

GALATIANS 2:22-23
(OT: Ps 3:1-6; NT: Mt 6:25-34)

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

- What kind of life have we been designed to live? That's what this series is about.
 - So far, we've said our lives can be characterized by **love** and **joy**:
 - We love bc he first loved us.
 - We delight in Jesus bc he first delighted in us.
 - This week we're going to talk about **peace**...
- So, let's read passage been focusing on and then pray. [**Read Gal 5:22-23. Pray.**]

INTRODUCTION

- Quick word to those flying solo/parenting while bride's at women's retreat: **Well done.**
 - Single biggest responsibility in your life is health/flourishing of your wife.
 - We have incredible mission: To love her as Christ loves church.
 - If you only get one thing right in this life → Make it your marriage.
 - If it's not been great...
 - Today is a great day to make a new start.
 - If you've been chasing children in her absence: **Well done again.**
 - Our world needs more fathers.
 - And we can do it → God has made us for it.
- But maybe this is good weekend for us to be talking about peace → Need some of that this morning?!!

Transition: I think we all do...

- We live in a world of anxiety.
 - All of us struggle with what I call "Little a anxiety."
 - The normal stresses/strains of life.
 - Relationships, jobs, deadlines, email...
 - Balance your budget, pay bills, run carpool...
 - Eat right, sleep right, get to the gym...
 - Get new HVAC filters and call your mum.
 - Modern life is busier than life is intended to be.
 - As a result, many of us also struggle with what I call "Capital A Anxiety."
 - A diagnosable condition in our mental health...
 - It can make it hard for us to get out of bed → Feel it physically in our bloodstream → Stops us doing some of the things we want to do in life.
- The statistics tell us that "Capital A Anxiety" is on the rise.¹
 - Here in the US, 33% of adults reported symptoms of anxiety last year.
 - That stat rises to 50% of those aged 18-24.
 - ~14% of adult women take medication for anxiety, as do ~7% of adult men.
- Let me be very clear in saying this:
 - If you're included in these percentages, feel no shame here in our church.

- As I've shared before, I've struggled with anxiety in my mental health journey:
 - Had a couple of seasons on medication to help deal with it.
 - Still see a counselor every week.
 - We praise the Lord for expertise/resources he's given to help us navigate life.
 - As a diabetic needs insulin and those with high cholesterol take a statin...
 - We thank God for his instruments of healing.
 - But it does make me wonder if our culture hasn't got things quite right...
 - Pace of life, disconnection in our communities, unbridled rise of social media/technology...
 - Many of us are reaping the whirlwind of worry/stress/anxiety.
 - Whatever anxiety you struggle with – Little a/Capital A – safe to say X understands.
 - He took on flesh → Sympathizes with us bc he experienced these things himself.
 - And amidst it all, he offers us peace.
- In a world of anxiety, part of God's design for your life is for you experience peace.***

Transition: We can't possibly cover all that that needs to be said about this important topic...

- But let's get into it by following the same outline we've been using in this series.
- **Definition** (What is peace?) → **Gospel** (How is Jesus the source of our peace?) → **Application** (How can we be at peace?).

DEFINITION: WHAT IS PEACE?

- Word used here in **Gal 5** is profound little word that is bursting with meaning.
 - Greek word εἰρήνη.
 - Where we get English word *irenic* (tranquil, calm, serene).
 - It's NT version of what OT calls *shalom* (whole or complete).
 - Takes us to solid definition of biblical peace: **A state of tranquility/wholeness.**
 - It's the feeling that all is well...
 - It's the feeling that it's well with your soul.
- Understanding of definition deepens when see how Bible contrasts such peace/anxiety.
 - NT word for anxiety literally means *to be divided into parts; to go to pieces bc pulled in different directions.*
 - Isn't that what anxiety feels like?
 - Like life is coming apart at the seams...
 - We experience this when something in life is **important but uncertain.**
 - **Important** in sense we care about it.
 - **Uncertain** in sense we don't know what outcome will be.
 - Run into situations like this all every day.
 - Finishing **school** but don't know what to do next. *Anxiety.*
 - Under pressure at **work** and not sure have what it takes. *Anxiety.*
 - **Marriage** is hard and not sure it will get any better. *Anxiety.*
 - **Kids** are struggling and not sure how to help. *Anxiety.*
- Into this experience – when the important is uncertain and it's tearing you up – Jesus offers peace...
 - Not experience of falling apart...
 - But experience of being held together → Of being whole.
- As such, notice that biblical peace is an active experience.

- Not just absence of worry/stress...
- But a positive presence → Where you actively feel that all is well.
- Bc active, you can experience biblical peace even in middle of worry/stress → You can experience peace in the midst of the storm.
 - Don't need to fix your circumstances.
 - Don't need the uncertain to become certain.

In the middle of it all → You can feel tranquil. You can feel whole.

Transition: Don't you want some of that?

- Bible says we can have it → But to understand how, must first move to the gospel.
 - Peace isn't something we can work up → Just tell our anxieties to stop!
 - It's the fruit of the Spirit → Which means we can only experience it in X.
- So let's move from: **Definition:** A state of tranquility or wholeness → **Gospel...**

GOSPEL: HOW IS JESUS THE SOURCE OF OUR PEACE?

- Do you remember very first thing Jesus said to his disciples after resurrection?
 - Feels like an important question, doesn't it?
 - First thing Jesus says after securing the salvation of the entire world???
- What might we expect him to say?
 - Talking to group who denied/betrayed him in his hour of greatest need.
 - Perhaps he'll speak a word of correction or rebuke?
- Instead, Jesus speaks **peace**.
 - **John 20:** He appears in the midst of them – miraculously through a locked door...
 - And the very first words from his lips: **Peace be with you (Jn 20:19).**

Be tranquil → Be whole → Let it be well with your soul.
- Not nice/fuzzy sentiment (like Hallmark card: Jesus thinking of something sweet to say).
 - NO! Fact that peace is first thing from his lips shows us that peace is more at the forefront of his mission than we realize.
 - As the Prince of Peace, he came to establish peace.
- In the Garden of Eden, all was *shalom* – everything was tranquil/whole.
 - But then came sin – and with it everything came apart at the seams.
 - Disintegration of our relationship with **God**.
 - Disintegration of our relationships with **each other**.
 - Disintegration of that perfect **world**.
 - So Jesus came to pull all the pieces back together...
 - To make us one with **God**.
 - To make us one with **each other**.
 - And to make this **world** whole.
- *Shalom* was the mission and in him it is restored.
 - On the cross, the last thing he said to his disciples was: **It is finished.**
 - So now he can say: **Peace be with you.**

It's the first word from his lips bc it's the fruit of all he's done for us.
- Do you see how the gospel is bigger/better than we sometimes realize?
 - We sometimes think the gospel is that Jesus died on the cross for your sins.
 - And underneath that headline come some bullet points.
 - Like you can have peace in him.

- But actually it's the other way around:
 - The headline is that Jesus has restored *shalom*...
 - And under that headline the bullet points come:
 - You have forgiveness of sin.
 - You have eternal life to come.
 - And you have the promise that he is making all things new again.
- Ultimately, all our problems have been defeated by him → The most important things are all certain again.
So you can be at peace → You can be tranquil. You can be whole.

Transition: If that's the case, how can we experience that peace now?

- In the “Little a anxieties” and the “Capital A Anxieties”?
- How do we take this ultimate peace and apply it to immediate stresses of day-to-day life?
- Let's consider that as move from: **Definition:** A state of tranquility or wholeness →
Gospel: The Prince of Peace has restored *shalom* → **Application...**

APPLICATION: HOW CAN WE BE AT PEACE NOW?

- There's a laundry list of things we could say at this point – and for some of us a laundry list is needed...
- But rather than cover a dozen things generally, I want to focus on one thing particularly.
 - Don't hear me saying this is the silver bullet...
 - But it is a tool I believe will help.
- How do we apply gospel peace to the anxiety of life? **A prayer with three steps:**²

1. Be OPEN

- In the presence of God, **be open** to the fact that you're anxious.
 - One of biggest things anxiety makes us want to do is avoid it → Hold it at arm's length/stuff it down inside.
 - But avoiding it fuels it → It grows when we ignore/stuff it.
- So be open:
 - Catch yourself feeling anxious → Realize that you are...
 - Don't let it come out sideways...
 - By withdrawing from your roommates, being grumpy with your spouse, getting controlling with your kids.
 - In God's presence, admit that you are.

2. Be OBSERVANT

- In the presence of God, **be observant/curious** about what you're feeling.
 - Remember that there's a big difference bt the feeling and the feeler.
 - You might feel anxious, but you are not anxiety:
 - Anxiety tends to consume us.
 - Don't let that happen → Get a hold of it, don't let it hold you.
- You do that by being observant.
 - Get descriptive about it:
 - What *exactly* are you anxious about?
 - What *exactly* are you worried will happen?

- This was once described to me as the way you might describe a painting like this.
 - What do you see?
 - Could say, “I have no idea...”
 - Or could get descriptive: “I see splotch of blue, some green dots, some orange that turns to red...”
- Don’t let anxiety be flooding/overwhelming mishmash → Get descriptive about it.
- Counselors like to say that when you name it, you tame it → And it’s true.
 - Being descriptive enables you to put boundaries around it...
 - Which gives you something specific to cast on him → You can’t cast what you can’t name...
 - What *exactly* are you anxious about?
 - What *exactly* are you worried will happen?

3. Be OBJECTIVE

- In the presence of God, put your anxiety in its proper place → In the context of the gospel we’ve just discussed.
- The Prince of Peace has restored *shalom*...
 - You have forgiveness of sin → You have eternal life to come → And you have the promise that he’s making all things new again.
 - Ultimately, all your problems have been defeated by him.
- So, you can cast all the worries of your life into in his loving hands.
 - Don’t know what to do after **graduation** → But God has a plan.
 - Don’t know if you’ll succeed at **work** → But God controls the outcome.
 - **Marriage** seems impossible → But God is for it and can heal it.
 - Don’t know how to parent these **kids** → But God loves them...
- Being objective doesn’t make our worries smaller → It just makes our God bigger.
 - And we find that in his presence anxiety starts to dissolve.
 - What’s important and uncertain to you is important and certain to him.
 - In his presence your circumstances might not change, but you will.
 - You start to feel peace → Start to feel tranquil. Start to feel whole.

THE CLOSE

- Will you try that this week? Pray through this outline and see if it helps.
- And if you need more help, reach out here at church.
 - We have an incredible counseling team → Summers and Stewart.
 - They’d be glad to meet with you to help determine next steps.
 - There’s a world of options that can help → An entire laundry list.
 - And they can help you determine what you might try next.
 - I’ll leave their contact info up there → Reach out to them this week.

CONCLUSION

- In a world of anxiety, part of God’s plan for your life is for you to experience peace.
- In the midst of the storm:
 - You can be tranquil and whole.
 - In Jesus, it can be well with your soul.

RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

Resources

This list contains some of the resources that were used to prepare this sermon series. Check them out if you want to dig a little deeper.

- Luke Bretherton, *A Primer in Christian Ethics: Christ and the Struggle to Live Well*.
- Jay Kim, *Analog Christian: Cultivating Contentment, Resilience, and Wisdom in the Digital Age*.
- C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*.
- C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*.
- Martin Luther, *Galatians*.
- Douglas Moo, *Galatians*.
- Redeemer Presbyterian Church, *Paul's Letter to the Galatians*.
- John Stott, *The Message of Galatians*.
- B. B. Warfield, *The Emotional Life of Our Lord*.

Endnotes

¹ Statistics taken from the Census Bureau's *Household Pulse Survey* and the CDC's *National Health Interview Survey*.

² I learned these steps from Dr. Curt Thompson who calls them "the tripod of awareness."