

PEACE; BE STILL

Week #3 of a 7-Week Series, "7 Prayers That Will Change Your Life"

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So you ready for tonight?

So what's your commitment to peace? Like, do you think you're kind of highly committed to living peace? Or peace in your life? Peace in the world? Do you think it's kind of a, "*Well, if it happens, great; if not, oh well.*" Right? Like, where are you with peace and your commitment to peace?

Because one of the things that I've noticed in my own life is that I've been on a journey with peace. And sometimes that journey was a little rocky. I graduated from college in 1980, and I think -- for me, anyway -- the whole decade of the '80s felt so optimistic. Not only that I could have inner peace, but we could have global peace. World peace! You know, November of '89, the wall came down -- the Berlin Wall came down; a barrier that had been up for more than 30 years.

And so, for me, the '80s felt so optimistic. And then within a year -- August 2, 1990 -- we went into the first Iraq War. And then the early 2000s, we went into the next Iraq War. And it seems like -- for me, anyway -- we've been in and out of war for the last umpteen years.

And -- for me, anyway -- it's hard not to be disillusioned. You know, every Sunday we sing "*Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.*" And I think most of us -- if we told ourselves the truth -- would prefer to live in a world of peace. That's what we're shooting for; that's what we want; that's what we're looking forward to.

So as I looked at my own commitment to peace, I realized that -- in the last 40 years -- my commitment to peace hasn't always been consistent. There's times when I felt very optimistic, like we were so close, and it was going to be right there, and everything was going to happen. And then there's been times when it's been like, "*When are we ever going to get this right?*"

And so I'm assuming that wherever you are -- maybe in the last 40 years if you're anyway nearly as old as I am -- that there's been a journey, a process, a disappointment, an expectation. A journey of peace. And what I realized as I was really preparing for this talk is that my expectation -- and my work for peace right now -- really focuses on the individual. That, in our country -- in our world -- we have people that are extremely anxious, fearful, upset. And I may not be able to impact world peace, but I can help one person not to be as fearful; not to be as anxious; and to really know peace.

Because if it's true we can't create world peace if we're a society that's freaked out ... And that's a spiritual term that I think Moses used in the Old Testament. [Congregation laughs] Where, when he was getting after the ... about something he said ... he said, "*Thou shall not freak out.*" [Congregation laughs] Maybe it was just my paraphrase, but that's kind of the way I remembered it.

And it's like, we can't get to world peace if we don't have peace within ourselves; if we don't have peace within our own hearts; if we don't have peace within our own life. And it seems to me -- over the last 10 year, 20 years, 30 years -- that there's been stuff happening. How many of you can see maybe, over the last 10 years, that your inner peace has gone through a bit of a process? Like, some of us have felt like, "*Well, this isn't ... we're going the wrong direction fast!*"

And so I want to talk tonight about this statement. "*Peace; be still.*" You know, I've been trying to keep each one of these prayers pretty short. And this week we're going to focus just on three words.

Will you say it with me? [With congregation]: "*Peace; be still.*"

One more time: [with congregation] "*Peace; be still.*"

Because I truly believe that we have to cultivate it within ourselves. That we can't have a world where millions of people are anxious and that not show up in the global state of affairs. So how do we get to peace?

And I remember a long time ago, there used to be a bumper sticker that says, *"Know God; know peace."* And it was K-N-O-W God and K-N-O-W peace. Know God. Know peace. And then the next line was N-O God -- *"No God; no peace."* And it's this idea that God has to be a part of our journey to peace. That it actually has to be a spiritual process.

And I think for many of us, and the thing that I truly believe, that the more we do our spiritual work -- the more we feel connected to God ... That one of the most beautiful experiences of my own spiritual life is inner peace. That the more that I truly experience God in my life, the more quiet and deep and calm and peaceful I become. And some of you have known me for a long time; some of you know me as a pretty hard-driving, get-it-done kind of guy! And if I can get to peace, literally anybody can get to peace! [Congregation laughs] Right? I mean, that's just true! Right? That peace is a possibility for all of us!

So in Mark 4, we read this:

"On that day when evening had come, he said to them, 'Let's go across to the other side.' And leaving the crowd, he took them in the boat, and it was just them. And other boats were with them. And a great storm arose, and the waves beat on the boat so that the boat was filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on a cushion. And he awoke him and said, 'Teacher, do you not care if we perish?'"

You know, when I was little and I read that Scripture, I just kind of thought they were kind of wimpy. [Congregation laughs] You know, I just kind of said, *"Come on, you guys; the man's asleep. Cut him some slack! Let him be! He's just spent all day healing and doing all of his Messiah stuff. Just cut him some slack! Like, you know, it's a little bit of wind; it's a little bit of rain. Get over it!"*

And as I matured, I realized that each one of those disciples had spent a great deal of time on the water. These were fishermen; many of them were fishermen. These were people who knew what it looked like to be in a storm, and they knew what it looked like when the storm was going to take them out. And I had a great deal of compassion for them, because they knew what it looked like to drown, because the storm in the desert would come up ... If you've ever been sailing on Lake Pleasant, if a storm comes up, you do not want to be on the water! Right? You just don't want to be there; it's awful.

And I realized that these guys literally knew they were going to die. They knew it! They weren't debating it; they knew it! So when they woke him up -- when they woke up Jesus and said, *"Teacher, do you not care if we perish?"* ... [Continues reading Scripture]

"And he woke up, and he rebuked the wind and the sea, and he said, 'Peace! Be still!' And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. And he said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?' And they were filled with awe and said to one another, 'Who is this, then, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'"

See, there's a part of us -- when we read this Scripture -- where we want to go out in our life and our world and just start shouting to everyone, *"Peace! Be still!"* You know, we want to go in the traffic -- when it's bumper-to-bumper traffic -- we want to say, *"Peace! Be still!"* And really what we mean is, *"Everybody get the heck off the highway so I can get to where I want to go!"* [Congregation laughs] And you know, or we're in the grocery store and the lines are 10-deep, and we just want to say, *"Peace! Be still!"* And we want all of those people to get their act together so that we can be at peace. Right? Because we know if they would just get it right ... If our kids and our in-laws and everyone around us ... Our boss ... If everyone around us would just get it right, then our natural condition would be peace.

Because we know how to do peace; we just have to get everything right, and then peace is a natural consequence when you get everything right. And that's what our ego tells us over and over again: "*As soon as I get everything right, then I will be at peace.*"

And what Spirit says is, "*As soon as you get to peace, it's amazing how right everything becomes.*"

And I'd like to suggest tonight that we actually -- [laughs] I'm going to get emails! -- that we actually need the upset right now as we are spiritually maturing. That the world feels a little more out of control because, as spiritual beings, we are awakening. And the world being a little busy right now really calls us into a higher level of peace.

Over and over again, what I want you to see today is that it's not until we learn to master our mind that we ever get to peace. And we're trying to master everything else so that we can be at peace. Yet our path to peace is when we learn to quiet our mind so that, no matter what's going on around us, we are still. We're still!

You know, when Unity was founded about 140 years ago, I believe the dominant consciousness -- the dominant thought -- was negative. You know, in the world the dominant thought was negative ... not too far off of where we are today. Like, the dominant thought was negative! And when Unity came into the world and invited people into a positive outlook on life, it was a radical thought! That you could actually have a positive outlook on life? They thought it was Pollyannaish, or they thought it was a little simplistic. "*Who are all those little happy people, and what's wrong with them?*" Right?

And it was a huge shift; it is a huge shift in consciousness to go from negative thinking to positive thinking. Right? And so, for the last 140 years, Unity's been talking about positive thinking. Look from the brighter side of life!

And there was an article -- and I forgot where it was in -- but it talked about how the leading scientists in our world today, how much their positive outlook is impacting science. Because when you're a scientist, especially if you're a researcher and it takes you years and years and years to either prove or disprove your theory, if you don't have a positive outlook, you will not put in the work to do the research necessary to look at the world in a new way. And this whole article was about the importance of high-level scientists having this engrained positivity in what they're doing. That they believe it's going to work. And I was so moved by that, right?

So there's an advantage that, when you move from negative thinking -- when you believe that the sky is falling and nothing's going to work. As you move from negative thinking to positive thinking, it's a benefit. It's good! Right? But it's not the whole story!

Like, if we keep doing our work, staying positive is lovely. But it's not the whole story. The third step in this process is when you move from negative thinking to positive thinking to a quiet mind. When you learn to manage your own mind and the busy-ness of your mind so that your thoughts are no longer ruling you. And it creates the next level of a significant shift.

As much -- or maybe even more -- from going from negative thinking to positive thinking is when your mind actually is quiet and you can feel the presence of God.

Because with a busy mind, you can only connect so much with God. But when your mind is quiet, the door to the Infinite opens. And that's why we do prayer and meditation. That's why we do those activities! When we learn to quiet our mind so that we can have profound experiences with God. And that's what peace is!

Peace isn't just being positive. Right? Peace is when you actually learn to shut your mind down and step into the next highest dimension, where God is fully present in you, as you, through you. That's the work!

So this week, just like we took on *"Thy will be done"* and *"Let there be light,"* for the next seven days your affirmation is, together: [with congregation] *"Peace; be still."*

Now the human part of you is going to make sure that everyone around you ... *"Peace, damn it; peace, damn it; peace, damn it!"* Right? [Congregation laughs] Just email Richard; he's on vacation. He won't get it for weeks that I swore in church. Just email him; it'll be fine. Right?

But our ego just wants everybody else to get it; but that's not the process! The process is I have to get it. I have to master my own mind. I have to master my own thoughts. I have to be able to stop the chatter of my own brain so that I can spend enough time and energy in the deep well of God.

So for the next seven days, your only job is, *"Peace; be still."*

Now, does that mean in the next seven days, everything in your life is going to be absolutely perfect? Like, your kids; your grandkids; your spouse; the economy; every day is going to be 92 degrees? Like, do you think it's going to work that way? I hope it doesn't! I hope that there's enough things going on in your life that your mind wants to step in. Your ego wants to step in and solve every problem; figure out every challenge; overcome every hurdle so that you get to practice; yes! Because you have such an incredible mind, do you have free will? Yes! And you can take the ride -- the ups and downs -- of your mind all you want to.

But I want you to feel the power when you learn to hit the "off" button, and your mind is just quiet. And there's God. The Spirit of God guiding you and directing you and healing you and blessing you and providing everything that you need.

Yes; you have a God-given right to move at 90 miles an hour. To be busy and figure it out and solve every problem so that everybody knows how right you are and how smart you are, how cute you are. Or you can just stop! And let that deep peace of God begin to well up within your soul that gives you the strength to go through every hurdle. To go through every obstacle. To go through every challenge.

So the path that I'm offering you tonight isn't a mental ride anymore. It's not about you getting smarter; it's not about you figuring it out. It's not about you having all the answers or have read all the right books, or becoming that spiritual person. It's about you becoming deeply quiet on the inside, and deeply knowing God in you.

This is the way Jesus said it in John 16:33:

"These things I have spoken to you, that in me you might have peace."

I love that! These things I have said to you; these things I've taught you; these things we've lived together! [Continues reading]

"That in me you might have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world."

And the world stuff happens; it's always going to happen. It's not broken; this is the way it works! There's always going to be ups and downs. There's a ride. If you come into life, you take the ride. You can't get out of the ride. It's never going to be any different than it is. It's a ride; it's always been a ride!

Will we ever get to world peace? [Shrugs shoulders] It's a ride.

But in the midst of every ride, there are those souls that find profound peace. And their peace is so contagious that the people around them tend to calm down. The people around them begin to take a deep breath and rest. It is our greatest blessing.

Inc. Magazine ... Now, if you know *Inc. Magazine*, it's not a magazine -- it's not a periodical -- that I usually bring a lot of spiritual insights from. It's a magazine I enjoy, but it's not always something. So

they did an article recently called, "Mental Strength and Inner Peace Go Hand in Hand." That mentally strong people are confident they can handle whatever life throws at them. It's not to say that they don't feel pain or they don't get sad. They experience their emotions on a deep level. But they don't waste their time on things that they can't difference in, or trying to change other people. They stay focused on managing their own thoughts, feelings and behaviors. So they make self-improvement a priority, because they know that's the only place where there's room for improvement.

So I come back to my first question. Because it really does matter what your commitment to peace is. Like, there's ... We get to be Chicken Little. Remember Chicken Little running around saying, "*The sky is falling! The sky is falling!*"? We get to be Chicken Little, right? We have free will. We can play this any way we want.

But if your commitment is really to peace, then the only way to it ... Because I've tried to manipulate everybody around me. Have you all tried that? [Congregation laughs] Do you all have a family that does whatever it is that they do? And friends and workplaces that just does whatever they do? I've tried to manipulate the heck out of everybody to get to peace! It just doesn't work. Right? The only way through this -- the only way that we move through this -- is when you learn to stop the mental chatter and take mastery over your thoughts and allow your mind to be still. So no matter what's going on around you, you can feel God.

So five things that I believe we need to let go of to experience inner peace. You ready?

First one: I believe the first thing we need to let go is the need to be right. That is the hallmark of our ego: the need to be right. And we all know [laughs] on the inside how right we are. Right? [Congregation laughs] And we love to be affirmed by others when they tell us how right we are, but it's not worth it. It's not worth it! So are you willing to give up your need to be right?

Two: Needing other people to change who don't want to change. [Congregation laughs] Does everybody have at least one person in their life [laughs] who you would love to change; you've been trying to change; you want to change? And they just refuse to give up their free will? [Congregation laughs]

Three: [Laughs] Needing to know what's going to happen next. The only way life seems to work is it's just one surprise after another. You don't get to know! You paid your quarter; you took on a body; and now you've got to live it! There's no hints. There's no peeks behind the curtain. You don't get to know what's going to happen next. You have to just live it every day.

Four: Needing to focus on tomorrow. We have to give up the need to focus on tomorrow. Just stay right here; stay in the moment.

And the fifth thing that we have to give up is this idea that thoughts are things. They're not! Thoughts aren't things! Thoughts are just mental constructs that we create that actually buffer us from reality. And the more we let go of the idea that thoughts are things, the more we actually start living life. Thoughts are just mental activity; they create mental constructs. But they're not really real. They're just thought things that we put that just make moments harder. So over and over again, thoughts aren't things. They never were; never have been; never will be. They're just mental busy-ness. Mental crochet. Right? You don't actually need them.

Now, if you need to solve a problem, turn your brain on and solve the problem. But I'm going to suggest tonight that you can actually have a much, much, much quieter mind, and that most things will solve themselves. Because God's in charge!

And three things that you need to be in peace. You ready? Three things. They're to stay in the moment. We have to trust God. And we have to do one thing at a time.

Can I say that again? We have to stay in the moment. That means right now this moment is the only moment you get. You don't know if there's going to be any other moment; you just get right now. You have to trust God with it completely. Totally, completely trust God with it. And just do one thing at a time.

And for some of us, that seems so boring! Really, I'm a multi-tasker! [Snaps fingers repeatedly and quickly] TV, computer, phone; I can get all three of them going at the same time. Right? And I can get myself so exhausted at doing 50 things at one time that I don't do anything really well.

Stay in the moment. Trust God. And do one thing at a time.

Will you pray with me?

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to this moment. And who would you be if you didn't have to think about life anymore? if you just woke up every day and lived it? If you just lived the moment? If you stayed right where you are? If you didn't over plan or over figure? Or if you didn't need to know? If you didn't have to figure it out? If you didn't have to solve your problems and everybody else's? If you could just have a quiet mind?

I want you to feel the peace of your soul. That the moment you quiet your mind, there is a peace so deep within you; it's God! And that, when you move into that peace -- when you completely move into the peace; when you move all the way into that peace -- you truly know that everything's going to be okay. You start trusting God; trusting life; trusting the moment. Because you're not constantly scaring yourself with your thoughts.

So take a deep breath. Peace; be still! Peace; be still. In the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

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