

A Season of More

ADVENT AT DOXA 2023

A SEASON OF MORE: YOUR DEEPEST PEACE

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Scripture Reference: Luke 2:1 – 14

The holiday season is a wonderful time for everyone to gather with our loved ones. Hopefully get at least a little time away from work or school and focus on what really matters. But what does really matter? What do you need most this holiday season? Is it some good news, something to look forward to? Is it a break from the anxiety and chaos of life? Is it a happiness or contentment that doesn't fade so quickly or maybe just to be seen and celebrated by others? Whether you choose hope, peace, joy, or love, all four of these are offered to us this season. This advent, let's explore our needs for hope, peace, joy, and love, and why the best gifts come not from consumption, but from a baby in a manger a long time ago. Go to doxa-church.com to learn more about Doxa, find service times or support the making of disciples in the everyday stuff of life.

Hi Doxa. We'll be reading out of Luke chapter two verses one through 14. In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all of the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: and you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with

the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

This is the word of the Lord. You can be seated.

Alright, well good morning everyone. The gauntlet continues with a sermon. Uh, today we are talk -- we are in advent talking about the concept of peace. My name's Eddie, if you're new, I'm the lead pastor here. Glad you guys are all joining us. Hey, I know I'm no stranger with the fact that we're all probably a lot more exhausted than we'd like to imagine around the Christmas season. We probably think, Hey, this is gonna be the season where I am calm and relaxed and it's totally opposite. And so let's ask the Lord for peace over us as we talk this morning. How's that sound? Let's do it. Let's bow our heads. Father, we ask for your Son's presence here. We ask for the Holy Spirit's presence. Lord God, would we experience a, a depth of peace this morning that would be life-changing that would be new for us as we dive deep into your word in the Christmas story. Lord, let us not look over the fact that, uh, a baby come into the manger this time of the year is life changing -- it's universe changing. Might we, might we be in awe of that this morning in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, you heard it read, and one of the most overlooked aspects I think of the Christmas story is the political backdrop in the days of Jesus' birth. Caesar Augustus, you heard his name, was the ruler of the Roman Empire at this time. And he was widely recognized by historians as one of the greatest emperors in all of Rome's history. He was so well respected that many of his followers actually thought he was a literal god. And when he died, many of the, many of his most devout followers didn't even get sad 'cause they said, uh, God don't die. Uh, the reverence for him came largely from his ability to create order and to install peace over the empire. And he was really good at it. So good at it that, uh, they erected a monument on his behalf called this, I wanna get the name right, Ara Pacis Augustae, Latin for the Altar of Augustine Peace. And the way he achieved peace, by the way, uh, over the empire, it wasn't the way you might expect. It wasn't like Martin Luther King or Mahatma Gandhi or Nelson Mandela with benevolence and kindness and love and nonviolent passive resistance. Not at all. In fact, uh, he made his name by taking peace. He took it by force. He installed it. He created it by force. The monument in Augustus's name went up actually unironically after a three year journey where he and his armies just got done going from city to city, burning them down and installing peace on top of the ashes of those places. So things were peaceful over the empire, but it was a rather dark version of peace. It was dark peace.

The emperor, the empire was quiet, but people were always looking over their shoulder, sort of wondering if a crack of the whip was coming to, of course, keep the peace. Now this is brutal. And we can look at Augustus and say, see, look at that. Another controlling leader throughout history, always using violence to get their way. That would be easy for us to say if we didn't do the exact same thing over our own lives.

I'll give you a rather playful example, uh, to some, at least. I have four kids. Things are nuts at the house in case you had a guess. Uh, for those who don't have kids, you think, how do you do that? Yeah, I don't, it just happens to me. And I have lots of kids. Uh, and it gets crazy from time to time. Uh, no doubt. And sometimes it gets so loud that me and their mother cannot handle it. And me being, as you imagine the sort of boisterous person I am, at some points I get to my

boiling point and in an attempt to control the environment and the house, I have to raise my voice and say enough. And you know what happens? It works. It works for a little bit, it works. It, it shuts everyone down. It's quiet. It is, it is. There's no talking. It's messy. It's crazy, but it's quiet. And I, in my desperate attempt for peace, I install it. But I've installed a dark peace.

A dark peace in my home because if you ask my kids, and even if you ask my wife, no one's all that peaceful, everyone's quiet, but no one's that peaceful because there's fear that for my kids, if they cough too loudly, if they spill their milk, if they shuffle their feet up the stairs too loudly, I'm gonna have to raise my voice again and install dark peace.

Now I was, we had a crazy day yesterday, three basketball games and three different places going from back to back to back with all my kids and it's all going crazy. And before that, I was telling my daughters, I was like, yeah, you guys, Manny, my oldest, you're gonna really laugh at the sermon because I'm gonna talk about a time where I raise my voice and I get you to quiet and you're gonna go, oh yeah, I know what that's like. Right? And so we're on our way home from these basketball games and it's nuts. And of course the kids are all wired on whatever snacks, uh, they get after these games. It's little junk food and they're eating their snacks and they're getting hyper and all this stuff. And it's crazy, and I have to go, "Enough!" And it gets quiet. We get home, my oldest gets outta the car and she says, daddy, was that the dark peace you were talking about? <Laugh> Yes baby, that was the dark peace. Irony.

Now it's funny, but it's no less true for all of us, right? Caesar Augustus installs dark peace over the Roman Empire. But you and I, we often install dark peace over our lives, especially around this time of the year. Guys especially, we attempt to take peace by force in our lives. And how you might say, how do I do that? Well, for some, we need to create the perfect environment. Controlling every little thing from the decor to the music, to the types of family that will be there, to the invitations, hoping that if we can somehow make sure everything is perfect around this time of the year, we will finally be free of the overwhelm and the overcommitment and the anxieties that the rest of the year brings.

And wow, once everything's clean, once everything's slowing down, once, once everything's in order and everyone's well-behaved, isn't that peace in those moments just sublime? Chef's kiss, right? Beautiful.

Now for others we feel like maybe you're like, I don't control anything. I have no control. Maybe you feel like I've lost control. Maybe you've lost control in one area or another. And perhaps instead of controlling your environment for peace, perhaps the comforts of the season will help you experience the peace that you actually long for, right? A little more food this time of year, a little more drink, maybe a little too much food, maybe a little too much drink. And finally, at least for a few hours, we can experience the depth of peace we actually need. And man, don't those anxieties melt? Once you get that drink, don't they melt away when that food is on your plate? You see, there's actually nothing wrong with peace. I hope you're not hearing me say that. In fact, peace is the reason we even have Christmas in the first place when you think about it.

So this morning it's about the right type of peace. Let's explore the ways we attempt to install dark peace in our lives and how it really fails to give us the real peace we actually seek then.

And only then, by the way, can we actually then see how the real peace that Jesus brings this time of year is what we've been searching for the whole time. Let's do that by looking at verse four in our text together. Here it is. It's on the screen if you don't have a Bible.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth to Judea to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem because he was of the house in lineage of David to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn.

Now I'm holding a big leather bible right now, right? And reading this Christmas story, uh, from a big leather book around Christmas is just gives you all the feels, doesn't it? Like by the fire, the smoking jacket, the treats, uh, the presence nestled under the tree, everything's beautiful. You read this story and you go, oh, isn't that just so kind?

But let me put you in Mary and Joseph's shoes for a moment. Okay? So here's how it goes. An engaged teenage girl has an angel randomly show up to her in the flesh. The angel says she's going to get pregnant, uh, with God as her child. Okay? Uh, that's crazy. And then her fiance is about to divorce her for hearing that she's pregnant because like obviously like we're not getting married after this. And then an angel shows up to him to confirm the teenager's rather sketchy story. Then somehow they're still together after nine months. They decide to head to fulfill this random -- in Bethlehem. The issue though is that they're poor. There are no motel rooms, places this day. It's likely freezing cold. And then she's about to have the baby. And of course, being a teenager, it's not like she planned well, but even if she had, they're not well off, they had no choice but to give birth to the baby in a manger.

And also a manger kind of sounds cute because if you're reading that again in 2023 by a fire with a pastor with a big leather bible in a red Christmas sweater telling you about the manger, you think, oh, how cute. Except for the fact that a manger is really a feeding trough for animals that travel through this town while their owners sleep in a junkie Motel 6-style place. And when I say Motel 6, that's the only way I could describe the condition of this hotel, quote unquote. 'cause really a modern equivalent to it would be like, I don't know, a gas station, uh, bathroom stall. That's kind of what they were sleeping in.

And keep in mind, Mary's of course a young teenager and she never had a baby before. And she's like, well, where do I put it? Mary, it's not an it, he is God. And she goes, okay, feeding trough with the animals, she drops it right there. There is -- all that to say -- there is seemingly nothing peaceful about this situation, nothing peaceful. And yet we learn they sort of handle this seemingly bleak, desperate situation with real composure. They're not like, I don't know if we're honest, many of us during the holidays when even the slightest thing goes wrong. I mean, many of us can't even sit down at Christmas dinner with our father or our brother-in-law because of their politics. Or if the the pie is burned we can't even get over the frustration enough to sing Christmas carols that evening. We can't do it. What's the point?

Mary and Joseph's peace must have come from something other than their ability to create it themselves. Because they were not in a position to create an environment like we can for peace. And here's the first thing. Real peace cannot be generated by us, friends. The peace that

you and I take by force this time of year and make over our lives has to always have an underlying anxiety and fear underneath it. Even if you've got really good at hiding that, because at any moment, it turns out we're capable of losing that dark peace on our lives.

I mean, think about it. Think about it. We install peace on our lives. For some of us it's the house. It's the house, it's the the cars, it's the retirement plan, it's the family, it's the having kids, it's the not having kids. Or maybe we're in school, we've got a relationship we like, the job is okay, things are going pretty okay, like life is good. But if you have all that and you feel pretty peaceful, you don't have peace. No, you don't. You merely have the illusion of peace.

Why? Well, what is peace anyway? Biblically speaking, the Hebrew word through peace in, in the Old Testament is the word shalom. Now this word means something much larger than, I don't know, not being anxious around the holidays. Peace is, or shalom is the universal flourishing of all of humanity combined with total wellbeing, delight, and satisfaction at all times. Isn't that sound nice? Yeah, that's great. You can't create that for yourself. That's right. You have no ability to, so you don't have peace if you have the house, the cars, the 401k's, the nice job, the boyfriend, the girlfriend, the good grades, you don't have any of that. You merely have the illusion of peace because at any moment all of that could come crumbling down and we'll be forced to grip with a new a new reality without the dark peace that we've installed over us. Is that real peace then? Couldn't be, couldn't be real peace as soon as the cocoon of order that we've made for ourselves crumbles, it's not peace, couldn't be.

Or like we've mentioned before, you feel like you're outta control and there is no controlling your environment and you've given up on controlling anything but you, again, you have that comfort thing. You have that thing. You can go to the eating, the drinking, the online activities. Maybe it's your own job that you go to, but the moment you don't have access to them, all of a sudden things start to crack around you. All of a sudden you don't have the composure you thought you did. It seems like if you can just get to the next alcoholic beverage or just get to the next meal or just get back to work in the morning, that everything would sort of dial itself back in. That's not peace. Is that real peace? Is that how Mary and Joseph operated? It couldn't be right? Because their lives were in literal chaos, nothing to medicate with nearby, okay? No control over their external circumstances, no money. And somehow they remain peaceful throughout this situation.

Now, how could it be if they don't have a nice big house on the eastside or if things aren't perfect in the bank account or if they didn't get into the right school that they could be in peace? How is that possible? They did it. Their peace was not contingent on their wellbeing. Their peace was found. Apart from those things which shows us this real peace must be experienced and received. See, we get peace wrong where we mistake peace as the absence of stress and conflict and anxiety. That's not peace. Peace isn't the absence of something. That's not what it is. Peace or shalom is actually the addition of something. Let's look at it in our text together. Look at verse eight, we'll talk about it.

And in the same region, there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. For unto you, uh, for unto you is

born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you; you'll find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly host praising God and saying "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

Okay, let's run this back. So now we get introduced to some new characters. These shepherds and these shepherds are, they're minding their own business. They're hanging out at night doing what shepherds do, which is tending to sheep. Not all that exciting. And in fact, shepherds weren't all that well thought of in their community. It's not like they had a high paying really awesome affluent job. They're just minding their own business, doing their jobs, and then all of a sudden an angel of the Lord, I kid you not shows up to them out there in the middle of nowhere. Now imagine for a second being these guys just doing a job enjoying a nice peaceful night and then a, an angel of the Lord shows up with the glory of God surrounding him. Fear seems like an appropriate response to that, right? Imagine if you were just in your cubicle like I don't know where you, where you work, you're like clicking around in your big old monitor and you're, you know, doing your thing and all of a sudden like all the lights go out and a giant angel of God shows up.

Everyone's gone and he says, glory God in the highest, and terrify you, right? Hold on a second, then the angel says, hold on, fear not I bring you good news and great joy. Oh that sounds nice by a fire in 2023, doesn't it? Right? But then it says verse 13 and subtly there was with the angel, a multitude of heavenly hosts praising God. Imagine the terror. Imagine the terror. First you scare us out of a peaceful night. We're enjoying ourselves as shepherds. Then you tell us not to fear. Okay, fine, great news, great joy, that sounds nice. But then more heavenly beings that anyone can count surround us in the sky to terrify us and send us home on a negative note. It's horrible. And reveal themselves in blazing glory.

God interrupts their situation, doesn't he? He interrupts it. He intervenes on the peace that they've created for themselves and they've organized a fine life for themselves. And then bam, God shows up to them. When you and I forge and white knuckle dark peace in our lives, we merely paint a peaceful facade over what we call our life. We don't actually change it from the inside out, but again, under the facade of that dark peace has to be fear and anxiety. Because deep down we know we can't really control anything about our lives. It's merely an illusion. But when we encounter God, the facade of peace that we've crafted, the dark peace peels back and it exposes us for who we really are. And the natural response to no longer being in control of what you thought the world was is fear.

Wait a second, life's not going the way I thought it was supposed to go. Who is this? God I know you like to think that if you saw all those angels, you'd have been praising God and worshiping, oh my gosh, thank you Jesus. I assure you it would've scared you. 'cause it's different when you encounter God and you see life's peace for what it is -- then all of a sudden you understand that your life is an illusion.

Quick question for you all. Who's had a moment in their life where everything was going pretty amazing, but then you got some really bad news or something really bad happened and then it totally changes your outlook on your life? Anyone felt that way? Like if everything's going great and all of a sudden you get the phone call and you're like, oh, peace has gone in an instant. This

has happened to me. I, I remember being a young man, young man, I was a boy around 10 years old and at 10 years old, even though my dad had left our home, I, I was still living my best life - video games, right? Sports, bicycles, like popsicles. You know, that's the -- life is good. But then I remember my mom one day needing to go to the hospital and that wasn't that crazy, but it was all sort of sudden, but you know, I'm still in my own world. And I remember sitting at the hospital for hours and thinking, well, this isn't right. Like there's a basketball game on tv. I wanna get back to that. And I remember my mom coming out and looking at me and my, my sister and saying, Hey guys, I wanna tell you that I think the doctors say that I have a thing called cancer.

It turns out that the illusion I crafted in my own heart, even as a 10-year-old boy, wasn't real. It was merely an illusion of peace. It wasn't real peace. It turns out underneath our illusion of a peaceful life is actually an awful lot of fear and anxiety if things go wrong because they can go wrong.

These shepherds, though, they're exposed too. But they're not exposed by life's circumstances, they're exposed by God himself. And this is a much way better way to be exposed. So these shepherds have this veneer of peace on their lives and it's pulled back and peeled back. They feel fear because of what they see. And that weirdly enables God to have an opportunity to infiltrate their hearts. The moment the facade of peace is pulled back, they're vulnerable to God's spirit being placed in them. Verse 14, all of a sudden,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

And they think, could that be me? God's presence peels back our peace and it gives us his peace, it exchanges it. And when we encounter him, all of a sudden it orients us into what's really important. So our life's path becomes no more important than any other thing you hear about. All of a sudden it comes about what God wants you to do because now you have perspective. You've now seen God and you can see yourself and go, Ooh, I'm not him. I'm gonna turn my path. Look what happens to the shepherds in verse 15. It says,

When the angels went away from into, from, from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

So what do they do? These shepherds decided to, within an instant, change their plans for their lives. And God's presence in their lives, with his own peace, relativizes their plans and makes their lives about his. They decide to change their path and go do what God wants 'em to do. Instead, they experience something unique here and there's a specific emotion that enables us to feel what happens to them. And if you and I encounter God, we'll experience the same feeling and it can happen to us too.

So if you haven't paid attention to anything, this is your moment. This feeling that they have is called awe. Awe. It's kind of like when a cat sees a dog, right? Overwhelmed like oh, right. Um, but it's much more. Now, awe is nearly impossible thing to define. It's impossible thing to define, but you sort of know it when you experience it. That's, that's how I would describe it. It's a combination of amazement and wonder sort of mixed together. But it's still more than

that, right? It's far more than that. Awe is one of the few concepts that can refigure our sense of time and immerse us in a present moment.

I mean, some of us aren't in present now in a room and I'm screaming at you, right? Awe can immerse you in a present moment. It can lock you into a present moment. There are literal secular scholars devoted to doing research on awe and, and and have gotten their, even their PhD degrees in trying to figure out and understand this concept. Lemme give you one of their definitions of awe. Awe is the sense, the sensation of being in the presence of something vast -- go figure -- that simultaneously transcends one's understanding of the world, a state of being that straddles the boundary and pleasure or boundary of pleasure and fear. Isn't that cool? Scientists discover what awe means and it sounds weirdly familiar.

Awe transcends our frame of reference. Imagine spending five years on a PhD and defining God, but not actually getting to the actual conclusion. Awe transcends our frame of reference. It combines amazement with an edge of fear and it dissolves our sense of self. Psychologists will call awe an emotion, but if you've ever experienced awe, you know it's far more than an emotion. In fact, it feels vastly different than being angry or sad or really even lonely or excited because the key difference is that emotions are internal responses to the world. But awe feels external. It feels as if awe happens to you. Like awe overcomes you. Here's my point. Only God can create deep enough form of awe in you that can melt the dark peace that you've attempted to install over your life. And I just wanna say that's all we do here. Like our default mode is to install a phony version of peace to help us feel like we can cope with what we know is true about the world. That it's sad, it's broken, and it's hard. That's all we do here. The problem is you can't create it. You just feel like you can sometimes. And all it takes is one phone call or one hospital visit to change that. What you need then is the awe of God because the awe of God is actually the antidote to dark peace.

Now, I think there are two types of people listening to this. I think there are two types of people in here, okay? And I wanna speak to both of you individually, and I think you're both in here. So pay attention first type of person. I'm not so naive to think that there aren't those, even on the eastside in the affluent western world, that there aren't those of us in this very room that are facing real trouble. Real trouble. Like I can't feed my family kind of trouble. Like life is bleak. I have ideations trouble. I don't know how I'm going to not end my own life trouble. Like I'm addicted to something trouble. Like I don't, I'm facing something really hard. I'm sick, they're sick, my family's sick. I don't know what to do. I've put myself in a real bind with my behavior type trouble. You're facing something real hard. I know what that's like.

Um, I remember, it's Christmas time. I always think about my mom around this time because I remember my last Christmas with her and growing up in the Bay Area in a very poor community. We didn't have a lot of great amazing Christmases, stuff like that. We always had sort of really humble Christmases. And not because we were humble people or something, but 'cause we didn't have a lot. And so anytime Christmas came around, my mom was always like penny pinching and being very like, careful with the money. Don't do that. Don't spend that. Can't, can't buy that. So we only got very few gifts, like very little stuff. And um, and that wasn't uncommon to us. The meals were, were humble.

But I, there was this one year and I'd always wondered which year when my mother was sick, she was sick for a few years. Which one would be the last one I'd have with her if that was gonna happen. And this particular year, our penny or penny pinching ways sort of eviscerated. All of a sudden she was buying us a lot of stuff, and I got a pair of shoes over \$80. And I was like, oh my gosh, this is crazy. And she's, we're going to different places, we're going to restaurants, we just had never done any of that stuff. She was really sick at the time. And I remember opening that pair of shoes that Christmas. And when I opened it, I immediately thought, this is gonna be the last Christmas I have with my mother. 'cause something's different here.

And it was. She ended up passing away. And you know, I hear all this foster community stuff, a lot of this stuff's meaningful to me. Um, there was no family for us to be taken in by, no money. We had no certainty of safety. My father was well out of the picture. It's not like we had aunts and uncles to go to or anything like that.

Now how do, how do I have, how does anyone have peace in a scenario like that? You might be facing similar trouble. Your life might be overwhelmingly difficult even in a Christmas season. And maybe you've tried to install some dark peace, but it's not working and your life's really hard. I can't offer you anything to help you out of that. All I can do is point to the words of Jesus. This is what Jesus says about peace. He says directly to us, "Peace. I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let your hearts not be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

You might say, how in the world do I have peace at this time of year? And I'd say, you're right. You can't. Jesus wants to give you his instead. You can have peace. He looked, he looks in the eyes of his disciples, knowing he's about to die and says, Peace I give to you. Peace I'm gonna leave with you. Let your hearts not be troubled in a moment like this. When you have no peace and there's nothing left, let your hearts not be troubled because your hope is not in the way you install peace over your life. My peace is sufficient for you. I long to give it for you to you. Don't be afraid. Fear not, for there's a Son coming, good news of great joy. Fear not. This is the same peace Jesus could hold knowing that he's headed for a torturous death and still believe the Father would preserve him. And it's the same peace that even a little boy could find after his mother dies without any family to care for him, believing that there was something better for him out there.

When you encounter Jesus, you learn that he walked the walk. He suffered as you did. And he did that so you could have the peace he's offering. Now, knowing that however hard your life gets, your ultimate outcome can be secure, regardless. If you're here and you're not a Christian, if you believe in Jesus, you will live forever with Jesus and glory on the new Jerusalem here. In a redeemed world without any of the feelings you experience and no need for dark peace. And you could find peace in Jesus' shed blood because he died on your behalf if you'd accept it. In Jesus' peace, there is no uncertainty. But in your dark peace, there's always uncertainty.

And there's a second type of person in this room listening, and I suspect it's most of us. And if you sit in this sermon or any sermon and have felt the need to wonder about anything other than Jesus, and I would just say this probably is for you, okay? Many of us, when we hear that Jesus brings peace around this time of year in a room like this, we think, oh, absolutely, definitely. I believe that absolutely. Jesus overcomes the world. I totally believe that. Amen.

Hey, uh, what are we doing for lunch? Hey, what time's the game start, or do they play on Thursday night?

Like, we're definitely in alignment with the fact that Jesus brings peace like cognitively. We get that right? We get that Jesus brings peace, but it doesn't really move us all that much, if at all. Like we're sitting in Advent going, ah, yeah, I guess Jesus is coming -- I'm just so, I got so much going right now. I'm, I'm not in awe. So the Christmas season doesn't fire you up because you're not in awe of God because well, do you really need awe right now? I mean, you kind of got everything you need, right? I mean, everything is sort of like copacetic, like house is good, kids are good, like things are probably fine. Do I really need it?

Jesus says to you, Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives to you do I give to you. And how does the world give you peace exactly? 401k? Yeah. Self-care? Shopping sprees, alcohol, real estate, good grades?

You need to know, and I really want you to hear this so badly, but I, there I was praying this morning, I, I wondered if you could, but that's my own unbelief and I trust that God can do it. I need you to know that the peace you've built for yourself here on this in the eastside is a house of cards that's going to come crashing down the moment a slight breeze comes. You're not ready.

And if we know anything about the Bible, we know it's the most dangerous spot to be in. To not recognize your need. There is not a more dangerous place to be to go. Hmm. Peace of God. Cool. What's next? I long for you to encounter God fresh this morning that he would just fall on you in this place and awaken you to see that the baby that he sent into the manger 2000 years ago was actually sent for you so that you could be in awe of him.

Colossians one, if that doesn't wake you up, maybe this will: For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Jesus, him, to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

You didn't think that shed blood could lead to peace, did you? The cosmic work of God is that he would send his son in the form of a baby to live a perfect life, die a death meant for you and I, and then live so perfectly that he would be capable of resurrecting three days later. Why would he go through all that trouble? Behind your dark peace that you've installed is a fear and anxiety that all of the peace that you seek in this life is coming to an end because it is coming to an end.

So then God sends a baby into a manger to come forth and encounter you in the middle of the night to shock you awake to his glory so you could experience him and so that you'd be in awe of him. That he would take violence on the world with an infant, and end violence with peace. He makes peace by his blood on the cross. It's because of him that you then can have a certain future. It's because of him that you can look forward to a holiday like Christmas with excitement. It's because of him that you can have peace with God forever and you don't have to be so anxious or afraid because it's not coming to an end. It stays forever. Then we don't have to install dark peace on our lives and we don't have to take it by force, controlling people and timelines and situations around us because Jesus offers us benevolent peace by invitation. Will you take the invitation? Lemme pray.

Heavenly Father, I pray for a radical encounter of God for my friends who are able to check their watches and think nothing of the peace of God in a season like this. Be gentle with them as you awaken them and startle them to your glory. That it's so magnificent that we could be so passive and slow and that you would still welcome a sin with open arms and forgive. There's no shame here except the shame that you take upon yourself when you shed your blood. I pray for my friends here that don't know Jesus, Lord, that they don't know your Son, would you awaken them to the good news that the, the life that they've created for themselves is a house of cards and it will not last no matter how much they anticipate on Christmas morning. Would we all experience your peace that we can go without making dark peace and relaxing that no matter our circumstance, we can be content in who you are and what you've done. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.