

Life Group Notes 12/1/2024
Pastor Mark Warren 1st of Advent Peace

[No doctrine is a given unless it has been found in the Word given by the Holy Spirit and received by you. If you have observations or questions, feel free to send me an email with your comment or observations at tbeachhead@comcast.net. Thank you for taking the time—Pete Mehegan, the Scribe.]

Remember: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our hearts...and guide our discussions. **PLEASE PRE-READ THESE NOTES AND CHOOSE THE DIRECTION THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR GROUP.** BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR GROUP'S TIME AND BE SENSITIVE! **Some groups would like to dwell on a single idea. Let the Spirit be your guide. Never feel obligated to complete this study.**

Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions that Pastor Mark has raised this week, 12/1. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. **The purpose is to minister to one another.** I include each of the passages mentioned in full, to facilitate the enjoyment of these notes. Footnotes are not meant to distract. This week's footnotes include:

1. [On advent.](#)
2. [On the peace in "...and I will give you rest."](#)
3. [On Corrie Ten Boom and The Hiding Place.](#)

*****Important:** At the very [end of these notes](#), I've included passages that were mentioned in this week's message for deeper study using SOAP journaling to help further your study during the week. ***

Pastor Mark, in his opening comments in reference to the invitation cards said, "Jesus is using you as a vehicle to change someone's life for all eternity.

1. Explain.
2. What were your first thoughts when you heard Mark's message on peace?
3. How was your Thanksgiving?
4. Did you experience peace?
5. What does this season bring you as it approaches?
6. Did you experience "Black Friday" shopping in any way?
7. How do you find peace in this holiday season?

Then he outlined his points:

◆ **Remember Who is True Peace.**

"We can talk about peace...Peace on earth, goodwill towards men...and yet we don't know there is a person Who is behind true peace, and He has a name. Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace.

Look up John 14: [27](#)Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled; do not be afraid. [28](#)You heard Me say, 'I am going away, and I am coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice that I am going to

the Father, because the Father is greater than I. [29](#)And now I have told you before it happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe.

1. What do you see?
2. What is the distinction between the Peace Jesus gives and the “peace” the world gives?
3. Describe Jesus’ method for giving peace to His disciples.
4. Explain why Jesus gives advanced notice. What is the benefit? What is the result when you know in advance what is taking place and the end result?
5. How do you feel if you do not know what is happening next, for instance, if you’re at a big event without a plan?
6. What steps do you take personally when you need to find peace? Do you have a testimony?

Pastor Mark emphasized that Jesus does not withhold peace. “It is a free gift.”

1. What does that mean? What can we be sure of? How can we be sure?
2. How is the gift assured us? How is it received?

Mark referenced St. Augustine of Hippo, who lived from 13 November, 354 – 28 August, 430, who said, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you, O, Lord.” Mark reiterated, “Our hearts are restless until they learn how to rest in Jesus.”

1. Explain.
2. Is it true?
3. How do you do this? Do you have a testimony?

He outlined some areas that bring contention with the season: “As we enter into the holiday season, we can easily get to that place of distraction in the hustle and bustle of getting things done. It’s numbing...as we begin to feel the stress. We start to lose our peace as the family tensions increase. We know **that** relative is coming over and we think, ‘I hope we don’t have a blow up.’ And, then...the in-laws.”

1. Do you have a testimony? Have you known difficulties in these areas?
2. Do you have a method for coping?
3. Have you ever been surprised by peace? Explain.

◆ **Come to Jesus with your burdens.**

Pastor emphasizes, “Jesus actually *does* tell us that He wants to carry our burdens. Look up Psalm 55: [22](#)*Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous be shaken.*”

1. What is God saying here?
2. Is Pastor Mark correct to say that this is God’s desire?

Now examine 1 Peter 5: [6](#)*Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, so that in due time He may exalt you.* [7](#)*Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.* [8](#)*Be sober-minded and alert. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* [9](#)*Resist him, standing firm in your faith and in the knowledge that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.*

1. What do you see? Is Peter repeating the Psalmist’s claim?
2. Is there cause for anxiety? How dangerous is the enemy?
3. Explain the difference between “anxiety” and “vigilance.”
4. Is there a need for anxiety? Why is there a need for vigilance?

5. How do you “cast away” anxiety? Do you have a method?

Look up Matthew 11: [25](#)At that time Jesus declared, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. [26](#)Yes, Father, for this was well-pleasing in Your sight. [27](#)All things have been entrusted to Me by My Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him. [28](#)Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. [29](#)Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [30](#)For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

1. What do you see? What is Jesus doing in verses 25 and 26? Who is being addressed? Who is being addressed in verse 27.
2. Who gets anxious? The wise and learned or the little children? Explain.
3. Why does God’s way work so well, and please Him? Have you ever considered that God enjoys the method itself?
4. How does the Father help Jesus stay free from anxiety?
5. How does “coming to Jesus” help you? What has He revealed to you?
6. Describe in your own words the rest Jesus is offering. What changes?
7. When we lay our yoke on Jesus, what is the next step?
8. How do you take on His yoke?
9. What are His concerns? What changes when you concern yourself with His concerns?
10. Is His yoke really easy? Is His burden light? Explain.
11. Which yoke do you prefer? Do you have a testimony?

Mark also referred to Corrie Ten Boom, 1892-1983, a survivor of Ravensbrück in northern Germany, the infamous concentration camp during the Holocaust. After her release until her death, she became a noteworthy and influential evangelist throughout the world. She said, “Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength.”

1. What does this mean?
 2. How does worry do that?
 3. Where does today’s strength come from?
 4. Mark says, “Worry consumes something in us.” What is that?
- ◆ **Seek God’s strength in difficult relationships.**
1. Do the holidays relieve stress in relationships? Or does it magnify that stress?
 2. Do you have a testimony? How do you rate your coping skills?
 3. Do you have any secrets to manage stress?
 4. Look at Psalm 29: [7](#)*The voice of the LORD strikes with flames of fire.* [8](#)*The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the Wilderness of Kadesh.* [9](#)*The voice of the LORD twists the oaks and strips the forests bare. And in His temple all cry, “Glory!”* [10](#)*The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD is enthroned as King forever.* [11](#)*The LORD gives His people strength; the LORD blesses His people with peace.* What do you see?
 5. Where does the strength for the day that Corrie spoke of come from?
 6. Where does the peace the psalmist speaks of come from?
 7. Who gives it? For what purpose?
 8. How do you feel when a stranger deliberately blesses you for no apparent reason?

9. Have you ever been invited to a gathering where you know there will be difficult people? How do you cope? Do you go? Or do you avoid?
10. Have you ever been surprised when an anticipated conflict did not develop, and the gathering was actually, memorably pleasant? Did you express gratitude? Did you thank God? Talk about it. What happened?

Pastor says, "You are not meant to go to these gatherings alone. You've said, 'Lord, I don't have the strength. I don't have the desire.' But Jesus says, 'Who is going to represent me? Who is going to bring Me to those family functions where those whom I'm calling can see my grace on display?'"

1. Answer Him. Does this change your perspective?
2. Have you thought this way before, as God's ambassador to your family or to in-laws or to your own children? What changes when you are the ambassador?

◆ **Take heart—Jesus has overcome.**

Look up John 16: [32](#) "Look, an hour is coming and has already come when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and you will leave Me all alone. Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. [33](#) I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take courage; I have overcome the world!"

1. What do you see? Describe your feelings, as a disciple, hearing Jesus say these words to you for the first time.
2. Describe the level of stress when He says, "...and [the hour] has already come..."
3. How does Jesus cope with the imminent stress he will face that night from the moment they leave the upper room and come to the garden?
4. How are they to find peace in Him? How does it help to know in advance? Who is in control?
5. How does Jesus' example serve to bring peace to us, His disciples?
6. What do we know about tribulation? Do Christians face it? Or are faith-filled believers exempt from tribulation?
7. Did our sin bring on the tribulation? Or does the world actually hate us? What did Jesus say?
8. If Jesus has overcome the world, what do we know of this tribulation?
9. Look at how Paul coped with this truth: 2 Corinthians 4: [16](#) *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, yet our inner self is being renewed day by day. [17](#) For our light and momentary affliction is producing for us an eternal glory that is far beyond comparison. [18](#) So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.* What affliction is Paul facing daily?
10. How does Paul describe that affliction? Is he crazy? Was it "light?" "Momentary?"
11. What is he comparing his current affliction to? Does that help to look ahead?
12. Look at verse 18. What is the strategy? What unseen thing do you fix your eyes on?
13. Are these unseen things imaginary? Or are they real and known?
14. How are they known? Where did Paul see? Where did he get them from?
15. Where do we get them from?
16. What do you fix your eyes on? Seen things? Or unseen things?

Mark said, "Sometimes the holidays magnify the brokenness, even in our own lives. The fractured relationships, the financial struggles, the unmet dreams...and yet Jesus offers us hope."

1. Do you have a testimony? Take a moment to consider praying for one another.
2. Where does the hope come from?

Once again, review Hebrews 12: [1](#) *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off every encumbrance and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with endurance the race set out for us. [2](#) Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our*

faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. [3](#)Consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

1. What do you see? How does this fit Mark's message?
2. Who are the witnesses that surround us, and what did they show us? How did they overcome?
3. Why fix our eyes on Jesus? What did He tell us about what we are facing?
4. What were Jesus' eyes fixed on? What was seen? Or What was unseen?
5. Was the joy that was set before Him seen or unseen?
6. Explain your answer: In what way was the joy indeed seen by Him? In what way was that joy as yet unseen? How does the Bible become a real description of our days ahead?
7. Look at verse 3. Did Jesus have tribulation? What form did that tribulation take?
8. How do you face hostility from sinners?
9. Have you ever seen a hostile sinner repent and turn to Jesus? What was that like?
10. Have you ever been a hostile sinner and a persecutor? How have you changed?

Pastor Mark says, "See what you have. Let tribulation be tribulation; your life does not have to be turbulent. Your life can be a life of peace. There is tribulation all around you, but your life *is not* turbulent. Your life can still be a life of peace. No matter what this season brings, Jesus has secured the ultimate victory."

1. Does this help? What thoughts does Mark evoke in you with this word?
2. If the peacemakers are blessed, because they get to be called children of God, what will it take to become a peacemaker?

◆ **Pray your way to peace.**

Look up Philippians 4: [6](#)Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. [7](#)And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1. What steps do you see? Number the steps.
2. What points from Mark's Grounded series are mentioned in these verses? What is the value of thanksgiving?
3. What is the result from following the steps?

Mark says, "I want this for you, and for me this Christmas season. I want you to cruise right through the holidays without losing your peace. And the way you're going to do this is you're going to have to spend time in prayer. Peace doesn't come as a manifestation of fairy dust sprinkled on your head."

1. He's saying peace comes with effort. Explain.
2. He says you have to contend for it. Explain?
3. Is "the battle for peace" an oxymoron? Is it a reality of this life?
4. When Jesus says, "Come to me...and I will give you rest," could this be what He is saying?
5. Look again at verse 6, above. How do you do this?
6. How is it a liberating theme just to know that we can cast our burdens on Jesus because He actually does care for us?

Mark says "Prayer isn't about fixing everything. It's all about bringing the issues to the One who can."

1. Explain. What has prayer changed in your life already?
2. Does prayer require a script? Can it just be your own words from your heart?
3. How do the psalmists pray? Are there surprises in the book of psalms? Elaborate.

Mark gave practical steps to stay anchored in peace:

1. **Have a daily quiet time**—Ground yourself in God’s presence and in His promises every day. If the holidays are so fast-paced, quiet moments will be enriched to enrich you and others.
2. **Set realistic expectations**—Peel off what you can peel off. Do not accept burdens and expectations that add more stress, and attenuate the joy. Focus on relationships rather than perfection.
3. **Choose gratitude**—Continue to write in your thanksgiving journal that you started last week. Write three things that you are grateful for. Note especially if you are seeing things differently than before.
4. **Establish healthy boundaries**—Say no when needed to protect your peace and your family’s peace. Be sure, whatever environment you enter this season, that you are walking in with His peace to share and impart. Do not be frenzied or overstuffed like a suitcase.
5. **Be a peacemaker**—Make a conscious decision to forgive, show kindness even when others do not reciprocate. (Do not expect others to reciprocate...make your kindness your best gift to them, asking nothing in return. Remember, love is not self-seeking, easily angered, and it keeps no account of wrongs. Arm yourself with 1 Corinthians 13.) Mark says, “It doesn’t come easy. It’s not even natural. We all know those family dynamics so easy to avoid. What happens when you just say, ‘I’m going to make a conscious decision to forgive.’?” Answer him.

Pastor quoted from Henri J.M. Nouwen’s work, *Out of Solitude: Three Meditations on the Christian Life*, saying “When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares.”

1. Why is this more powerful than our efforts to “fix” things?
2. Do you have a testimony?
3. Is it a relief for you to know that you do not have to know?
4. How do your friends know you care?
5. Prophecy: What will be different this Christmas season? What would Jesus say?
6. Pastor says “Don’t just look for peace. Look for Jesus Who is the Prince of Peace.” Can we do that? Where will we see Jesus? In whom will we see him?
7. If the peace of God that passes understanding is guarding your heart and mind this season, what can you expect?

Mark concludes saying, “Rest on the unshakeable promise that God’s peace is already yours. Peace not only calms *your* heart. It begins to radiate to those around you.” How will that change lives? Explain the promise of Isaiah 26:3 *You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.*

1. What are the two steps to peace outlined in this verse?
2. Which comes first: the steadfast mind? The trust? Or the peace?
3. List the expected order of the path to peace that Isaiah describes.

The Follow-up Application

1. Use the [SOAP journal studies](#) below throughout the week.
2. Memorize 2 Corinthians 4:18. Write it on your mirror and above your bed.
3. Write down three steps toward peace in the face of present-day turbulence. Make a strategy. Look at Mark's steps above.
4. This week, deliberately be anxious for nothing, and in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. See that the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, actually does guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus. Note the results. Notice when someone else notices.

Take the time to pray.

Scribe's Notes:

1. **On advent**—Here is a great explanation on the origin and ideas that come with the advent season. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-history-of-advent/> Enjoy.
 2. **On the peace in "...and I will give you rest."**—Pastor Mark pointed out correctly that the Greek verb used here by Matthew to convey the gift Jesus was offering can mean, "I will give you peace." And the Greek word, **ἀναπαύω**, *anapauso*, goes even further than one would expect. On Biblehub's word study page (<https://biblehub.com/greek/373.htm>), it says this: *The verb ἀναπαύω primarily means to cause or permit someone to cease from any movement or labor in order to recover and collect strength. It can also imply a sense of refreshment or repose. In the New Testament, it is often used in the context of spiritual rest and refreshment provided by Christ.* **Cultural and Historical Background:** *In the Greco-Roman world, rest was a significant concept, often associated with the cessation of labor and the enjoyment of leisure. In Jewish culture, rest was deeply connected to the Sabbath, a day set apart for rest and worship. The idea of rest in the New Testament extends beyond physical rest to include spiritual peace and refreshment found in Christ.* (Emphasis added.) This page is worth a visit.
 3. **On Corrie Ten Boom and *The Hiding Place*.** Pastor mentioned Corrie Ten Boom of Harlaam, Holland, who wrote the story of her testimony, her trials, and her family imprisonment during the holocaust, as they set out to save the lives of their Jewish neighbors. Her book, *The Hiding Place*, an eminently good read, was made, in the seventies, into one of the best Christian movies ever produced by Billy Graham's ministry. It can be seen today on YouTube. It is a family movie for older children, because it contains some difficult scenes of brutality within Ravensbrück, the concentration camp in which Corrie and her sister Elizabeth were confined. https://youtu.be/-zNDe30_eKw?si=6iFXGBLEsaP8xjBq YouTube has many clips that feature Corrie and her wisdom borne of her experience and faith.
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For further study:

Take a moment each day this week to apply the **SOAP**... (**S**cripture—Copy the scripture. / **O**bservation—Write what you see. / **A**pplication—What is God saying? / **P**ray—What is your response?) ...method to some of the scripture we looked at this week:

Monday: John 14:27-29
Tuesday: Psalm 55:22-23
Wednesday: 1 Peter 5:6-9
Thursday: Matthew 11:25-30
Friday: Psalm 29:7-11
Saturday: John 16:32-33
Sunday: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Once again, some passages suggested here have more than the usual number of verses. This is not to increase the burden but to provide clarity of context. Pick the verses that speak to you most clearly, and run these through the SOAP steps.