

ADVENT *Devotional*

A 27-Day Devotional Reflections
from Leaders Across the Asia-Pacific Region



CHURCH OF THE
NAZARENE
ASIA - PACIFIC



WEEK 2

PEACE

DAY 8

PEACE

by Dong Hwan “Bill” Kwon - Southeast Asia Field Strategy Coordinator

A few days ago, one of my District Superintendent texted me in the middle of the night. “Gun firing has been outbreaking here in Tahan, in front of my house, and at the back of my house. And it also breaks out in another three areas. Your urgent prayer is needed.”

Our Field Intercessory Prayer team began sharing this urgent prayer request and prayed for the protection of our pastors and our brothers and sisters. A few hours later, we received the good news that our prayer is answered and they are in peace.

Well, these are unusual situations. But our experiences for the past two years, were unusual circumstances especially due to Covid-19.

Many of our pastors and our brothers and sisters have been experiencing challenges in their lives. We are looking forward to another Advent season of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. John chapter 20:19-20 talks about a little similar situation. Jesus Christ’s disciples were kind of anxious and frustrated because the Jewish leaders were looking for them. And they do not know what to do in the middle of the night.

But at that night, Jesus Christ looked at the door and presented himself with the word: “Peace be with you.” In that moment, the disciples received the genuine peace of our Lord Jesus Christ in the middle of the night. Nothing was changed but the presence of the Lord with the word, “Peace be with you”.

I don’t know what else to share in this Advent season except the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, to bring the genuine peace for all of us. One of the other Myanmar pastors later texted us and shared his prayer. He says, “I do not know if we will ever be able to fathom why the good God would allow such things to happen to us. But my sincere prayer, is that God would let us see his good plans behind these tragedies. Dear friends, we’re now looking for a better life on this earth as God’s children. But I do like to ask your prayers that God would not allow this injustice to go on and that justice and peace will soon prevail in our country.”

In this Advent season, in this Covid-19 pandemic, and this military coup in the country, what we have to look for is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ that brings the genuine peace to our lives.

***On the evening of that first day of the week,
when the disciples were together,
with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders,
Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”
After he said this, he showed them his hands and side.
The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.***

John 20:19-20 NIV

DAY 9

PEACEMAKERS

by Eileen Ruger - Regional Women Clergy Coordinator

A person only needs to spend a few minutes on the internet to learn the opposite of “peace-loving.” Videos such as people losing their tempers on airplanes or grocery stores as well as ones that show violence that erupts with small provocations pop up on my video feed constantly. I suppose there are some who view these videos as entertainment. Sometimes I wonder where the peacemakers are in these situations.

Peacemaking requires wisdom from heaven. Wisdom from our world says that we should insert our rights and our family’s rights, not be passive but assert ourselves over others to maintain or gain our rightful place in society at the cost of conflict and divisiveness. The Apostle James reminds us to focus on the wisdom that comes from heaven. It is wise to love peace. Those that love peace seek to have the mind of Christ.

James further states that loving peace requires action: peacemaking. As vessels of the Holy Spirit, we carry in us the Spirit of God who not only brings peace into our own lives but also seeks to use us as peacemakers as well. Peacemaking that comes from heavenly wisdom transforms all those involved. James says that it produces righteousness. This peace dispels shame, guilt and fear.

As we celebrate the coming of our Savior this Advent season, let us ask for this wisdom from heaven and offer ourselves as peacemakers in our cities, communities, and families when strife and divisiveness begin to take root. May our Lord find us eager to be used as His peacemakers.

***But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure;
then peace-loving, considerate, submissive,
full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.
Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.***

James 3:17-18 NIV

DAY 10

GIFT OF PEACE

by Dan Balayo - Regional Holistic Child Coordinator

I was driving sometime and noticed a long queue of trucks, motorcycle along the side of the road. I tried to slow down and observed what is going on. I thought, there might be some accidents that cause the traffic. When I reached my turn to pass, i noticed a sign in the middle of the road a “checkpoint” sign.

It was the police, highway patrol and Land Transportation Office joint task force operation. It is checking for vehicles with no registration, or incomplete and questionable documents, and drivers without driver’s license. Right then, I realized why the lines of trucks, cars, and motorcycles wont pass through this checkpoint. They don’t have the documents that will justify why they have the right to use the highway. Their registration papers are not made right with the authorities. They have no “peace” to pass through the checkpoint.

Our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ gives us the assurance of completeness, and confidence to receive the beautiful benefit of His grace, God’s peace. When we placed our trust in Jesus Christ, we became a new creature, made right with God and stamped by the Holy Spirit as His.

As we celebrate this Advent season, may we be reminded of the beautiful gift we have received from Jesus - the peace with God. And this peace gives us complete joy and confidence in our journey with God.

***“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”***

Romans 5:1 NIV

DAY 11

THE PEACE FROM GOD

by Arnel Piliin - Philippines/Micronesia Field Strategy Coordinator

We hear much news on the radio, television, and social media sites about the conflicts worldwide that lead to wars, fears, and distress. Sometimes you even ask yourself, “Is there really peace?”

Since the beginning of the creation, we see that conflict is present in our realities. The story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:8 says, “And while they were in the field Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.”

This is just one of the stories that showed us that even the people in the Bible were not exempted from having conflicts. This resulted in “sin” that constantly blocks our way to God. Even today, we are not exempted from having conflicts in our families, workplaces, and churches. But today’s devotional scripture reminds us to “Make every effort to live in peace without holiness no one will see the Lord.” (Hebrews 12:14)

What is the answer to resolve these conflicts? It is to always make every effort to live in peace and be holy. If we set ourselves not to be disturbed by anything that takes away our peace, we learn to fix our eyes and thoughts to God. We learn to live and love like God. We give importance to living a holy life.

People who don’t know God yet will know Him because they see it in how we live like Him and love them. They will know Christ by our testimonies and how we live in peace amidst every situation, good or bad.

My prayer today is that may the love and peace of God manifest in us. And as we come together to celebrate with our families and friends, may we examine our love and relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. Let the peace of God direct our paths to a meaningful Advent Season.

***“Make every effort to live in peace.
Without holiness no one will see the Lord.***

Hebrews 12:14 NIV

DAY 12

PEACE IN FEARFUL TIMES

by Christine Trent Mosuela - Regional NMI Coordinator

On June 2021, I received a call as I was preparing for my Sunday School class. The caller was looking for my 15-year old daughter. I told him that I am the mother and he immediately said “Your daughter tested positive for Covid-19.” He then asked when she could be picked up and taken to the COVID-19 quarantine facility. It was a fearful announcement since my husband was already at the hospital at that time also due to COVID-19.

However, at that moment, the peace of God enveloped me as my caller explained to me what I need to do. I responded that I will call him back for details and went on to teach my Sunday School class as usual. I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit which made me calm in spite of the news I received.

The telephone call in some way represented the story in Luke 2:8-14, but only in reversed version. My caller was not bearing good news but in our text the angel bore the good news of the birth of the Messiah and encouraged them not to fear for He brings peace.

There may be moments in our lives that rob us of peace because of circumstances beyond our control. We tend to freeze and become fearful, but the Angel’s good news is still relevant and possible today and no matter what news we receive, let us keep our eyes focused on the Prince of Peace.

And as we celebrate Christmas, let us be reminded that Jesus Christ brings “peace on earth among those with whom He is pleased” in the midst of uncertainty and trials.

***Suddengly a great company of the heavenly host appreared with the agnel,
praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth
peach to those on whom his favor rests.***

Luke 2:13-14

DAY 13

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

by Mitchel Modine - Professor, Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary

I once heard a preacher praising his congregation for their efforts to feed the hungry in their city. He said there was still much work to do, however. An old woman seated a few rows ahead of me suddenly became angry. "If there are still hungry people here, then your congregation isn't doing enough," she said. I remember that the preacher remained calm but firm: he would not allow the size of the problem to lead them into despair.

I thought about this when I wondered about Jesus's promise that peacemakers will be called the children of God (Matthew 5:9). Scrolling through social media or the news reveals a world in turmoil: violence, murders, wars, coups, and pandemics seem to be without end. In the words one of the greatest Christmas hymns, "There is no peace on earth, I said / for hate is strong, and mocks the song / of peace on earth, good will to men!" Yet Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Immanuel, calls us not to despair. He calls us to be peacemakers and honors efforts in that direction. Though the task seems great, we should not be children of despair, but instead children of God.

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called Children of God.*

Matthew 5:9 NIV

DAY 14

THE ABSURDITY OF PEACE

by CM Field Strategy Coordinator

Imagine with me the extreme nature, even absurdity, of Jesus' statement. Having already walked many days to Jerusalem, and having already purchased the sacrificial offering, first century Jews would not just stop in the middle of this important and costly act of worship. (You can color in your mental picture with the chaos of unattended pigeons and goats running around in the Temple). In this way, Jesus intensifies the command to seek reconciliation in our personal relationships. God so highly values reconciled relationships that, without them, our sacrificial gift, our spiritual act of worship, will be unacceptable and unpleasing to God. Worship that seeks to draw closer to God is meaningless if we have not first healed the broken relationships with our brothers and sisters.

Even more extreme—that which forces us to uncomfortable places—is that the cause of broken relationship in this situation is me: my anger, my mean and untruthful words, my disdain toward others, even others in the Church. It is not because someone else hurt me that I need to seek reconciliation. Rather, it is because I caused someone else to be hurt. To humbly admit your sin before another person is neither easy nor comfortable.

Yet, the Gospel for us, the Good News this Advent season, is that reconciliation and peace are God's gifts of grace to us. Because He has already created it, we can pursue it. Living in the peace of God, even when we have hurt someone, we can take the first step, confess our wrongdoing, and work for reconciliation. A difficult and extreme task is made possible through the extravagant grace of God.

As you come before the Lord today, does anyone have something against you? Do you have a broken relationship with anyone? What is the Lord calling you to do in order to make peace and be reconciled with your brother or sister?

***Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember
that your brother and sister has something against you,
leave your gift there in front of the altar.
First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.***

Matthew 5:23-24