



Peace – 2023 Advent Devotional

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All together... deep breath... inhale... now exhale. Feel better? Maybe you are by yourself, with your family, or with your friends. Turn on some relaxing holiday music and sit near your Advent candles.

Light your second PURPLE advent candle, the candle of PEACE.

As you sit and breath, reflect on why you're taking some time away from your busy schedule to refocus your mind.

How would you define peace? What robs you of your peace? What robs the world of peace?

PRAY

Lord,

Thank you for the opportunity to spend time with You. Help us block out the distractions we have created around the holiday season, and allow us to focus our minds and hearts on the truths of your word. In this time, grant us hearts of gratitude for the many blessings that you have given us. Refresh our spirits as we read of your promises and gifts. Empower us through your Spirit as we celebrate your arrival and await your return. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Read God's Word

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of

King David. ²⁸ Gabriel appeared to her and said, “Greetings,^[a] favored woman! The Lord is with you!^[b]”

²⁹ Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. ³⁰ “Don’t be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favor with God! ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ And he will reign over Israel^[c] forever; his Kingdom will never end!”

³⁴ Mary asked the angel, “But how can this happen? I am a virgin.”

³⁵ The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ What’s more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. ³⁷ For the word of God will never fail.^[d]”

³⁸ Mary responded, “I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.” And then the angel left her.

Luke 1:26-38 (NLT)

Something to Consider.

It’s tough to cannot turn on a news broadcast and not be bombarded with the chaos that our world is in. It is nearly impossible to go a day without hearing about the war between Israel and Hamas, the war between Russia and Ukraine, rising prices from inflation, growing tensions between the US and China, the border crisis, and the latest tragedies that happen in the streets of our own country; not to mention, next year being an election year...

Like every year, we are surrounded by loads and loads of terrible news and chaos, and when we look back and reminisce this year, I doubt the word **PEACE** will be used to describe the year we’ve experienced. We may have convinced ourselves that **PEACE** cannot exist unless there is an absence of chaos. That is, unless we rewrite our understanding of **PEACE**.

In the passage we just read, Mary, a teenage girl who was engaged to be married to Joseph, was confronted by the Angel, Gabriel, and told that she would be impregnated miraculously with the Messiah. She will give birth, and he would be the savior to all the world.

We can make a fair assumption that Mary, like most of us, had plans for her future. It is also fair to assume the plans for her future included living a peaceful life with the man she loved, raise a family, and live out a meaningful and purposeful life. Well, sometimes plans change, and there are not many things that can throw your plans into chaos quite like and unplanned pregnancy; specifically, a pregnancy that was not initiated with the person you had promised to spend the rest of your life with. For most of us, it is safe to say that if we were in Mary's shoes, we would protest adamantly God's decision to choose us, and we would encourage Him to pick someone else.

However, that is not what we see with Mary. Instead, we see an incredible demonstration of faith and **PEACE** from the young teenage girl who just received the positive pregnancy test.

³⁸ **Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.**

Luke 1:38

The **PEACE** that is gifted to us through Christ's arrival does not exist because of an absence of chaos in the world. The **PEACE** that is gifted to us through Christ is a **PEACE** that we experience amid the chaos around us. Mary's life had just been thrown off the rails, but through her faith and trust in God she had **PEACE** in knowing that God's plan was better than hers.

The **PEACE that is gifted to us by God is not defined by the circumstances around us, but by the **HOPE** within us.**

Through God's **LOVE**, Jesus paid for our sin by sacrificing his life on a cross. This sacrifice provided mankind the **HOPE** of Salvation. This salvation is a gift that we may accept. We can accept God's gift by believing in Jesus, repenting from our sin, and following Jesus as Lord. It is through faith in Jesus that we find the **JOY** of our salvation and **PEACE** with God.

We never have been a peaceful world and never will be defined as a peaceful world. However, as followers of Jesus, we can find **PEACE**, knowing that one day, we will be with Him in Glory. We can find **PEACE** in our temporary state of chaos. We can find **PEACE** with decisions we make in prayerful consideration. We can find **PEACE** in our darkest days as well as our greatest victories.

Tonight, as we take time to slow down, we celebrate the gift of **PEACE** we receive from God through the birth, the death, the resurrection, and the promised return of His son Jesus Christ.

What are some things in your life that are robbing you of **PEACE**? Share some of these things with the loved ones around you or with someone you trust. Then listen to the words Paul writes to the Philippians from his prison cell.

⁵ Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:5-7 (NLT)

PRAY

Lord,

Thank you for your many promises. Thank you for the **PEACE** that we can find in you regardless of our circumstances. Thank you for the **HOPE** that provides us this **PEACE** which exceeds anything we can understand. We ask that, during this time of waiting and anticipation for your return, you might grant us strength and perseverance that is only possible through your Holy Spirit. Fill us with this gift of **PEACE**, and grant us opportunities to share it with those who have not yet heard about it.

⁹ "Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,

¹² and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Matthew 6:9-13