

Sermon Guide: Peace | Petra Anderson| Nov. 19, 2023

In this sermon, Petra explores the profound concept of Shalom, a Hebrew word that signifies complete wholeness, and wellbeing, something much richer than simply the absence of conflict. This kind of peace can be experienced even in the midst of pain and suffering.

Petra explains how in the beginning shalom was described as an unbroken relationship between Adam and Eve and God. In the same way, the New Jerusalem in Revelation is described as God himself dwelling with his people and restoring the shalom of the Garden. In between creation and the new creation, scripture describes a process of restoration in which Jesus is the leading figure. This shalom is something that we can experience now, if only we turn to God and trust him, rather than restoring peace in our own strength and in our own way. The presence of the Lord and trust him.

Petra encourages us to develop spiritual eyes to see beyond our reality's limitations, referencing Paul's second letter to the Corinthians and Psalm 46. Despite chaos and brokenness, God is constantly making new life within us, and His presence offers refuge and strength. The hymn writer, Horatio Spafford, exemplified this posture when he penned "It Is Well with My Soul" despite experiencing tremendous loss, including the death of his wife and four daughters in a tragedy at sea.

Petra also shares a personal story of a time when she also felt tremendous pain through betrayal of friends, and being led by God to read Psalm 33 and being profoundly reminded of God's character and his acts, and then experiencing a deep shalom. She experienced what Paul promises in Philippians, a peace of God that surpasses understanding, guarding her heart and mind and allowing her to love deeply again.

Petra concludes the message by leading the congregation through a visualization exercise where one first thinks about a particular situation needing Jesus' peace, and to imagine that person or situation until one can picture Christ there with them, and to allow Christ's gaze to become one's focus, and letting one's prayers reflect Christ's longings for the restoration of wholeness.

Key Takeaways:

- Shalom is more than just the absence of conflict; it is a state of wholeness and restoration that we are invited to experience and participate in through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. By joining Jesus in His mission, we can be agents of peace and healing in a world that desperately needs it. [18:17]
- Spiritual vision allows us to perceive God's ongoing work of creating new life within us, even when external circumstances seem dire. This perspective is crucial for maintaining hope and finding peace amidst chaos, as it anchors us in the reality of God's presence and the promise of His refuge and strength. [22:14]
- In the face of suffering and conflict, focusing on Christ's presence and offering our longings to Him can lead to a deeper connection with God's heart and the experience of Shalom. This practice helps us to engage with the world's pain without being overwhelmed by it. [38:44]

Bible Reading:

1. Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)

"For 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."

2. Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

3. John 14:27 (NIV)

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

Discussion Questions:

1. In Philippians 4:6-7, what are the believers instructed to do with their anxieties, and what is the promised result?
2. What role does prayer and thanksgiving play in experiencing the peace of God described in Philippians 4:6-7?
3. What does Isaiah 30 tell us about God's present role in this time between creation and the New Jerusalem?

Application Questions:

1. Think of a relationship that is currently strained or a conversation that you anticipate will be difficult. What is one way you can prepare your heart to extend Christ's peace in that interaction?
2. Choose a news story that has recently caused you distress. How can you pray for that situation this week, asking for God's Shalom to be evident?
3. Consider a time in the past week when you felt competition or disunity with someone. What is God's heart for this situation? What is one step you can take to pursue unity and peace in that relationship going forward?