“The Theory of Peace”

December 8, 2018

Ephesians 2:8-14

Please open your Bible with me to Luke Chapter two and Judges Chapter six.

Here’s a word from Charlie Brown. *“I think there must be something wrong with me, Linus. Christmas is coming, but I'm not happy. I don't feel the way I'm supposed to feel. ... I like getting presents and sending Christmas cards and decorating trees and all that, but I'm still not happy. I always end up feeling depressed.”* And here’s Lucy’s response. *“Charlie Brown, you're the only person I know who can take a wonderful season like Christmas and turn it into a problem.”*

Haven’t you heard that depression and anxiety rise at the holidays, especially around Christmas? Some call is the “winter blues.” And the name that’s quite often associated with it today is SAD, an acronym for Seasonal Affective Disorder, discovered in 1984. I’ve heard it too; for years; except for one thing. It may not be true.

I discovered something about depression around the holidays that is quite significant. Go online and do a search for “Christmas and depression” or “holiday anxiety and depression” and you will discover that the one survey on holiday depression and anxiety that is most often quoted was done in 2006. Yet, almost every article quotes it as though it was done recently. It’s even in the November 2018 Reader’s Digest. Check it out [found on https://www.rd.com/-health/wellness/holiday-depression].

Now, here’s exactly what that 2006 survey says [https://-www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2006/12/holidaystress.pdf]. The main finding was this. “The holidays are, first and foremost, a joyful time. During the holidays, people report many positive emotions such as happiness (78 percent often), love (75 percent often), and high spirits (60 percent often).”

Question “How often do you experience any of the following during the holidays? Happiness (Often/sometimes 96%), Love (Often/sometimes 90%), and High spirits (Often/sometimes 89%).”

And loneliness, anger and sadness are on the lowest end of the survey (Survey question “How often do experience any of the following during the holidays? Loneliness comes in at often/sometimes 26%, anger often/sometimes at 35%, and sadness often/sometimes at 36%).

Quote (again from the 2006 survey) “People love the holidays and look forward to spending time with loved ones, especially family.” “More people are inclined to feel that their stress increases, rather than decreases, around the holidays (38 percent increase versus 8 percent decrease). However, most people (54 percent) feel that there is no difference in the amount of stress they experience.”

The article written on that survey is twenty-two pages long. No, I didn’t read it word for word. Now, granted, the survey is twelve years old. But if nearly every article on Christmas depression refers to it, why shouldn’t I?

So, folks, it may be a myth. Most people do not get depressed around the holidays. Then, you ask, why would present-day doctors and psychologists and counselors and finance experts and magazines tell you that most of us are depressed around Christmas? I don’t know the answer. But, here’s at least one possible reason. Because the world can’t even figure out what the world thinks.

And, usually the purpose of an article is to get you to agree with the writer. As well, it might be easier to give quote “answers” and quote “solutions” to the problem rather than simply tell what the survey answers revealed.

Besides, if most people are happier during the holidays, wouldn’t these doctors have less work? Maybe they need the work.

Now, having said all that, I’ve titled today’s sermon “The Theory of Peace.” Shall we pray?

Rather than focus on the problems at Christmas, I want to encourage you to focus on the reality at Christmas and especially the words of the Bible at Luke 2:10 *“And the angel said unto them,* ***Fear not****: for, behold, I bring you* ***good tidings*** *of* ***great joy****, which shall be to all people.”* Luke 2:14 *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth* ***peace****, good will toward men.”*

What’s on my heart this week is this. God is the God of peace. His Son is the Prince of peace and His Spirit is the One Who bears the fruit of peace,

So, today, let me begin here.

First, God wants people to experience peace. The angel said to the shepherds on the very night Jesus came from heaven into this world *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth,* ***peace****…”* So many reasons for Jesus coming into our world and the one that pretty much stands out front is peace. Luke 2:14 *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth* ***peace****, good will toward men.”*

Philippians 4:9 refers to God as the God of peace *“and* ***the God of peace*** *shall be with you.”*

And here’s how the Apostle Paul ends the Book of Hebrews. Hebrews 13:20 *“Now* ***the God of peace****, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, (21) Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*

The first person in the Bible to refer to peace is God. Together with a huge promise to bring a son into the world through his ninety year old wife, Sarah, God promised Abraham that he’d leave this world in peace.

Here’s what He said to Abraham *“And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace …”* (Genesis 15:15). Folks, since God is the God of peace, then you can be absolutely certain that He wants *your* heart to enjoy *His* peace.

The theory of peace is this. If God truly is the God of peace, and since peace was ruined by the Fall, then the Only One Who can provide you a heart of peace is God. And this theory has to be tested and re-tested and tested again so that we personally establish the fact that that’s exactly what God does.

He sent Jesus into a world that was ruined by the Fall. Where was the peace when Cain chose to murder his own brother? Where was the peace when Noah was building an ark to save the world?

The word for peace that God used with Abraham is this “Shalom.” Folks, if the LORD promised Abraham that he would one day lay his head down, close his eyes, and leave this world in quiet tranquility and contentment, don’t you think that His will for you is the somewhere near the same thing?

Now, let me say a word here about peace and the will of God. Find with me Judges Six. Judges 6:24 *“Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovahshalom.”* Do you know what Gideon named the altar in his house? “The LORD is peace.”

Do you know why he named that altar “Jehovah Shalom”? Here’s why. For year and years the Midianites had dominated Israel. That was the stage that Gideon was placed on in his time on this earth. The Jews in fear lived in the mountains, in caves, and in strongholds. Whenever the Jews sowed their land with barley or wheat, the Midianites invited the Amalekites over and together they’d steal the entire harvest. There was little or no quote “peace” in the land.

As a matter of fact, the amount of attackers that came into Israel in those days were compared to grasshoppers because there were so many. And they had no many camels that nobody knew the total number. And the LORD spoke to Gideon that he was to stand against these enemies. So, was he willing to surrender himself to the LORD? Yes. And on that day, the LORD said to Gideon *“Peace be unto you. Fear not; you will not die.”* So, he built that altar and named it “Jehovah Shalom,” “the LORD is Peace.”

Here’s what you and I need to know about God’s will and God’s peace. When we let Him have *His* way with us; when we are ready and willing to surrender our will to His will; then, we, just like Gideon, can set up an altar in our homes and let people know Who the LORD is; He’s our Peace.

Would you agree with me that God is the God of peace? Then, would you agree with me that God wants *you* to experience and enjoy His peace? Then, why is it that when God works out His will upon you that peace seems to fly away?

Let me put it this way. How many of you feel like you’re wasting your time seeking peace from the LORD? Psalm 34:14 is God’s will. Here’s what it says *“Seek peace and pursue it.”* I Peter 3:11 “… Seek peace and ensue it. Do you know what the word “ensue” means? It means “to earnestly pursue,” “to hunt down and chase after.”

God is so interested in your having peace that He sent His Son into the world to achieve it for you. But, He also commands you to chaste after it; to earnestly pursue it. Maybe, a part of the reason for depression at Christmas is that we’re disobedient. We expect peace while the LORD commands us to pursue it.

When Jeremiah was put into prison, the LORD came to him with a promise to the Jews. Jeremiah 33:6 *I “will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth.”*

Listen carefully. It’s God’s will that you experience His peace. The doxology in II Thessalonians 3:16 puts it like this. *“Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.”*

Can you see the first part of the theory of peace? It’s this. God wants you to know *His* peace.

First, God wants people to experience peace.

Second, Jesus is the Prince of peace. At Christmas we hear this word from Isaiah. Isaiah 9:6 *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father,* ***The Prince of Peace****. (7)* *Of the increase of his government and* ***peace*** *there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”*

Jesus isn’t a mere prince. He’s a Princely Prince. And He’s a Prince Who offers not just a cessation of war. He offers a condition to you that no one ever could offer to you; His peace.

Think about it like this. Jesus Christ, the LORD, wants to rule in your life. So, what did He come to do if He came as the Prince of Peace? What was the kingdom like that He promoted while he was here?

And what does He do today? And how does He rule over you? He rules by bringing you peace. He allows circum-stances to enter your world that are anything but peaceful. And why? Why does He allow that? Because for every peace-less circumstance, He requires you to turn to Him and say “LORD, rule my heart right now.” And will the One Who is the Prince of Peace deny you that? I don’t think so. The way His Kingdom operates is in peace. His kingdom is a kingdom of peace. You can tell that you are surrendered to the Prince of Peace. You enjoy that condition called peace.

The NT presents it like this. Colossians 3:15 *“Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart…”*

The original word here for “rule” is umpire. His peace, He says, is on patrol, watching over your heart so that when you let other things enter in, He’ll remind you to stop and return to that peace. Think about how gentle He is and how ready and willing He is to see to it that you experience His peace.

And here’s how. Think about you and your LORD as one. That’s really what peace means. You’re one with Him and He’s one with you. Let’s say you’re tempted to think about how stressed out you are or how little money you have left over after you’ve paid your bills. What should you do? Choose. Instead of letting the discontent and the stress and worry or anger or fear or recalling how little you have compared to some people; instead of that, let the peace of Christ rule.

Rather than give room in your heart for complaints and sadness and thoughts about how much you’ve lost over the past year; let the One Who understands how important peace is, the LORD Jesus Christ, let *Him* and let *His* peace rule your heart. It’s a choice. Some choose to pity themselves and to complain while some choose to let the peace of heaven rule their hearts. It’s up to you.

And here’s what you can do right this very moment to let His peace rule in your hearts. Turn Colossians 3:15 into a prayer. *“LORD, you commanded me let Your peace rule my heart. Right now I ask me to do just that.”* Who here thinks that God will not answer that prayer? Remember *“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”* (John 14:27).

And when peace returns, remember, it’s simply you and He returning to a state of oneness. It’s His peace. Say “thank you, LORD, for Your peace. If that’s His command, then that’s His promise as well. Do not try to manufacture your own peace.

So, do you know His peace? Have you found peace in Christ, the Prince of peace? If not, today is the day to repent and put your trust in Christ. He will not only forgive every single sin. He’ll give you along with His forgiveness His peace. Listen, folks, every person I know wants to enjoy this condition in their heart.

First, God wants people to experience peace.

Second, Jesus is the Prince of peace.

Third, peace comes when you are ready to give up on anxiety. Find with me Philippians 4:6.

Philippians 4:6 *“Be careful [be anxious] for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. (7) And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”*

Philippians 4:6 might be quite familiar to you. So, let me remind of this. There are three things in this passage. Two of them you can do. And one of them He does.

The two you are required to do are these. One, give up anxiety. Give up being anxious. Who here is worried about someone or some thing? Are you worried that something will happen or are you worried that something won’t happen? Do you have a relationship issue that’s affecting you right now? Your worry is right now stopping the LORD’s peace from coming into your heart.

To “worry” means “to be pulled in two different directions.” It also means “to be disturbed and to be annoyed in your spirit.” Psalm 38:19 says this *“I am full of anxiety because of my sin.”*

Jesus uses this exact same word. “Stop worrying about tomorrow” (Matthew 6:34)

The second thing God calls you to do is to let your requests be made known to the Him with a spirit of thanksgiving. Have you ever wondered how someone can pray while they are worried and ungrateful? I’ve done it. So have you. But why? Why worry with an ungrateful heart? It leads to no good.

But what happens when give up anxiety and come to Him with a grateful heart and make your requests known to Him? What does the LORD promise will happen to you when you give up anxiety? What does He offer when you take every-thing to prayer and supplication with thanksgiving? What is His pledge to you when you bring your requests to Him in prayer with thanksgiving? Here’s what He does; verse eight. He promises to keep your hearts and minds, all of us inside His peace. That His peace will “rule.”

Do you know what a guard does? He stands guard so that, if by chance, something or something threatens to hurt you, he goes into action. That’s what the LORD’s peace will do for you when you give up your anxiety and take everything to the LORD in prayer.

You all know the difference between supply and demand? Now, when it comes to your life, which do you focus on; the demand or the supply? If you focus on the demand, you’ll worry and you’ll experience anxiety. But if you do what is right and focus on the Supply, you will see that God provides a wonderful condition for you to live in; His peace.

Watchman Nee describes it like this. Imagine three construction workers passing bricks up some stairs. One man passes bricks from the first level up to the next, and the second man passes them from his level up to the next. All goes smoothly as long as the bricks keep moving. But if the second man stops passing his bricks along, he’ll soon be crushed by the increasing weight of the load.

We’re often in this second man’s position. All day long we receive cares, troubles, and burdens. And when we hold on to them, we’re soon overwhelmed by the weight of anxiety. What should we do? As soon as we receive the cares and feel threatened under their weight, we must pass them on to a higher level. [Found on www. <https://blog.biblesforamerica.org> “Fellowship With God”].

Why take anxiety when you can pass those very same things on to the One Who’s on the stairs above you, the LORD. And every time you do that, He does exactly what He promises here in Philippians four, He promises that His peace will through His Son guard your heart well.

I don’t know what you need peace for this Christmas season. But I know He knows. And He’s out for your good. He’s got a protector available for you. It’s His peace.

First, God wants people to experience peace.

Second, Jesus is the Prince of peace.

Third, peace comes when you are ready to give up on anxiety.

So, who’s ready to give up his or her anxiety and trade it in for His peace? It’s your choice. Why not make it today?

II Peter 1:2 *“Grace and* ***peace be multiplied*** *unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord…”*

Romans 15:13 *“Now the God of hope* ***fill you with*** *all joy and* ***peace*** *in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”*

Isaiah 26:3 *“Thou wilt keep him in* ***perfect peace****, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”*

Think about the LORD each morning as you wake up this week at the Supply. And remember that no matter how great the demand, the Supply cannot be exhausted. Pass the bricks up to the next level. That’s the “Theory of Peace.” It’s your responsibility now to test it and re-test it and test it again. Does the theory work or doesn’t it?

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 737 “Like A River Glorious”