**First Things First**

**ABC’s of The Christian Life**

Jesus, Tranquility, and Troubled Times

Advent, Week Two: Fighting for the peace of God

2 Peter 3:8-15

**The Question:** God has promised peace, but where is it and how does it come?

“Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent

to be found by Him without spot or blemish, and at peace.”

 We usually think of peace as a rather passive thing, but to do so is dangerous. For in a fallen world, peace is often kept only by law enforcement and/or standing armies. Conflict is all around us, from family reunions to shopping outings to road rage incidents to racial tribalism. We read the many promises and descriptions of God’s peace, but it seems as elusive as it is mysterious.

**The Answer:** The peace of God turns the world inside out.

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace.

In the world you will have tribulation. *But take heart; I have overcome the world*.”

 Although synonyms for “peace” are few, the uses of the word are many. It is a very busy word, used as it is to describe both the outward treaties among nations as well as the inward serenity of heart and mind. We must bring our own expectations in line with what the Lord actually tells us about the nature of peace and how to find it.

 Why? Because, in the near term, the Gospel divides believers from unbelievers, creating conflict. Luke 12:49-53. Long term, peace on earth lies only on the other side of judgment (Conflict) and the establishment of God’s Kingdom. 2 Peter 3:8-15. So our peace is founded upon the two Advents of Jesus, the first to pay sin’s penalty and the second to eliminate sin’s very presence. Hebrews 9:27, 28. In the mean time we fight for peace by saying “No!” to peace-destroying sin. Romans 8:6

**And for now?** Five peace-cultivating realities while waiting for Christ’s return.

1. God’s Son; your Savior. Jesus is the Prince of Peace because He created the way to peace, first, between God and mankind, and second, within mankind’s relationships (ethnic groups, Jews/ Gentiles). Romans 5:1; Colossians 1:19, 20; Ephesians 2:14, 15. Little lamb, do you truly trust your Shepherd?

2. God’s peace; your heart. To have peace, we must believe that it is available and then choose it, or allow it to rule in our inner being. Believing does not make something true. But believing does “actualize” a given promise to you. Jesus, Prince of Peace, has made peace, and now promises peace. But none of that is realized in us until we believe. Colossians 3:12-15; Hebrews 4:2

3. God’s peace; your mind. To have peace, we must discipline our minds to pursue truth, not fantasy, vain objects, or evil pursuits. Philippians 4:8,9. It is your mind, and it is up to you to direct it towards the peaceful things of God.

4. God’s peace; your prayer. To have peace, we must pray, committing our days and moments to God in Christ. Our unrelenting anxiety is most likely choking off the path to peace because we have not prayed. Philippians 4:6,7. Prayer is not magic; it operates because we are in covenant fellowship with Jesus.

5. God’s peace; your conflict. Jesus’ promises of peace were made in the midst of His conflict with the world and our fallen nature (flesh) and apply to your conflict with the world (and your flesh). John 14:25-27; 16:32, 33; 1 Peter 4:12, 13; Romans 8:5-16. In other words, peace of mind, heart, and life must be purposefully pursued, and does not “just happen.”

***Our peace (serenity) has been promised by God and purchased by His Son, and now must be pursued in our relationships with others by our believing His word and by overcoming our sin by the power of His Spirit.***