TITLE: PEACE

TEXT: Ps. 4:8; Jn. 14:27; Mt. 5:9; Job 22:21-28;

Lk. 16:19-31; James 1:9-11; Jn. 16:33; Is. 26:3

INTRODUCTION: This morning, I want to talk about the most sought after thing in our world.

The most sought-after thing is not money nor power nor fame nor fortune but the most sought after thing in our world is peace.

Now in man’s quest for peace they may seek wealth, fame and fortune but they seek those things because they believe those things will lead them to peace.

But, in themselves, they never truly will….

Our world itself is a world striving for peace…peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians, Peace in the Middle East between Arabs and Jews. Peace in the Ukraine between a people that want a free democratic society and those that want to keep her under Russian control.

Peace between warring factions of Islam in Iraq, Iran and Syria…..

Every war that has ever been waged has been because people were either trying to protect or obtain peace…..

Peace is also one of the most prominent themes of the Bible…

So just what is peace?

King David says this in:

**Psalms 4:8(NIV) 8I will lie down and sleep in peace,  for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.**

Here the Hebrew word used for peace is:

***shaw-lome',*  *safe*, that is, *well*, *happy*, *friendly*; (good) health, be at peace, prosper.**

Jesus says this in the New Testament:

**John 14:27(NKJV) 27Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.**

The Greek word Jesus uses for peace here is:

***i-rah'-nay*; *peace*; by implication *prosperity:*— peace, quietness, rest, + set at one again, exemption from havoc of war.**

The most current upheaval in our world is now being played out in the Ukraine and in Israel.

They also struggle for peace, for the freedom that true peace brings.

In the Ukraine a people looking to build a democracy and on the other side is Russia striving to expand their empire and their control of the region.

In Israel we have a people who long to live at peace but live surrounded be enemy nations that want to wipe them off the face of the earth.

I heard a liberal American commentator say that we do not have the moral authority to condemn Russia for what they are doping in the Ukraine because of what we did in Iraq and Afghanistan.

There is a huge difference between when America goes into another nation for war and when most every other nation on the planet has gone to war….

Most every other nation, like Russia, goes to war and end up expanding their empire. They will take control of conquered ground.

America seldom has! We go to war, most often, to protect or gain freedom…Especially when it is in our national interest to do so.

At the end of WW2 Russia expanded their empire…

The US took no land that they conquered…In fact after the war was over, we not only did not expand our territory, but we helped rebuild the very nations that went to war against us.

The rebuilding of Europe and Japan were largely financed by American taxpayers…

The same can be said for the Wars fought in the Middle East….We went into Iraq and disposed a vicious Dictator and set a people free of His tyranny…

We did not claim land for the United States or receive one drop of their oil as payment for the treasure it cost us in life and finance to set them free…

There is simply no comparison between what Russia is doing in the Ukraine and what America has done in the past…

I believe what has formed this basic foreign policy of America is the Christian principles on which our nation has been built.

As Christians we are a people called to be seekers of peace…

Jesus said:  
**Matthew 5:9(NIV) 9Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.**

Billy Graham shares:

*“Before the Big Four Conference in Geneva I watched President Eisenhower kneel in a chapel and ask God for divine guidance in the deliberations to follow. I felt sure that God would answer his earnest prayer. I believe that He did, for President Eisenhower during those days displayed the spirit of a true peacemaker on the international level.*

*The only corrective measure in establishing peace is for men as individuals to know the peace of God. Though I am not wholly averse to movements which strive in one way or another for world peace, I have a strong conviction that such peace will never come unless there is a spiritual dynamic at the core. I pray for wars to cease, just as I pray for crime to stop; but I know that the basic cause of both crime and war is the inherent sinfulness of human nature. The world cannot be reborn until men are born again and are at peace with God.”*

*The world cannot be reborn until men are born again and are at peace with God.”*

Any true and lasting peace within our world must be built upon the freedom that inhibits the hearts of the people that comprise the nations involved.

Sure, we can encourage people in other nations to model our republic and form of democracy, and they may be better off if they do, but if those people do not have a deeper peace at the more basic level of their heart, then the resulting peace they may experience will be limited and very fragile.

With a true democracy comes freedom but not necessarily peace….

The American experiment has produced the most freedom of any other nation that has ever existed and our freedom is still unparalleled today….

But that in itself does not necessarily bring peace….

There are many living in our nation today that has great freedom but little to no peace in their life….

The reason is that true peace is not an outside force but must reside internally, in the human heart.

And that is the message of Scripture from its beginning to its end….

**Job 22:21-28(NIV)**  **21    “Submit to God and be at peace with him;      in this way prosperity will come to you.**  **22    Accept instruction from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart.**  **23    If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored: If you remove wickedness far from your tent**  **24    and assign your nuggets to the dust, your gold of Ophir to the rocks in the ravines,**  **25    then the Almighty will be your gold, the choicest silver for you.**  **26    Surely then you will find delight in the Almighty and will lift up your face to God.**  **27    You will pray to him, and he will hear you,      and you will fulfill your vows.**  **28    What you decide on will be done, and light will shine on your ways.**

**Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you.**

Real peace is a God thing! True peace must originate with God!

I have known some very wealthy men in my days on this planet…

Some of the corporate heads I used to work for had stored up vast amounts of wealth…

They may have lived in huge houses and drove only the most expensive cars and wore only fine tailored suits, but most did not have a true peace in their life…

I believe that is how many of them became wealthy…

Thinking that just one more dollar would be the one that would bring them peace they continued to strive for more and more….Yet never finding true peace..

Jesus reveals this truth in the story about a rich man and a poor man…..

**Luke 16:19-31(NIV)** **19“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day.**  **20At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores**  **21and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.   
22“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried.    
23In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.    
24So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’   
25“But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.    
26And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’   
27“He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father’s house,    
28for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’**

**29“Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’**

**30“‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’**  **31“He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”**

One thing that is revealed in this story is that we have a man who sought peace through the wealth of this world yet never attained it and a man who had found peace while living in extreme poverty…

**James 1:9-11(NIV)**  **9The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position.**  **10But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower.**  **11For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.**

It is not the wealth or the poverty that is the factor that defines peace…

I have also known wealthy men who had a great peace in their life.

Scripture has examples of wealthy men who had true peace as well…

Abraham was a very wealthy man as was Job, as was Jacob, as was Joseph in Egypt and as was King David….

All these men had the true peace of God in their life, yet they were extremely wealthy….

What this tells us is that it is not poverty nor wealth or anything in-between that will determine peace….

True peace is only from God, and it must reside in our hearts….

Jesus tells us how to obtain true peace, the only way to obtain true peace….  
**John 16:33(NIV)** **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.”**

**I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace.**

We have talked about this before, how this phrase, “in Me” like the phrase “in Christ” talks not about our mere salvation but it speaks of moment by moment Lordship….

How that we can be saved yet not necessarily be “In Him”.

In Christ, the Greek-- en Christos, literally means to take up a fixed position in Jesus.

That means allowing Him Lordship, supremacy, in our life.

We can be saved and yet not allow Him a place of Lordship in some part of our day to day life.

And anytime we don’t allow Him Lordship we are not living “In Him”.

We have stepped outside of Him…..

That is why, as Christians, we may not always be living in a state of true peace…

Anytime that we are disobedient to Him, anytime that we do something or say something that we know does not please Him, anytime we knowingly sin, we have no peace about it…..True peace will evade us as long as we live in that condition….

Once we repent and come back to living our day to day life “in Him”, living with Him in control, that true peace will return….

J. Oswald Sanders once said:

*Peace is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of God.*

Helen Keller wrote,

*“If we trust, if we relinquish our will and yield to the Divine will, then we find that we are afloat on a buoyant sea of peace and under us are the everlasting arms.”*

The story is told oftwo painters who were asked to paint a picture illustrating peace.

The first painted a beautiful evening scene in the foreground of which was a lake, its surface absolutely calm and unruffled. Trees surrounded it, meadows stretched away to the distant cattle gently browsing; a little cottage, the setting sun—all spoke of perfect rest.

The second painter drew a wild, stormy scene. Heavy black clouds hung overhead; in the center of the picture an immense waterfall poured forth huge volumes of water covered with foam. One could almost hear its unceasing roar, yet perhaps the first thing to strike the eye was a small bird, perched in a cleft of a huge rock, absolutely sheltered from all danger, pouring forth its sweet notes of joy.

It is the second painter who could describe the peace that passeth all understanding which is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

One can only have peace with himself if he has peace with God.

Thomas à Kempis once said::

*First keep the peace within yourself, then you can*

*also bring peace to others.*

*Erwin W. Lutzer said:*

*Emotional peace and calm come after doing God’s*

*will and not before.*

Unknown author once said:

*Peace is the deliberate adjustment of our life to the will of God.*

A story is told by William Gilbert of how Dante, wandering one day over the mountains of Lunigiana, eventually drew near to a lone, secluded monastery. It was at a time when his mind was wracked with internal conflict and was seeking refuge from the strife. So he loudly knocked at the monastery gate.

It was opened by a monk, who in a single glance at the sad, pale face, read its pathetic message of misery and sorrow. “What do you seek here?” said the monk. With a gesture of despair, the poet replied, “Peace.”

It was the same old craving followed by the same old search. But neither the solitary places, nor the recluse cell ever brought true peace to Dante’s afflicted heart. Peace comes not from without but from within.

We can have it in the winter of age or the spring of youth; in the lowly cottage or the stately mansion; in distressing pain or in buoyant health. The secret of it is in comradeship with Christ. You can have peace in the midst of the storm, if you have Christ. He is the shelter from the tempest, the soul’s haven of rest. If we have learned to value His friendship, we have mastered the secret of the “peace which passeth all understanding.”

Before we or any nation will ever have or transfer peace we must first have it ourselves at the deepest level of our heart.

And that peace must first be a peace with God…

*Peace is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of God.*

*First keep the peace within yourself, then you can*

*also bring peace to others.*

It is a noble thing to want to expand freedom and the

resulting peace that can come from it.

But real peace is always a matter of the heart and is

only possible in righting our relationship with God.

And that is only possible in our surrendering our life

to Christ.

**Isaiah 26:3(NLT)**  **3 You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!**

Do you have peace in your life today? Do you have True peace, the peace that surpasses understanding?

If not, how is your relationship with Christ going?

Are you trusting in Him? Are your thoughts fixed on Him? Are you residing in Him through surrender of your heart and life to Him?

For that is the only place true peace will ever be found….

*Peace is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of God.*