

12-12-2023 – Peace Like a River – The Peace that Christ Brings

Good morning. My name is John and I'm glad you are here today. This morning we are continuing the sermon series that Pastor Jeremy began last week entitled "The Peace that Christ Brings." Pastor Jeremy started the series with the sermon "Peace with God." Today we will review part of that as we look at the God for whom we may now have the "Peace of God" in our lives after we have obtained Peace with God.

If you've been a Christian for some time, you may remember a little chorus that we used to sing. If you know it, please join in and sing with me:

*I've got peace like a river,
I've got peace like a river,
I've got peace like a river in my soul.
I've got peace like a river,
I've got peace like a river,
I've got peace like a river in my soul.*

Why not like a river? Why not like a pond? Or a lake? Or an ocean?

In the past, we used to sing the following hymns. I'll just read the words, but if you want, you may hum the tune to it.

*Like a river glorious, is God's perfect peace,
Over all victorious, in its bright increase.
Perfect, yet it floweth, fuller every day,
Perfect, yet it groweth, deeper all the way.
(Chorus)
Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest,
Finding as he promised, perfect peace and rest.*

One more hymn that we sing is this:

*When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll,
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

So, why do songwriters compare peace to a river? One reason is that the Bible compares peace like a river.

Isaiah 48:18

*Oh that you had paid attention to my commandments!
Then your peace would have been like a river.
And your righteousness like the waves of the sea.*

Isaiah 66:12

*For thus says the LORD:
Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river,
And the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream...*

The chorus of the hymn “Like a River Glorious” was written from this portion of scripture:

Isaiah 26:3

*You keep him in perfect peace,
Whose mind is stay upon you.
Because he trusts in you.*

Now we’re going to ask the following question; why does the Bible compare peace like a river? Before we answer that question, there are a few other questions we want to address first.

What is peace? Last week Pastor Jeremy shared with us two biblical words for peace. First, the Hebrew word for peace in the OT is Shalom which means wholeness, harmony, and well being. Secondly, the Greek word for peace in the NT is Eirene, for which we get our words serenity and tranquility.

Years ago, I was having a discipleship study with a young man at a coffee shop here in Quito. After some time together, a friend of this young man came up and joined us at the table. She said to me, “Pastor John, I’m a lawyer. I’ve worked in the Judicial system here in Ecuador for many years. I now work in a very important government position and have reach all of my professional goals in life. But Pastor John, I don’t have peace in my life. Can you tell me how I can have peace? I would like to know, please tell me!

As we all sat there at the table, I shared with her you that you can’t simply take a magic pill and then all of a sudden, you have peace. The reason why none of us have peace, the reason we have this conflict in our lives goes all the way back to the beginning of history.

In Genesis 1-3, the Eternal God, creator of heaven and earth, created everything. He created man and woman in His image and placed them in the Garden of Eden. At that time God had perfect harmony and intimacy with Adam and Eve, the first created human beings. God had told Adam that he could enjoy the fruit of every tree in the garden except one tree. He told Adam that if he disobeyed and ate of that one particular tree, he would surely die.

Then it happened, Adam and Eve, who had enjoyed peace and a perfect relationship with God, disobeyed. In that moment, conflict entered the world. They realized that they were naked and then their innocence disappeared. They tried to hide from God. They tried to cover their guilt and shame. Fear gripped them as they waited for God’s judgement. Death.

As they waited for their punishment, they overheard something interesting. A promise, that one day a Satan conqueror would come and defeat and destroy the serpent, Satan, the one who had tempted them to disobey God. In Genesis 3:15, the bible says:

***I will put enmity between you and the woman,
And between your offspring and her offspring,
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise his heel.***

Adam and Eve tried to cover their guilt and shame. They made a covering of fig leaves. They tried in their own way to get rid of the conflict that had just entered their lives. They were waiting for God to zap them, as their sentence for rebellion and disobedience was death. But then something happened. God provided a different covering for them, animal skins. Death did occur, but it was a substitutional death. Something died in Adam and Eve's place. God had given mercy and grace to them while at the same time punish sin as He had said.

Mercy means to not receive judgement even though they deserve it. Grace means to receive a benefit or a blessing, even though they didn't deserve it. In that moment in the Garden of Eden, mercy and grace was extended to Adam and Eve. They were both expelled from the Garden of Eden and from that time until now, there has been conflict and an absence of peace.

Year after year, century after century, a blood sacrifice was made before God. An innocent animal was offered before God as an atonement for sin. Why? Because sin must be punished and the punishment for sin is death. For years, we have all been living in conflict with God. But God had promised that one day a Messiah would come and atone for the sins of the whole world.

Then, one day an announcement was made. In Luke 2, the angels announced on that first Christmas even that peace would finally come.

Luke 2:8-14

(8) And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

(9) And the angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

(10) And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy, that will be for all the people.

(11) For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

(12) And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

(13) And suddenly there was with the angel of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying,

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

Peace. An announcement of peace would come. The conflict between God and man would come to an end.

The baby was born, and his name was Jesus. Jesus grew up. He lived a sinless life. Then one day, the prophet John the Baptist saw Jesus and announced, "Behold the lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world." The one who had been promised in Genesis 3:15 had finally come. Jesus lived a sinless life. He died. While he was on the roman cross, he declared, "It is finished!" and he died. He died for your sins and my sins. He died in our place. When repent of our sins and place our faith and trust in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, the Bible says that we can have peace with God. We can once again have that intimacy and perfect relationship with the eternal God, the creator of heaven and earth.

While we were sitting at the table at the coffee shop, the young lady who had asked me the question, “how can I have peace?” said, “Pastor John, that’s what I want!” And in that moment, she bowed her head, repented of her sin and trusted Jesus Christ as her Savior. About two weeks later, her mother called me and said, “Pastor John, what did you do to my daughter? She has changed! What happened?”

What happened? Her sins were forgiven. She was declared not guilty! Last week Pastor Jeremy read to us this verse in the bible.

Romans 5:1

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Justified, what does that mean? Justification means to be declared righteous. It is a legal court room term where the judge declares you not guilty for a particular crime. Therefore, when the bible says that we have been justified, God in heaven declares us legally not guilty for the infractions against Him. When we get saved, when we trust Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, God can declare us legally not guilty because He credits the righteousness of Jesus Christ to our account. It is because Jesus Christ on the cross paid your infraction. Jesus on the cross paid my debt. It allows God the Father to declare us as not guilty, not because we’re not guilty, because we are guilty, but because the debt that was incurred by being guilty was paid on the cross by the death of Jesus Christ, the sinless son of God, who paid the penalty for our sin. That’s legal forgiveness that everyone receives when they accept Jesus Christ as your personal substitutional sacrifice on the cross which was credited to your account that declares you innocent legally. That is an eternal issue that is settled when you come to faith in Christ for salvation.

Now that we have peace with God, let's look at we can have the peace of God in our lives. To have the peace of God in our daily lives, we must look at the God of peace. Who is God? What is it about him that gives me peace and confidence in my daily life? Let's go back to the narrative that I shared with the young lady at the coffee shop.

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning, God...

In the West, we use names different than the way the Bible describes names. We name our children with the names of our parents, grandparents, someone who had an influential part of our lives. In Latin America we name our children with a surname, a second and/or third name, then the father's name, and lastly the mothers family name.

However, in the Bible, names were given to describe the character and nature of the person. Therefore, when God wants to reveal Himself to us, He does so by telling us His names. So, the better we know God's name, the better we are to relate to Him when we pray.

Bible scholars have studied and found that there are about 100 or so names of God in the Bible. Those names describe His nature and character and reveal Himself to us. We all know the name God which describes that He is deity. But as we study in detail the names that God ascribes to Himself, we will know Him better. And to really know who this person is who is our Heavenly Father, let's look what His names describes to us with His nature and character.

The first name that God reveals to us is the name Elohim. It is found in ***Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning Elohim (God) created the heavens and the earth."*** Usually, when you see in the Bible the word G-o-d, it is usually referring to Elohim. That is the creator God. Elohim is a plural term, (him – plural) (El – strong one). Elohim, the creator God, is His power name. He creates with that name. We need to know that name

because we will need power in our lives. We will need for Him to do something in our lives.

To understand that name and meaning, we need to look at what the scriptures say. *Hebrews 11:3* says, ***“By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what was seen was not made out of things that are visible.”*** That is a theological concept that tells us that God created everything from nothing. God created everything with no raw materials from which to create. He created creation out of nothing. It’s hard for us to grasp that because we’ve all been told that there was this big explosion and all the world just so happened to fall into place. However, to understand and believe that God created out of nothing is a great confidence booster for us. That means that he can answer our prayers which doesn’t have any explanation. He can open the Red Sea. He can make a way when there is no way. God is all powerful and He can answer our prayers for which His uniqueness can only do. When we know who our Heavenly Father is, who can pull off the impossible without the limits of time and space, it gives us that confidence to go to him with every need we have. The Bible says, *Matthew 19:26* ***“With God, all things are possible!”***

The second name that we want to look at today is the name YHWH (Yahweh or Jehovah). That is the name that God gave Himself. When we read in our English bibles and see the word L-O-R-D, that usually means Yahweh or Jehovah. That is God’s relational name, His covenant name. In *Exodus 3:7*, when Moses asked God, whom shall I tell the people of God sent me, ***“God said to Moses, I Am Who I Am. Tell the people of Israel, I Am has sent me to you.”*** YHWH, scholars have had to add vowels so that we could pronounce the word Yahweh. I Am Who I Am. I’m not I Am who you want me to be, but I Am Who I Am. God is a relational God. God, which is why He uses Father, because He is a relational God. So, if we want to see Elohim’s power in our lives, we must have a relationship with Yahweh, the relational God. There are a lot of people, God’s people want to see the power of Elohim in their lives,

but they don't want to spend time in developing the relationship with Yahweh or Jehovah.

In Genesis 1, we see that Elohim created ... In Genesis 2:4, we see that when God created Adam and Eve, the Bible uses the word Elohim Yahweh, or in our English bibles, the LORD God. From the beginning of time, God created us to have a relationship with Him as He shows us His power. And if we want to see Him work in our lives, our prayer lives, we must spend time in developing that relationship with Him. That is what He desires most. We shouldn't expect to see God's Elohim power, that is His provision, His protection, His guidance in our lives if we keep Him at a distance. He wants to be our Father, someone that is close and intimate in our lives.

The third important name for God that is essential for us to know is the name Adonai. When we read our English bibles, Adonai is spelled: L-o-r-d. Adonai means boss, supervisor, manager, or owner. The one who is responsible for you. Elohim means His power. Yahweh or Jehovah means His relationship and Adonai means that He's responsible for us. He is in charge. If we don't want to have God tell us what to do, which is found in His Word the Bible, then we won't develop a strong relationship with Him and we won't see His power in our lives. He is the one who is in control. He gives us peace. As we look at His name, we can see who is God, who is our peace.

Let's look at a few scriptures that tell us how we are to respond to God's name.

Psalm 8:1 & 9, the Bible says, "Oh LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name."

Psalm 111:9, "... Holy and awesome is His name."

Psalm 29:1-2, "...ascribe to the LORD, glory and strength."

Psalm 113:3, “From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the LORD is to be praised!”

Proverbs 18:10, “The name of the LORD is a strong tower, the righteous man runs to it and is safe.”

We’re not just talking about any name. We’re talking about a name that is above all names. We’re talking about the God of the universe who desires to have an intimate relationship with you and me. The most powerful name in the world is our Heavenly Father!

We don’t have time today to go over all the names of God, but I’ll mention a few this morning.

Jehovah Jireh – God will provide

Jehovah Nissi – the LORD is my banner or victory

Jehovah Shalom – the God of peace

El Elyon – the Most High God

El Shaddai – God Almighty

El Roi – The God who sees

The eternal God, the creator of heaven and earth, desires to reconcile you to have peace with God. Not only peace with Him, but he desires you to experience His peace in your life through every moment of your life.

As we celebrate Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ, let’s remember the word of the Prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 9:6

***For to us a child is born,
To us a son is given,
And the government shall be upon his shoulder,
And his name shall be called,
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,***

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace!

Let's pray.