comes in a life of full surrender. That surrender leads to peace.

But surrender is easy to say, but hard to do. It is a simple formula that you have to go back to every day. Less of me, more of him. Like “More Taste, Less filling” but better. LESS OF ME → MORE OF HIM

Less of me +More of him = surrender and surrender is a process that is about handing over one region of your life after another to Jesus. Here are six areas.

- **Surrender My Control to God’s Plan**

- Who is in charge? Who gets the say in what you do with your life? I wonder about Joseph sometimes – Jesus’ earthly dad. I wonder if he may have thought “Seriously? I just wanted a nice Jewish girl, settle down, make babies... and now I get a pregnant wife on a long journey and the responsibility of raising the very son of God!
- There are ways to make you do what he wants.
- ³¹The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. ³²

- **Surrender My Worry to God’s Power**

- Worry – excessive concern about that which you cannot control – Your health, other people’s choices, the economy...
- Worry is a problem – gives way to anxiety and even panic attacks
- Trusting that God runs the world and therefore your life is the antidote to worry!
- One of the best ways to surrender worry and control is to just pray. Set aside time to be with God. If you HUNGER for God, come on out to the HUNGER for the presence prayer meeting this Wednesday. Low structure, high in prayer – we enjoy the presence of God and being in his presence - at 7pm in the student center on Wednesday.

- **Surrender My Impatience to God’s timing**

- In our microwave fast culture, we want our gratification, our stuff, our leisure, our plans... and we want it now! I want an oompa Loompa now daddy
- But sometimes God is a slow cooker, not an inst-pot. God is getting stuff done... just not always WHEN you want
- In fact, you may not be able to see what he has in store until you get around the next curve

- **Surrender My Hurt to God’s Healing**

- Words do not define you
- Sins do not define you
- Your worst day does not define you
- God wants to heal that garbage
- He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. ³³Whoever has accepted it has certified that God is truthful.

- **Surrender My effort to God’s Salvation**

As a general rule, human beings have made an error of cosmic proportions. We have believed that our goodness is our ticket to God’s pleasure. In other words, if you talk to the proverbial man on the street about how they relate to God or get to be justified or go to heaven, their defense is almost always in the category of “a pretty good life”. At least by their own standards as they compare to the humans they know. And we are so self deceived that most everybody believes they are at least above average.

Religions worldwide reinforce this idea with salvation tied to religious attendance, alms to the poor, pilgrimages, rituals or prayers. They see human effort as the key to salvation.

But the Bible says that humanity is not the solution to the problem. It is the problem. That is why we need a prince of peace. An intermediary to stand between us and God. We need someone who understands what it means to be human, yet has the power of God. One who can be perfect and make peace between the warring parties. Bringing peace from war requires supernatural power. If you have been watching the Israel-Hamas war, a solution humanly speaking is not obvious. It will take supernatural power and sacrifice.

The Peace Child



Don and Carol Richardson went to Papua New Guinea to bring the good news of Jesus to people who never heard. The Richardsons ministered to a pair of neighboring villages, that were constantly warring against each other. One of their highest values was treachery. When he told them the accounts of Jesus, they declared Judas the hero because of his betrayal. How would they ever stop warring when treachery was a value? When, after several months, the Richardsons were not able to

convince the two settlements to stop fighting, they announced that they would have to move elsewhere to minister. The Sawi, not wanting to lose the benefits to be gained by having westerners living among them, suddenly declared that they were going to make peace with each other

The morning after announcing their intention to make peace, first a leader from Haenam then a leader from Kamur started to carry one of their own infant sons toward the neighboring enemy village. But in the first case the father from Haenam was prevented from doing so by family members who snatched the child back from him. And in the second instance the Kamur father, obviously distraught, changed his mind and turned back to his own village.

Suddenly a young Kamur father named Kaiyo picked up his six-month-old son, his only child, and began running swiftly toward Haenam. Kaiyo's wife chased after him, pleading with him to stop. But when she slipped and fell into a muddy bog alongside the trail, she was unable to stop him.

When Kaiyo arrived at Haenam he came face to face with a line of his mortal enemies. "Mahor!" he called out to one of them. When Mahor stepped forward, Kaiyo asked, "Mahor! Will you plead the

words of Kamur among your people?" When Mahor stated he would, Kaiyo continued, "Then I give you my son and with him my name!"



Taking the baby gently in his arms, Mahor then announced for all to hear: "It is enough! I will surely plead for peace between us! Those who accept this child as a basis for peace, come and lay hands on him!" The men, women and children of

Haenam eagerly filed by, each placing his or her hands on the Kamur infant. From then on Mahor went by Kaiyo's name.

Presently an infant from Haenam was presented to Kaiyo, who made the same sort of pledge that Mahor had pronounced moments earlier. When Kaiyo returned to his village, the people of Kamur similarly placed their hands on the Haenam child as the basis for maintaining peace with that settlement. Kaiyo immediately assumed the name of Mahaen, the Haenam father who had given him his son.

When Richardson asked why all this was necessary, the Sawi answered, "You've been urging us to make peace. Don't you know it's impossible to have peace without a peace child?" As long as the child is cared for, there will be peace.

Richardson went on to use that deeply-rooted cultural tradition as a "redemptive analogy" of God's having sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to reconcile His enemies (those who were opposed to Him and rebelling against Him) to Himself, thus establishing peace between forgiven people and holy God. That peace child analogy, in fact, served as the basis of the Sawis' understanding that led many of them to saving faith in Christ.

When the angels announced the birth of the Savior to the shepherds in Luke 2, they declared, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests." God was providing a Savior to make a way for human beings to come to be at peace with Him, to be reconciled to Him. By trusting in the Savior people could have their sins, which estranged them from God, forgiven. Christ Jesus was the ultimate Peace Child.

I love that children of the Peace child become peacemakers. Even Jesus said "blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." They see every person – regardless of what side of a conflict – as created in the image of God and valuable in his sight. They look for opportunities at home and at work and at school to be bringers of peace, to end and resolve conflict, and to usher in goodness.

Jesus was the peace child for a world at war with the Father. And little baby Jesus grew up to become the price of peace! And the Father knew that the Prince of Peace would ultimately be killed by the human tribe. His payment for our treachery on the cross was the means that we could be forgiven. God said "I'll give my son for you. My kid for your salvation." All you have to do is trust me... and we will have peace.

Start the Music

- It is cosmic peace. It means no matter what you have done in your past. No matter how stupid. No matter how much you regret it, God forgets it and you have peace with God.

³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

I can't say it mor plain or more clearly. Let me say it again – straight from John. Believe and have life. Reject and you are still at war with God.

Friend, if you want to experience the peace of God, you must know the God of peace. And if you want to know the God of peace, you must embrace his only Son. Because all the plans are in his hands.

Invitation to receive Christ.

Hand raise.

Come to the front for a high five, resources and next steps.