

**Making Room for Peace**  
**December 2, 2018**  
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Luke 3:1-6

*In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,*

*"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
'Prepare the way of the Lord,  
    make his paths straight.  
Every valley shall be filled,  
    and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
    and the rough ways made smooth;  
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"*

November 11<sup>th</sup> has many different meanings to different people.

November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1918 marked the end of World War I, the war to end all wars. At 11:00 am, on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month (Paris time) an armistice was signed

At 5am that morning, members of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) went over the top and sustained 3,500 casualties.

Battery 4 of the US Navy's long-range 14-inch railway guns fired its last shot at 10:57:30 am from the Verdun area, timed to land far behind the German front line just before the scheduled Armistice began.

Henry Gunther, an American, is generally recognized as the last soldier killed in action in World War I. He was killed 60 seconds before the armistice came into force while charging astonished German troops who were aware the Armistice was nearly upon them.

November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1919 Woodrow Wilson proclaimed that it should become a day of remembrance, but it wasn't until 1938 that it was made a legal holiday

In 1954, after ten years of wrangling, Armistice Day was changed to Veteran's Day to honor "a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace".

Since the end of the war to end all wars there has virtually not been a day when conflict isn't taking place somewhere in our world.

The late historian Eric Hobsbawm claims that 187 million have died in conflicts the last 100 years.

Why am I telling you this?

Because this morning we are looking at the concept of peace and its relationship to advent.

And I want to make this bold claim --- We cannot make room for Advent unless we follow the path of peace.

But peace is more than the absence of conflict.

While November 11<sup>th</sup> stirs many patriotic emotions in each of us (which it was not created to do).

November 11<sup>th</sup> means something more to me --- something that kept me from finding peace for years.

November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1985 was the day 23-year-old Stewart Wesley Conger died from cancer.

And the peace that I sought after that day is certainly not the same kind of peace that was sought on November 11, 1918.

But it was peace never the less

We cannot make room for Advent unless we follow the path of peace.

I believe that there are primarily three types of peace that we strive for

- Inner peace
- Peace between people
- Peace between nations or groups

I am not really going to spend time this morning talking about the second two kinds of peace (peace with others, peace between nations or groups) because I am convinced that until we find peace in our own hearts --- we cannot make peace with others.

One of the things that I love about preaching on topics like this is I get to do all kinds of research and find out all kinds of wonderful tips --- now if I could just stop preaching about them and start living them.

Psychologist Robert Puff, in an article on "How to Find Inner Peace" in **Psychology Today** claims that he has a simple solution that will bring almost immediate relief and not cost a penny.

He says the solution is only three words long, but most people ignore his advice.

And what does he suggest? BE IN NATURE.

He writes:

By nature, I'm referring to an environment that fosters stillness and silence. This doesn't necessarily mean a national park or a rural location far from city life. In fact, in the midst of nearly every busy city, where you're surrounded by buildings, people, and urban gridlock, you can still stand outside, look at the sky, listen to the birds, hear the wind blow, watch trees sway, and observe a sunrise or sunset. In other words, nature is accessible to all of us. Nature can even be something we bring indoors. Potted plants and flowers are simple and wonderful ways to bring the outdoors into our homes and workspaces. When we're feeling anxious, having plants and flowers nearby encourage calmness.

This is the quiet place free from mental noise that fills our minds throughout the day.

What he really is wanting us to find is quietness --- stillness in our lives.

When we quiet ourselves we can begin to allow peace to overflow in us.

In many ways I agree with him --- finding time in nature is wonderful.

When I want to get away from everything and become filled with quietness the best place I have found is a cruise ship.

It is one of those places where no decisions are required --- you are disconnected from the day to day rat race.

I find a cruise the most relaxing vacation I have ever taken because I can slow down in a way that I normally can't do

One of the greatest examples I have ever seen of inner peace is found in the Atticus Finch character in To Kill A Mockingbird.

There's a scene in which Atticus, the small town attorney defending a falsely accused black man, encounters Bob Ewell, the low-life white farmer who is the accuser.

A drunk Ewell calls Atticus a stream of filthy names and then spits in his face.

In the movie, this scene is played beautifully by Gregory Peck.

With spittle covering his glasses, he doesn't say a word but reaches for something in his pocket while staring at Bob Ewell.

Ewell flinches thinking Atticus is going to hit him, but instead Atticus pulls out a handkerchief and calmly wipes his face and glasses, then walks away.

Not many people could maintain that state of equanimity in such a situation.

Finding inner peace is more about being than doing.

It's about leaning toward rather than struggling against.

It's about being fully present and focused on the task at hand.

The rewards of finding peace are numerous.

They include mental and physical health and well-being, self-confidence, better relationships, and a more intense and joyful experience of life.

If we want to experience inner peace --- there are a few things we can practice in order to get better at it.

These come from life coach Barrie Davenport.

1. Have nothing unresolved  
Don't leave the unresolved, unresolved --- seek help if necessary to put away those things that sap your energy and steal peace from your life
2. Surrender and accept what is  
We need to let go
3. Take full responsibility for how you react to others  
Know that you get to choose how you react to others.  
Decide who you want to be in all circumstances
4. Become aware of and sensitive to feeling rather than ignoring them  
Not only others feelings --- but your own as well!  
Figure out what is behind the feelings you have
5. Tell the entire truth  
It is amazing how good we are at lying to ourselves and others --- if we want peace we must quit lying
6. Know your higher self  
Distinguish between your self versus your mind, ego, needs or past experience.  
Take the time to understand who you really are.  
What are your values, your goals, your joys and passions, your integrity?  
Those are what define you and make you authentic.
7. Unhinge from adrenaline  
Slow down and let go — or risk losing your health, your relationships, and your peace of mind because of our adrenaline addiction
8. Know what rattles your cage  
Keep asking yourself, "Why do I feel this way?" until you know the real answer.  
Then deal with the answer directly.
9. Step over nothing, even the small stuff  
Don't ignore the small stuff  
You may not be able to change everything, but awareness and the ability to manage tolerations in a healthy way can bring you peace.
10. Prioritize peace ahead of performance  
Most people live 28,500 days --- prioritize the days you have left to live.

I think there is some great advice there --- but I would change the order and urgency of some of them.

As a follower of Jesus, the number one thing that the scripture tells us we must do (must achieve) if we want peace in our lives is SURRENDER.

And that is the problem in a nutshell

I want to be in control

I want to choose which scripture to follow

I want to choose who I love and who I don't

I want to decide who my neighbor is

I want to decide how I spend my money

But God says that PEACE – the peace that passes all understanding --- only comes from putting our full trust in God.

Every Sunday, as a part of our worship service, we pray: THY WILL BE DONE --- but do we really mean it?

Or do we say --- Thy Will Be Done --- but only after I explain why my way is better.

Dwight L. Moody said

“Spread out your petition before God, and then say, ‘Thy will be done.’ The sweetest lesson I have learned in God's school is to let the Lord choose for me.”

Until we realize that we don't steer the ship --- that we are not in control --- peace will always escape us.

Christian Author J. Oswald Sanders has defined peace as, “not the absence of trouble, but the presence of God.”

Peace isn't a “thing” that can materialize all at once, out of nothing, just because people get tired of strife and violence.

Peace — whether international peace or simply good and open relationships in the home, or with people we deal with daily — this peace is a process that takes place over time, as we learn to lay aside our self-centeredness and obey God.

Peace comes to us when the Prince of Peace comes to us.

Paul said Jesus “is our peace.”

During this Advent season we prepare to receive Jesus afresh into our troubled world, into our church, into our families, into our own hearts.

But the Prince of Peace is here now.

There is peace in our midst, for Jesus is here

- here in the proclamation of his word;
- here in our sharing of his gifts, the loaf and the cup;
- here in the loving touch of those who know him.

Jesus who is our peace is in our midst.

Therefore, as we prepare to gather around the table we remember when Jesus said:

“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

Make room for Peace this Advent

Let us pray:

Soften my heart Lord as I seek to surrender and admit: I can't control people, plans, or even all my circumstances, but I can yield those things to you, and focus on your goodness. Thank you today for every good gift you've given, every blessing you've sent, all the forgiveness I did not deserve, and, yes, for being with me in every moment of life. Teach me to let go and believe you. I know that when I pray and give thanks instead of worrying, you have promised that I can experience the kind of peace that passes all understanding. That's your kind of peace, Lord. And it's the kind I crave. Teach me to surrender. Amen.

There is a wonderful Peanuts comic strip, in which Charlie Brown and his little sister Sally are talking.

Sally proclaims that she has inner peace, but is really restless.  
She starts ranting and raving about someone she doesn't like.

“I thought you had inner peace,” says Charlie Brown.

“I do,” says Sally, “but I still have outer obnoxiousness.”