

During this Advent season we anticipate celebrating Jesus' arrival in this world. We also anticipate His return one day. But in the meanwhile, we live in a broken world filled with trouble. And because of that, we desperately need Jesus' peace in the midst of our everyday lives.

What Peace do you need this Advent season; peace with God, with others, with your current circumstances, with your future? Spend a few moments in silent reflection and ask God to show you where He wants to bring peace into your life. Then set aside the cares of this world and receive the gift of peace Jesus offers.

1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. - Ephesians 4:1-3 NIV

Paul's prayer for the Ephesians points us toward the path to forge the bond of peace. This Advent let's determine to follow Jesus' example by practicing humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, and love.

WRAP-UP

Following Jesus means embracing peace that starts with God and extends to others, fostering harmony through our actions. This peace is different from the world's and is rooted in a close relationship with God, which also leads to holiness. Jesus' call to His disciples was a transformative choice that required trust and sacrifice. This Advent, as we prepare to celebrate Jesus' arrival, we are encouraged to reflect on where we need peace in our lives and to practice humility, patience, and love to share that peace with others.

MEMORY VERSE

27 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. - John 14:27 NIV

Challenge- Set aside time this week to speak life into someone and encourage them in their faith journey and in using the gifts God has given them in ministry.

Peace & Calling

The Gospel of Mark - Week 6

INTRODUCTION

In this second week of Advent, we light the candle of peace. As followers of Jesus, we are given both the gift of peace and the calling to be peace makers. In this week's study in the Gospel of Mark, we see Jesus calling His disciples to follow Him and become fishers of men. Let's consider how following Jesus leads us to bring the message of peace through faith in Christ to a hurting world.

Ice Breaker

What is the most peaceful place you've ever visited?

Key Passage

16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 17 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." - Mark 1:16-17 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Peace

Peace is an integral component of following Jesus. Our peace begins with peace between us and God. It continues as we are called to partner and participate with God in spreading peace between us and others.

27 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. - John 14:27 NIV

Jesus tells us His peace is different from what the world offers us. How would you describe the difference between the two? How do you regain God's peace in the face of a troubled heart or fear?

14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. - Hebrews 12:14 NIV
18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. - Romans 12:18 NIV

The above passages in Romans and Hebrews encourage us to actively seek to live in peace. The verb for living in peace is *eirēneuō* and means to cultivate harmony.

What are some instances where you have witnessed disharmony? What kind of damage have you observed as a result? How can we cultivate harmony through our actions or our words?

In Hebrews 12:14, living in peace is paired with holiness. Holiness (Gr. *hagiasmos*) results from being set apart for God. That word can also be translated as sanctified or consecrated. If we follow God's lead and live our lives according to God's purposes, then we are living a holy, set apart, and sanctified life. That kind of life keeps us near to God, our source of peace. And a life lived in peace and holiness is a compelling witness to the world of Jesus' power to change lives.

2. Follow Me

In our key passage, Jesus walks up to Simon (later renamed Peter) and Andrew as they were fishing and simply says "Come, follow me!" His calling was simple and direct. It wasn't a suggestion; it was an instruction. The verb (Gr. *deute*) indicates it was imperative that they follow now!

From the other Gospels we find that this wasn't the first time Simon and Andrew had seen Jesus. They had been following John the Baptist and had heard Him announce that Jesus was the Lamb of God. But now it was time to make their decision about what to do in response to what they had seen and heard.

Following a first century rabbi meant they would accompany and assist him. They would stay close and be taught by instruction and example to emulate Jesus. What would they have to give up to follow Jesus? When you decided to follow Jesus, what doubts or fears did you have to overcome? What did you give up to follow Jesus?

In Jesus' day, it was unheard of that a rabbi would call a follower. Being a disciple of an important teacher was a coveted position for which only the most qualified would contend. But Jesus saw something in these common fishermen that caused him to call them to something they might never have imagined for themselves.

Have you ever had someone put confidence in your ability that you didn't recognize in yourself? If so, how did that effect you?

*19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
- Matthew 28:19 NIV*

Jesus had called His disciples to follow Him, then as he departed, He told them to go and make disciples. It was their turn to speak into the lives of others, calling them to a relationship with Jesus that leads to a life beyond what they may have imagined for themselves.

Is there someone, or more than one person, in your life that God is calling you to disciple? Perhaps a person younger than yourself that you can encourage in their walk with God or in the direction of ministry you see matches their gifting and passions? It may be as simple as a text telling them what you see in them or inviting them to coffee. Ask them what they dream for their future and let God guide you in supporting them along the way.

God has placed us in community and each of us has a unique calling as part of the body of Christ. Your encouragement may be the very thing that launches someone into a ministry that changes the world.

3. Your Choice

When Jesus called His first disciples they had to make a choice to set aside what they knew well, were comfortable with, and had depended on in exchange for trusting in Jesus and stepping into the unknown.

33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." - John 16:33 NIV

Choosing Jesus doesn't guarantee a life free from trouble. In fact, quite the opposite. In John 16:33 Jesus clearly states that we will have trouble in this world.

What kinds of trouble have you encountered in your life? How has Jesus' peace helped you through those hard times? If anyone in your group is currently experiencing a difficult time, pause to pray together for Jesus' peace and intervention in that person's life.