

When Peace is Hard

Preached: 5/10/2020 – Video Message

Welcome: Welcome to Germantown Church of God. I'm glad that you have tuned in today for this message. I pray that our time together today will be helpful to you. We are continuing through a season when our public gatherings have been suspended due to the Covid 19 Virus. We are abiding by the directive to temporarily avoid gatherings of more than 5 people in order to protect us and protect others. Government leaders are establishing guidelines to follow so that states can begin to re-open. Those guidelines will determine when we can begin to gather together again for Worship. While no specific date has been established, we anticipate that we will be able to gather together again soon. Please pray for those in authority who are trying to protect us, and pray for our Church leaders as we develop plans for re-opening, so that we can make coming to Worship a safe experience.

This message is being prepared for the weekend of May 10 – Mother's Day. Mother's Day is a day that is set apart to honor and bless Mothers. Ordinarily we would take some time in our Worship service to publicly recognize Mothers and pray for them. I regret that we cannot do that publicly, this year, but I do want to assure Mothers that you are loved and appreciated. There is a story in the Bible that recognizes the important role of Mothers. It is the story of Hannah. Hannah was not able to have children for many years. She prayed that the Lord would give her a son. She prayed: "**O LORD Almighty, if you will look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life.**" (1 Samuel 1:11). The LORD heard her prayer and gave her a son. She named him Samuel. When Samuel was born, she kept her promise. When he was old enough (probably 3 or 4) She brought him to the Tabernacle of the LORD, and gave him to the LORD. She left him there to serve the LORD. Samuel grew up to be a great leader of God's people. Hannah shows us the important work of a mother. Her godly influence impacted Samuel's life who impacted the whole nation of Israel. The role of Mothers is an important role. We pray for those of you who are Mother's or Grandmother's, Step-mothers, mothers-in-law, that you will have a great impact on those who are coming after you. We want to pray today for you.

Prayer

Scripture:

Matthew 6:25-34

Message:

When Peace is Hard

For the last few weeks, I have been talking about how it is sometimes hard to live out some of the characteristics that we would expect to find in someone who is a follower of Christ. We expect that Christians will be people of faith, people who are loving, and joyful. But sometimes when we are going through difficult times, it is hard to demonstrate those characteristics in our lives. Sometimes it is hard to maintain a strong **faith**. The difficulties that we face are too big, and it is hard to believe God. Sometimes a situation is so heavy and sad, it is hard to experience **Joy**. Sometimes difficult times put a strain on relationships and **loving** others is hard. This current situation that we are living through right now with the Corona Virus has been hard. It is the hardest thing that many of us have ever had to go through. Even if we haven't had the Covid 19 virus ourselves, we have had to make hard sacrifices. We have been quarantined in our homes, sheltering in place. We are not supposed to go out. We are supposed to avoid crowds. We are supposed to wear masks when we are with other people. We don't want to get sick and we don't want to make others sick. We can't visit family members and friends. We have had to limit our grocery shopping, and when we do go, we have to follow the arrows on the floor and can't find some of the products we wanted to buy. Many people

have not been able to work. They have been laid off, or their job has been eliminated. Some people have seen retirement savings diminish and now they are wondering if they will be able to retire, or if they already are, they are worried that their income will run out too soon. **It has just been hard.** In all of this difficulty we have discovered another “Christ like quality” that has been difficult for us – Peace. **Peace can be hard.** That’s what I want to talk about today.

We use the word Peace in several different ways. Sometimes when we talk about peace, we are talking about Peace between people or nations. When conflicts have been resolved, Peace has been restored. Sometimes we use the word to talk about One’s relationship with God – We experience forgiveness of sins and live with the assurance that we have been adopted by God into His family. For this message today, **I am talking about Peace within.** Sometimes we use the phrase **Peace of Mind.** The ability to live with our heart at peace, even when we are going through a storm. I am talking about the experience of having our hearts at rest when we are going through a difficult time, such as we are going through now. For many people, right now, **Peace is Hard.**

In the passage that I read from Matthew 6, Jesus challenges us to live with **Peace of Mind.** He says it like this: ***Do Not Worry.*** Well, we might be tempted to respond to Jesus with a big **“That’s easy for You to say! After all, You are the Son of God.”** But remember, Jesus came to earth and lived in this world as a human. He knows life as we know it.

This passage is included in a section of Scripture that we call the Sermon on the Mount. It is recorded in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. If you have a Bible that has the words of Jesus printed in red, you will discover that this is the longest section of Red Print in the gospels. Matthew tells us that a large crowd had gathered around Jesus. The crowd included his closest followers, who are referred to as disciples. They were probably seated closest to Him. But there were many others who had come to hear Jesus speak. As we follow the story of Jesus in the gospels we learn that many of the people who listened to him were just common folks. Most of them were not wealthy. Many of them would be considered poor, just living day to day trying to make ends meet. Similar to what many people in the world are experiencing right now. So we might wonder what these people thought when they heard Jesus challenge them to Not Worry. I’m sure that some of them were just as familiar with worry as many people are today. **Worry robs us of Peace.**

Anxiety is a word that we sometimes use when we are talking about Worry. The Meriam-Webster Dictionary defines Anxiety like this:

1. **apprehensive uneasiness or nervousness usually over an impending or anticipated ill**
2. **an abnormal and overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear often marked by physical signs (such as tension, sweating, and increased pulse rate), by doubt concerning the reality and nature of the threat, and by self-doubt about one's capacity to cope with it**

Maybe, Anxiety describes what you are going through right now. You do not have any **Peace of Mind** about your situation. Bible Teacher, Beth Moore, says that ***Anxiety never stops telling us, “I can’t cope with this.” In fact, when we are feeling anxious, we are telling ourselves over and over again that we cannot handle whatever situation we are worried about.***

So, we understand that sometime, in times like this **Peace Can be Hard.** It’s hard to have **Peace of Mind** when we don’t know if we are going to get sick, if we have accidentally come in contact with someone who has it, when we have lost our job, when our emergency savings funds are being depleted (if we had any), when the stimulus check funds are running out.

Well, how do we respond to this reality? How do we find **Peace of Mind** when we are so anxious and worried. In the passage, Jesus assures us that Our Heavenly Father is able to care for us. I think it is interesting that in this passage Jesus intentionally refers to God as your heavenly Father. He is not some faceless, impersonal Deity. He is your FATHER! Now, that may sound like a cold and trite thing to say, but Jesus assures us that if God is able to take care of birds and feed them, if He is able to dress flowers of the field more beautifully than Solomon, He is able to take care of us. Do not focus your attention on the material things of life. Instead He says we must focus our attention on your Father in Heaven and what He is doing in this world, and He will care for us. **Jesus seems to be suggesting that Worry is a Choice.** We can choose not to be anxious and instead trust our Father to care for us. Peter teaches us, ***Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you***” (1 Peter 5:7)

Let me suggest one more challenge when our Peace is disturbed and we find ourselves anxious. **Philippians 4:6-7 – *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***” Again, I don’t mean to sound trite. The things that many people are worried about in these days are legitimate concerns. They are real. But in our times of anxiety, we are challenged to take our concerns to the Lord. Turn them over to Him. Put them in His hands and be still.

If you are struggling with worry and anxiety right now, I’m sure that you are not alone. Many people are. But I assure you that your Heavenly Father longs to fill your heart with Peace. Look to Him. Trust Him. Pray. Take your worries to Him.

Isaiah 26:3 Remember the verse that the Lord has given us for this season. ***You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because He trusts in You.***

Prayer

If your heart is in a state of turmoil today, if you are having a hard time experiencing Peace, I would be glad to pray with you. Please contact me. You can call our Church office or email me and I will be glad to talk with you and pray with you. Sometimes talking to someone about our fears, can be helpful. It’s almost as if, the energy is drained out of our worries or anxieties, when we are able to vent and share our concerns with someone else, especially someone who also knows and loves God and who will pray with us. God doesn’t want you to live in fear.

Thank you for being with us today.

Blessing: John 14:27, Jesus says: “*Peace I leave with you. My Peace I give to you. Not as the world gives, give I unto you. Do not let your heart be troubled, and do not be afraid.*”