

9SP4 – Jesus is my Peace

Aim:

- ⌚ To understand that Jesus is the giver of Peace in my life; such peace comes from His Love and fills us from within. It withstands the effects of any external influences or forces.
- ⌚ To have peace in all circumstances.
- ⌚ To have peace with others.

Memory Verse:

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

Introduction:

- ⌚ Peace is “God-centred”
 1. Inner contentment and joy regardless of our circumstances
 2. Accepting what God has given you
 3. Calm assurance and trust in God
 4. Harmony with God and his plan for your life
 5. Realizing that nothing “bad” happens to us as Christians except being separated from God.
- ⌚ Peace is not “Circumstance-centred” and is not dependant on:
 1. Emotional happiness
 2. Financial “security” or
 3. The end of a difficult problem
- ⌚ How to attain peace with ourselves and with others?

Lesson Outline:

I. Defining Peace

- ⌚ Peace is inner contentment and joy regardless of our circumstances.
- ⌚ Peace is tranquillity. It is not worrying about the future, not regretting the past and not fretting over all the problems that occupy our minds every day. Peace is trust that our lives are not just a random series of events, but instead perfectly planned from beginning to end. True peace can only come from God and a personal relationship with Him. Material possessions and human relationships can be pleasant and bring us happiness, but they cannot give us true peace.
- ⌚ When everything is going our way, it is very easy to feel peaceful. If we are healthy and our family is healthy then we feel peace. If our school marks and assessments are high we feel like we doing well then we feel peace. If a difficult problem is solved in our lives, we feel peace. We can have peace of mind when we see police cars patrolling our neighbourhoods at night or feel secure when we activate the house alarm before we go to bed.

The truth is that the peace we “feel” when things are going our way is not really peace at all, it is happiness. We feel happy when happy things happen to us, but peace is

something on the inside that is not shaken by our external circumstances. Peace is something we should experience always, not just when we do not have any problems.

☺ Very often our lives are not so calm and ordered. We all face very difficult situations that we must deal with everyday. We can fail our tests, lose our health, lose our friends, lose our money, lose our jobs, and we can even lose our lives and the lives of those we love. In these situations, it is not so easy to have peace

☺ In fact hardships and persecutions are bound to happen to all of us. St. Paul says, *“all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution”* (2 Timothy 3:12). So if we know up front that we will suffer, then we must also learn how to have peace despite our circumstances. In John 14:27, Jesus says, *“Peace 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.”* How to attain this peace is the topic of this lesson.

ACTIVITY: Buy some of the cheap foam ear plugs, they can be purchased from a Pharmacy. Ask three or four volunteers up and give them the ear plugs to put on/in. Ask the rest of the class to sit quietly and ask the volunteers what they can hear (should be nothing). Then ask the class to make a bit of noise and ask the volunteers what they can hear (should also be nothing). Finally ask the rest of the class to make a lot of noise and ask the volunteers what they can hear (should be nothing). This demonstration should give the kids an idea of how inner peace works, no matter how big our problems are we always maintain our inner peace regardless as the King of peace is bigger than our problems, and just knowing this should give us peace.

II. Accepting what God has given us

In order to have peace, we must be satisfied with what we have. It is very easy to look at our neighbour and desire or even envy what they have, but we must understand that God provides for each of us in His own way and what is good for one person might be harmful to another. God has a purpose and a plan for each of us that fit who we are and what He wants us to do.

God might make one person wealthy to allow him to glorify God through his wealth, giving generously to the poor and having the extra free time to serve. God might similarly choose another person to glorify God through his poverty, being an example to others of how to be content despite his circumstances. The poor man is poor for the glory of God and the rich man is rich for the glory of God, so how can the poor man say to God, *“Make me rich”* when it is *God’s perfect will that he be poor. We should therefore always accept the circumstances, gifts and talents that God gave us, and if we are responsible with small matters then He will place us in charge of larger ones; as it is written “Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities”* (Luke 19:17).

God might allow one person to be healthy while another suffers from disease his whole life. Does God care for one more than another? Is God cold and unfeeling toward the sick person and warm and loving toward the healthy person only? No, God loves both the same. Sometimes we cannot understand why God allows certain things to happen, but if we believe that *“all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose”* (Romans 8:28) how can we complain? His ways are not like our ways and His thoughts are not like our thoughts.

St. Paul says, *“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counsellor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”* (Romans 11:33-36) God’s thinking is above our own.

We might not understand God's plan, but we should still have faith that God is in control of all the circumstances of our lives, as it is written: *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths"* (Proverbs 3:5-6). We simply don't understand many of the things He does, but we should accept through faith that He is working all situations for our good.

III. Calm Assurance and Trust in God

To have peace, we need to fully trust God. When faced with a situation that seems out of control we must realize that God is in control. He is in control of every circumstance of our lives no matter how dire or painful. It is this faith that gives us a calm assurance that He is working to solve our problems and bring us through them safely.

We have the power of an infinite and loving God working in our lives. He wants to help us, He wants to comfort us, He wants to give us peace that surpasses all understanding, and He has the power to do so. Why do we continually worry? Do we feel that God is too busy for us? Do we feel that He doesn't care enough about us? Do we get too caught up in the details and the pain and all the obstacles that are in our way that we lose sight of the one who can remove all those obstacles in a blink of an eye? Don't we realize that He allows pain in our lives to help us grow and mature? And as we grow and become stronger we become more resilient to Satan's attacks. We stop worrying so much about the future and start enjoying life more. Our future is secure in God's tender hands.

Jesus said *"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 'So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble"* (Matthew 6:25-34).

IV. Harmony with God and His Plan for Our Lives

The first step is to trust God unconditionally that He is doing what's best for us regardless of how it makes us feel. We must deny our will and say as Jesus said, "Let Your will be done." It is one thing to concede to another who knows more than we do; It is quite another thing to change the way we think so that we no longer have to concede to God, but rather we desire His will above our own.

The next step then is not just to deny our will any longer, but to make our will and God's will one and the same. St. Paul says, *"do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"* (Romans 12:2). As we grow and our mind is renewed we begin to desire the same things God desires. He wants to conform us to His likeness if we let Him. In doing so, He changes our minds from focusing on the things of the world to focusing on the things of God.

To have perfect peace in all situations we must place our focus completely on Him as it is written; *"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You"* (Isaiah 26:3).

St. Peter saw Jesus walking on the water and said, *“Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.”* Peter had great faith that he could do what no other human being has ever done...walk on water. He saw for himself the power of God as Jesus walked on the water. However, when Peter began to look at the wind and the waves around him, he realized that no human can walk on water. He doubted and began to sink. When we focus on God, we too can walk on water. We can do things that we never dreamed possible, but when we doubt and begin to focus on our problems we sink into despair, worry, and even panic. God is a problem solver, He allows problems in our lives to teach us His ways, and He also provides solutions to our problems once we have learned what He wants us to learn.

St. Paul also understood the power of trials and difficulties in life saying, *“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong”* (2 Corinthians 12:10). God strengthened Paul and gave him peace throughout his life that was full of persecutions and ultimately death in the name of Jesus Christ. St. Paul who endured so much punishment for the sake of Christ said *“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”* (Philippians 4:11-13).

If he enjoyed peace even as he wrote letters to all the churches from prison, what excuse do we have? God is the source of our peace. We cannot pursue it apart from Him. The world desires peace too, but they do not look to God for it. They look to philosophy, Yoga, entertainment, and other remedies to fill the gap in their lives that only God can fill. As a result, they have no assurance, hope, or peace. We must learn to be content as Paul did, not just for our own sake but so that we can spread the message of the Gospel to the world. Not just through our words, but also through our actions. If others see that we are peaceful despite hardships, then they will want the same thing for themselves and as a result start becoming more interested in learning about God.

V. Realizing That Nothing “Bad” Happens to Christians

The dictionary defines the word “bad” as “not achieving an adequate standard; poor.” Do we believe that God is inadequate? Does He not make the grade? Is His love for us below standard? Certainly not! So then how, when faced with a difficult problem in our lives, can we say that this circumstance is “bad”? Painful things certainly do happen to Christians as well as to the rest of the world, but bad things only happen to non-believers. The only bad thing that can happen to a believer is to be separated from God. This is usually through sin or rebellious attitude against God. Similar to what happen with Adam and Eve when they fall to sin and broke the commandment of God.

If we truly believe Romans 8:28, then we know that ALL things God does are for our good. Not just the happy things that put smiles on our faces, but all things. This includes death, suffering, and persecution. “All things” means everything under the sun that can possibly happen to us past, present, and future is for our own good! He even transforms the negative consequences of other peoples’ sins into our own good. This is the truth that sets us free. It sets us free from worry about the future and regret about the past. Everything God does for us He does out of love.

We are like small children, not understanding what is going on around us. And God is our loving Father who does what is best for us no matter how it makes us feel. For instance, a small child can see a lit candle and want to grab hold of it. The flame looks nice playing in the wind, so the child reaches for it. The boy’s parents, however, know that the candle can burn the child so they take the candle away before he can reach it and the child begins to cry. Did the parents do a bad thing or a good thing? Of course we would all agree that the parents love their son, want the best for him, and did the right thing by taking the candle away. So if we then, as adults, can understand such a simple example, why do we cry when God takes away the candle we are trying to reach for?

We too often reach for candles without knowing it. We see something that seems very pleasant and nice so we try to take hold of it, but God does not want us to have it. Instead, He takes it away and we cry and wonder how He could do such a thing. Remember, what the young child thought. He too thought he was reaching for something good and he didn't understand that he was going to get hurt. We also do not understand. We don't have vision to see into our futures and know what is good for us and what is bad, but we don't need to! We've got God doing that for us already, all we have to do is trust Him and He'll take care of our whole lives as it is written, "*For You are my hope, O Lord God; You are my trust from my youth. By You I have been upheld from birth; You are He who took me out of my mother's womb. My praise shall be continually of You*" (Psalm 71:5-6). Also "*The Lord shall preserve you from all evil. He shall preserve your soul. The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore*" (Psalm 121:7-8). This is why we are to have peace.

The world also reaches for many candles, and God just lets them. So instead of being angry or disappointed with God for not giving us what we want, we should praise His name and thank Him for His unbreakable promise that all things that happen to us are for our good.

VI. How to Attain Peace?

Just like all things in our lives, we cannot succeed without God's help. We need His help to have peace "*Lord, You will establish peace for us, for You have also done all our works in us*" (Isaiah 26:12). Peace is not something we create for ourselves. If we rely on ourselves, it is very easy to look at the problems around us, get discouraged and fall into despair. So how do we attain peace? St. Paul answers the question saying, "*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:6-7).

So here we are told that we should not be anxious, but instead with thanksgiving ask God for help, and then His incomprehensible peace will dwell in us. So who here is making the bigger effort, God or us? God says that we are not to worry or be anxious, but to simply trust Him and bring our requests to Him. If we feel anxious about a situation, we are to simply ask for His help and have faith that He will indeed help us. In turn, He will give us peace despite the uncertainty we face. This is true regardless of the magnitude of our problems. To God all our problems, no matter how gigantic they seem to us, are minute compared to His power and glory. He not only has the absolute power to solve our deepest problems, but also promises to give us peace our entire life.

So our part is to ask His help and to "be anxious for nothing." Asking is easy...we ask God for things everyday. But in addition to asking for help, He tells us to not be anxious or worried. The only way we can do this is if we have faith and believe what He tells us. The strongest prayer is one that we know will be answered. We must know as we say the words, "Lord help me with this" that he will certainly help us. God's will is perfect, so we cannot ask for specifics and then hope God fulfills them. We do not know what is best for us; only He knows that. So instead, we should ask Him to increase our faith, to help us to trust Him, to allow us to be patient while He works in our lives, and to help us accept what He has done and will do for us because we know that no other love in the Universe can compare to the love He has for us.

He tells us to pray with thanksgiving. When we praise God for what He has given us, it takes our mind off of what it is we are seeking and focuses our attention on all the good things we already have. God wants us to see that He as already provided so much for us; He will continue to provide if we are patient and trust in Him.

Also, it is very important that at all times, whether happy or sad, we maintain a very close personal relationship with God. It is easy when things are going our way to pray a little less, read the Bible a little less, and go to church a little less all because we begin to feel satisfied with our lives. But at any moment, our lives can change and we can find ourselves needing

God more than ever. At that time, we will need the closeness to God that we were neglecting before and it will be that much harder to have peace.

If, on the other hand, we seek out a personal relationship with God and make Him our highest priority everyday, regardless of our circumstances, then when problems come, we will be ready to face them through His strength. He wants to carry our burdens if we let Him.

St. Paul says, *“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy-- meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:8-9)*. If we focus on these good virtues, meditate on the things of God and place Him first in our lives, then His peace will live inside each of us and will protect us from the despair we face when we wallow in our own problems and feel that God is so far away. Instead we will feel God so close to us, even through pain and hardship.

Again, the only way to have peace is to have a right relationship with God. Peace will come naturally as a result, *“Let him turn away from evil and do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it” (1 Peter 3:11)*. We pursue peace by pursuing God, and when we find Him, He will give us not only peace, but also love, kindness, faith, hope, generosity, strength, comfort, discipline, humility, authority, and purpose. He is the source of all good things.

VII. Peace with Others

The natural result of true inner peace in any believer is to attain peace with others including friends and enemies. It is basically a reflection of the inner peace that a believer is experiencing. Christianity has spread through peaceful preachers who were able to convert nations to Christianity just by the word the Lord gave to them to testify.

Conclusion/Questions:

God desires that each one of us experience his perfect peace in our lives everyday. But we so often neglect Him and go our own way. We try to endure suffering alone, succeed on our own, and make decisions on our own...we so often fall into the pattern of the world. We often neglect the greatest resource we have, and that is God Himself. We struggle to love our enemies, struggle to suppress feelings of hatred or anger, even struggle to seek God's will and pursue it. But our God, the God of infinite love and kindness, the God that created us from the dust of the earth understands all our worries and sorrows and He wants so much to help us. To each of us He offers, with outstretched hand, everything we need. Love, hope, faith, peace...all the things we spend our lives trying to attain, He wants us to have from the time we are still children. The reason we so often do not have peace or love or faith is not because He does not offer us an infinite supply of each, but because we refuse to accept His offer. He sees us struggling and says, “Here...take my peace.” But we say, “No, I'd rather do it on my own.” He says, “Experience the love that only I can show you.” And we say, “No thanks, I already know how to love and be loved.”

And then when faced with tough times, we come to Him crying and saying, “My Lord, My Lord why have you forsaken me?” He has not forsaken us; it is we who have forsaken Him. Turned our backs on Him, neglected Him, He who gave us our very lives and our only hope for eternal life. But despite all we humans have done to Him, He still loves us. He still loves us even though we killed His Son. In fact, He turned His death into life for us so that we may live and be freed from sin's grasp.

God so much desires a relationship with us, and if only we take one step toward Him, He will take one thousand steps toward us. Just as when the father of the lost son saw him a long way off, and ran out to meet him with open arms, so too does God desire that we turn from our ways and return to Him. And He will not rebuke us, but accept us as His children and rain down upon us all the blessings of His glorious kingdom. A relationship with God is not only the beginning of peace, but also of wisdom, knowledge, faith, and love *“But as it is written:*

Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).