

Midweek Message

“You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock.”

(Isaiah 26:3,4 ESV)

As we talked about this past Sunday, peace is always something we long for in our world and especially in our lives. With few exceptions, most people would greatly desire a world and an existence that is tranquil, peaceful, calm, and without any disruption or violence. However, the kind of peace the world desires really isn't possible in the current time we live in. There will never be a cessation of hatred, animosity, calamity, violence, wars, and rumors of wars while this world is under a curse and human beings are in the grip of their sinful rebellion against God. Now, that doesn't mean there won't be some semblance of peace in our world as God's common grace is still at work even in those who are in rebellion against God. There are always periods in which there is less violence, hatred, animosity, war, pestilence and pandemic. Things are not always as bad as they could be although Scripture does indicate that as we approach the return of our Lord, this world in which we live will be a place of panic and trouble. Who knows, perhaps we're in the very beginning of that great event when Jesus will return to clean up the mess. However, even though the world around us is continually in turmoil, God tells us that we, who believe in and follow the Lord Jesus can experience inner peace as we travel this journey we call life.

I don't know if you noticed, but in the above Scripture God tells us through Isaiah that this peace we can experience is a perfect peace. Although the peace of which the Scriptures speak isn't a complete cessation of conflict and turmoil, there is still a real and lasting peace God's people can experience and enjoy. It's the kind of peace that's the calm in the midst of the storm, that when everything else around us is in chaos, we can still experience a sense of tranquility and quietness within our souls. It's perfect because it's from God, given to those who rest in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul tells us, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1 ESV). You see, that's where this peace begins in that we must first be reconciled to God who is the source and giver of this perfect peace. It's only as we come to Jesus, through repentance for our sinful rebellion against God, and trust only in Jesus's sacrificial atonement for us, that the barrier between us and God is removed and we're forgiven by God, restored to fellowship with God, and empowered to live in peace with God and with each other. Once this peace between us and God has been accomplished by God's grace freely given to us, it's then and only then that we can enjoy this perfect peace in a world of chaos and calamity.

Now, you might be thinking, wait a minute, I'm a Christian, I've placed my faith in Jesus, and I know I'm forgiven, restored, and the Holy Spirit empowers me to live in peace. However, I don't have this perfect peace in the midst of our current crisis. What's wrong with me? Well, did you notice how Isaiah continues in the above Scripture? The continuing experience of this perfect peace within our souls is realized only as our minds are stayed upon God. You see, it's one thing to know that peace between us and God has been accomplished but quite another to experience that peace in our lives. Peace is certainly available to us as those redeemed by Jesus and although there's nothing we can do to earn such peace as it's all of grace, we must still live in the peace that God has already given to us. The problem we all face is in keeping our eyes on the Lord, looking to Him for our every need, resting in His sovereign work in this world, His perfect Providence by which He governs our world and our lives. You see, we tend to look at what's wrong, what might happened, what's going on that's frightening, and in doing so, we become more and more insecure, anxious, and worried. Instead, we should look heavenward where our Savior is currently seated at the right hand of God, ruling over all the affairs of this world and even those of our lives. As I've said before, we tend to be guilty of our stinking thinking.

Everything begins in the mind and as such our minds must always be fixed on the Lord. In fact, the Apostle Paul tells us,

“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

(Colossians 3:1-4 ESV)

You see, since we’ve been raised with Christ our home isn’t in this realm, but it’s in the next that will come when Jesus consummates His Eternal Kingdom in which all that distresses and destroys will be forever removed. Sure, we should be concerned with what’s happening in our world and take the necessary steps for our well-being. However, we’re not to be those who fret and worry to the point where we lose sight of whose we are and who we are in Jesus. We need to remember that this world, for the believer, is just a staging ground for the next, that although we live here and certainly are affected by events that occur here, our citizenship isn’t in this realm, but already in the eternal realm. Our hope isn’t realized in the things of this world but our hope is realized in the promises of God and the reality of the new life that’s ours in Jesus and the coming of the eternal kingdom.

Listen, as Isaiah tells us, this perfect peace, that inner sense of well-being is ours because God has chosen to lavish His grace upon us. God is always faithful to keep His Word and will never fail to be who He is as the only true and living God. That’s why Isaiah tells us that we can trust Him for He is an everlasting rock. That’s a world picture, given to us so that we can grasp something of God’s unmovable, unchangeable character. We can trust in Him forever, because He will never change the way in which He has always worked on behalf of His people. As I thought about this Scripture, the words of Martin Luther’s hymn “A Mighty Fortress” came to mind.

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing;
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and pow’r are great, and, armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God’s own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same, and He must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us;
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure, one little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly pow’rs, no thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him Who with us sideth;
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
The body they may kill: God’s truth abideth still, His kingdom is forever.

Listen, we can enjoy a perfect peace in our souls, because we have a sovereign God who loves us unconditionally, sacrificially, and eternally if we keep our minds on Him and trust Him in all things.

Pastor Mark