

Bulletin Outline

PEACE...in the midst of chaos *Isaiah 9:6-7*

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Peace is not the absence of _____, but rather the Hebrew concept of _____.

It is... _____, _____, _____
_____.

God's provision for peace in His creation is _____.

We lack peace because we...

...mistakenly _____ it to our _____.

...try to get it by _____ in the _____.

We experience peace by _____ in the _____.

Trust that He is your _____ for peace.

Trust that He is working _____ together for _____.

LOOKING BACK

PEACE...in the midst of chaos

Isaiah 9:6-7

This Christmas season is an opportunity for us to turn our attention toward the Prince of Peace who came to bring "peace on earth, goodwill toward men." But how do we experience this peace in a world that often seems to be spinning out of control? We need to receive it - and that means changing the way we think about peace, and changing the things we grab onto to try and get it.

THINKING IT THROUGH

(Contemplate/consider/discuss/agree/disagree)

God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there.

~C.S. Lewis

There are many things that are essential to arriving at true peace of mind, and one of the most important is faith, which cannot be acquired without prayer.

~John Wooden

Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid.

~Frederick Buechner

WORKING IT OUT

- Make time this week to list out all the things in your life that seem to be disrupting peace. Keep going until you can't think of another single one! Then, reflect on Philippians 4:4-7 and present these requests to God one by one. Ask Him to change your perspective on these circumstances and fully trust in Jesus as your provision for peace.
- What things do you tend to unconsciously look to for a sense of peace and wholeness in your life? Food? Entertainment? Shopping? Relationships? Work? Begin to pray that Jesus would become your Prince of Peace in place of all else.

LOOKING AHEAD

JOY...in the midst of disappointment

Matthew 1:18-24

"Joy to the world, the Lord is come..." We know the words well, but how much joy do we experience in our lives day-in and day-out? The reality is we live in a broken world where disappointment is unavoidable, and at times, almost suffocating. And yet Christmas reminds us that God did not stay above it all, but rather entered neck-deep into the disappointment of real life as a human being. The baby we sing about is *Immanuel*, "God-with-us." This fact carries some profound implications for our lives, and very much affects our ability to honestly experience JOY...even in the midst of disappointment.

LOOKING IT UP

- Read Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus in Matthew 1:18-25. Why might Matthew have primarily used the perspective of Joseph to tell the story?
- We know Joseph was an upright Jew (see v. 19), experiencing the exciting season of engagement. Imagine how the news of Mary's pregnancy must have affected him. What kind of emotions might he have experienced as his dreams came crashing down? How would you have felt in similar circumstances?
- Reread verses 20-23 and make a list of main points of information the angel communicated to him. How difficult might these things have been to believe? Why do you think Joseph believed them? Imagine his next conversation with Mary; what might their emotions have been?
- What is the significance for us of Jesus being called "God-with-us"? (Consider both the theological significance and the emotional significance. For help, consider John 1:14, 18 and Hebrews 4:14-16)
- Read Luke 2:8-11, which is an account of the first public announcement of Jesus' birth. Why is it "good news of great joy"?
- Jesus' life played out differently than many would have imagined, especially considering his arrest and crucifixion. Read Luke's account of Christ's return to heaven in Luke 24:50-53. Since Jesus was now gone, why did His followers have "great joy"? (For a hint, see v. 49, along with Matthew 28:20b and John 16:5-11)