

Are you happy with your life? Is your life exactly the way you would like it to be, right now? If there was one thing you could change about your life, what would it be? If only, some people say. If only I had a different job, or more money - then I would be happy with my life. Then I would be at peace. If only I had a spouse and children - or a better spouse and children - then I would be happy with my life. If only - have you ever had these thoughts before? If only I had better health. If only things I had better friends. If only things were different in my life, then I would finally be happy. Then I would be at peace.

I bring this up because especially this time of the year, as we head into the Christmas season, you hear a lot about being happy. You hear about peace and contentment and joy. The Christmas music tells you that it is the most wonderful time of the year, the hap, happiest time when, at least for a little while - you will feel a sense of peace. Do you think that's how the Christmas season will be for you? A lot of people are looking for this feeling of contentment and joy and satisfaction, this feeling that everything is finally right - you can sum it up with one word - the word peace. Will I finally find it this Christmas season? Or, after it's all over and it's time to put everything away, will I be left with that empty feeling that I missed something, that the season didn't live up to what I was hoping for? In Micah 5, there is a little phrase that helps us, as we look for peace. Did you hear it? After the prophecy about the Messiah being born in Bethlehem, after the description of the Messiah as a shepherd whose greatness would reach to the ends of the earth – there is a little phrase that is so easy to skip over, but there it is - did you hear it: “And he (Jesus) will be their peace.”

Jesus will be their peace. For the believers back in the days of Micah. And for the believers today, in the 21st century - Jesus is our peace. Today we will talk about what that means, and how Jesus brings real and lasting peace into our lives, even as we live in a world that seems to be the opposite of peace.

A study was once done – during all the years of recorded history, how much peace has there been? A former president of the Norwegian Academy of Sciences and historians from England, Egypt, Germany, and India have come up with some startling information: Since 3600 B.C. the world has known only 292 years of peace! During this period there have been 14,351 wars, large and small, in which 3.64 billion people have been killed. The value of the property destroyed would pay for a golden belt around the world 97.2 miles wide and 33 feet thick. Since 650 B.C. there have also been 1656 arms races, only 16 of which have not ended in war. The remainder ended in the economic collapse of the countries involved.

Back in the days of Micah the prophet, there was a lack of peace. The verse right before our text talks about how the people of Israel were under siege. The massive nation of Assyria was in the process of destroying the country and taking all of the people away into captivity. There was no peace, politically. God was allowing this to take place as a judgment of Israel - they were going down the drain morally, and a lot of social injustice was taking place. The court system was stacked against the little guy. The kings were getting richer. The regular people were getting poorer. A lot of people were in a great deal of need. All of these things were symptoms of

the bigger problem that was developing among God's people - they were sick spiritually - they had gotten involved in all kinds of idol worship, and were in the process of leaving the true God. This was causing their visible sins. And this was bringing the judgment of God.

People were searching for answers - looking for stability. Looking for peace. And in that situation, the prophet Micah came onto the scene with a message from God. Yes, difficult times were ahead, politically, socially, financially. But there was hope - a ruler was coming, someone who would shepherd the people, someone who would offer the people real and lasting security, eternal spiritual security, and "he will be their peace," Micah says.

How different is our world from the world that existed during the prophet Micah? They had a lot to be concerned about. And so do we. People were looking for answers, for peace and security back in those days, and so are we today. Why is it, that especially during the Christmas season, there is such a loud and emotional cry for peace in our world? One reason is because God has placed inside of every person a desire for peace, a desire for contentment and satisfaction and joy and happiness. We all have that - to be at peace with yourself, to be at peace with others, and ultimately to be at peace with God. Some people have described this as the "God-shaped hole" that exists in every human heart. Tragically, most people try to fill that void, especially this time of the year, with all the wrong things. And sometimes we can be guilty of that as well.

If only I had more money, then I would be at peace. Money is certainly a blessing from God. God never condemns money. He condemns the love of money – greed. Some people are able to acquire an incredible amount of money in their lives. But there's still something missing – they don't feel at peace. If only I had a spouse or a family. To find a spouse, to have a family – those are wonderful blessings from God. And yet, there are many married people out there with children who are still not content with life. There's still something missing. They don't feel at peace.

Maybe if I had more power in my life. Or if I was famous. And yet, some of the most powerful people in the world, and some of the most famous people in the world, still don't feel content. There's still something missing for them.

What did God want the people to do during the days of Micah? How would they find peace? First of all, God wanted them to confess their sins - to look deep within themselves and see all the selfishness, all the worldliness, all the materialism. God wanted them to look within themselves and see that emptiness that comes from leaving the true God and worshiping the things of the world. And after seeing those sins, God wanted them to turn to him for forgiveness. To focus on the Messiah. He will be our peace, the Bible says. He is the only thing that can fill that God-shaped hole that exists inside every human being.

Look at how the Bible describes him... Verse 2 talks about how Peace would be born in Bethlehem. You would think that a famous person who would bring the world such a blessing, would come from a New York, Los Angeles, Miami, or Atlanta. But Bethlehem? Bethlehem was an equivalent to Wildwood, FL. But don't let those humble roots fool you. It was predicted in prophecy. And Prophecy has been fulfilled. And how old is this true peace bringer? His

“origins are from of old, from ancient times.” Jesus was alive long before he was born to the Virgin Mary. As the Son of God, he was involved with the creation of the world. Peace has existed from eternity, because Jesus is our peace.

A great description of Jesus is found here - he is someone who shepherds his flock in the strength of the Lord... and they will live securely. For those believers in the day of Micah, looking for security - and they were looking in all the wrong places. Look to the Messiah, Micah was telling them. They wouldn't find financial security, or political security or social security or health security. But they would find spiritual security, and that is the best thing anyone could find

And the same thing is true for us today. If you want to have peace with God, you will never find it anywhere, in anything you try. Money, power, relationships, health, love - all these are blessings from God. But none of them bring you that real and lasting sense of peace. You can only find it in Jesus Christ. And so first, I need to repent of my sins. I need to repent of all the times I've looked for security and happiness and contentment in all the wrong places. I must repent of all the times I thought that being selfish would bring me peace, being worldly would bring me contentment. I stand before God and confess my sins. And then I look to Jesus, because he is my peace. And he does that by taking all of our sins upon himself, and he gives us his righteousness. He takes away any guilt, any regret, any sin that you wish you could take back - all of that is taken away by Jesus, and it all disappears, by his sacrifice on the cross.

How is it possible for the man with stage 4 cancer who probably won't even make it to Christmas as he lies in bed - how can he be at peace as he is about to meet his maker? Because he knows that his sins are forgiven. How is it possible for the man who has wrecked his own life and the lives of others with his sins of greed and lust - how can he ever find peace? Because he is looking to Jesus, and if Jesus forgives him, then he can forgive himself.

How is it possible for you to have joy and contentment and satisfaction - even if your health is bad, or your finances are bad, or your personal life is bad - because Jesus is your peace. You know that he loves you - you have seen it at the cross, and you know that he is working out all things for your ultimate good. This is the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, which guards our hearts and minds, through faith in Christ Jesus.”

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding. Even when the rest of the world is not peaceful, a Christian is. There is such a thing as peace on earth. It comes from the Prince of Peace. It is a gift that cannot be wrapped, cannot be bought. And it is yours. his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace. Amen.