

**In Search of Peace**  
**July 12, 2020**  
**Isaiah 26:1-3**

This has been a tough year for all of us! If we did a survey this morning and asked the question, “**Has this been the toughest year of your life?**” Many, many of you would say yes!

For most of us, it has been tough for a couple of reasons (1) everything **normal and predictable** about our lives has been disrupted - other than the sun coming up each day, most other things that were predictable about our lives have been uprooted.

(2) Between the virus and the civil unrest in our country, most of us have an “uneasy” feeling in our guts - just below the surface of our lives, there is an **added level of stress**. We probably have found ourselves to have a **shorter fuse** with others. We may have turned to some **unhealthy, even sinful habits**, to try to find some comfort - or maybe just to escape for a short time.

(3) For the first time in many of our lives, there is a feeling of “**Uncertainty**” **about the future**. We just want this all to be over - we want to see this virus eradicated - we long to see **racial harmony and equality** - we want to see peace on our city streets - but we don't yet see any light at the end of the tunnel.

That makes an unsettling trio:

- (1) **The disruption of normal**
- (2) **An added level of stress**
- (3) **An uncertainty about the future**

I recently read a study done by the CDC on **the increase in suicide** we have seen over the past several years. The reason the study re-appeared is because there is a concern that we are having a further increase in suicides as a result of the stress people are feeling in their lives right now.

What struck me was a particular quote from the study. It said, **“One thing that is a heavy commonality among people who die by suicide is an unshakeable feeling of dread, despair, loneliness, and hopelessness.”**

Wow, look at those words! During a time of social distancing - working isolated at home - many losing jobs - young students dealing with the disruption of school resulting in distanced learning.

Add to these a **24 hours news cycle** of unending destruction, misery, anger, and argument. Don't we all experience some of those feelings these days to varying degrees?

Right now, we can't even turn on the TV and watch a sporting event without the announcers reminding us every few minutes of the number of players who couldn't play that day because **they tested positive** for COVID 19! Even Atlanta Brave, Freddy Freeman, has been sick!

Of course, having our sports taken away is certainly **a first-world problem!** It ranks right up there with the very **painful 6 weeks** that I could not get a hair cut. These aren't serious problems! But, oddly, they do disrupt our lives.

I believe most of us came to church this morning or tuned in online because we wanted something different. We are hoping to get a break from the sadness that surrounds us. Most all of us came wanting to find some hope and some peace today!

If that is you, I got some great news! That is just what we are going to LOOK FOR in God's Word today. The title of this morning's message is, **“A Search for Peace”**. Our text will be Isaiah 26 beginning in verse 1.

But, first just a little background on Isaiah. Isaiah was a prophet to both the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah - though primarily to the Judah.

The wonderful thing about studying history is that it gives us a better **understanding and perspective** of our lives today.

The period of time in which Isaiah lived and prophesied was a **very dark and bleak period of history**, especially in Israel and Judah. The Northern kingdom was immersed in **pagan practices of worship** that even included child sacrifices. During the ministry of Isaiah, the nation was also invaded the Assyrians. This was part of **God's judgement** on their idolatry.

The Assyrians were brutal and barbaric when they invaded a country. They developed horrific ways of torturing and killing innocent people in order to subdue a nation. This **period of history** was not a good time to be born in Israel.

STARVATION, DISEASE, AND DEATH were an everyday occurrence during the life of Isaiah. Trust me when I say, **No matter how bad things are for you right now, history tells us that life can always be worse!** I don't say that to **minimize the difficulties** many families are facing today, but I think sometimes we need a little perspective from history!

I've heard it said, **"The only minor surgery is the surgery someone else is having!"** In other words, when it is happening to you, **All pain is real pain!** But, **history helps put our current pain in some kind of context!**

With this as our backdrop to the Prophecies of Isaiah, when we get to Chapter 26, the **prophecies have turned positive**. Isaiah has begun looking to the future.

He is sharing a glimpse of the **Millennial Kingdom** - the 1,000 year reign of Christ. Israel is restored as a Nation after the Great Tribulation. Jesus is ruling this world in righteousness and truth.

In this wonderful passage, we learn **some important truths** about our walk with God. We are going to learn the origins of Peace. Where we FIND IT, and HOW TO KEEP IT. If you need peace in your life this morning, Isaiah has some ENCOURAGING WORDS for you today.

**Isa 26:1 In that day, this song will be sung in the land of Judah: "We have a strong city; God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks. 2 Open the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in.**

In the history of man, there has never been a city like this city. It is a Godly city - one where God reigns in totality - where righteousness was the rule - one where there really is truth and justice for all - one where Salvation was part of its walls!

It will be a city FULL OF SINGING - a glorious city governed by a glorious Savior! **From within its wall, Jesus** will rule this world for 1,000 years! But, until Jesus returns, there will never be a **truly Godly City**. For now, there are only ungodly cities that are FILLED WITH both Godly & ungodly men and women within its walls!

Today, our goal is **to build God's Church**. The Church is to be a GODLY PLACE, **ruled by Jesus!** We are to build His Church all around this world inside these ungodly cities.

This is why Paul tells us in **1 Timothy 2:1-2 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.**

Right now, we are to pray for our leaders that we might be able to live our lives in a **“quiet and peaceable” way** - that we might be free to worship God without fear - that we might be free to share our faith and see others joining His Church!

Today, our goal is that Jesus would rule in His Church by ruling in the lives of His People. But one day, He will RULE OVER ALL THE WORLD from this beautiful city, and in that day, we, his people, will sing about it! Today, WE SING about the JOY OF HIS GREAT SALVATION that has come to each of us!

But, notice Verse 3, **You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.** “Perfect Peace”! Isn't that what we all long for. In the Hebrew, the phrase is **Shalom, Shalom**. Shalom is the Hebrew word for peace. When you put the two words together, you have Super Peace - exponential peace - an intense peace - or as it is translated Perfect Peace!

Isaiah is describing a peace that is different from human peace. It is a peace **created and provided** by God. It is not a peace defined by the absence of conflict. It is the presence of peace in the **middle of conflict**.

So often we pray for God to take away the problems in our life. We assume this is how we will experience peace. Yes, that is a form of peace - **a life without conflict** - but that is NOT THE PERFECT PEACE spoken of here.

This Perfect Peace is a **confidence deep down in your soul** that God is in control of your life. Add to that a knowledge that He loves you and that he wants what is **best for you** and then that He will accomplish His Will in your life.

The NT describes it as a **“peace that passes understanding”**. Perfect Peace is not always understood from a human perspective. It is a peace that you experience **when nothing around you** in life says you should feel any peace, but deep down inside you are RESTING IN THE KNOWLEDGE that your Heavenly Father has you in His Arms.

Notice, Isaiah says that God will **“keep you”** in this perfect peace. It doesn't say He will **take away your troubles** or move you to a different circumstance. It says “He will keep you in His peace”, and this is not dependent on anything changing in our lives!

The Father makes it HIS RESPONSIBILITY to keep you resting in this peace. What He is trying to convey is that you CAN'T MANUFACTURE this peace. The pressure is on God to keep you centered in His peace!

Does that mean we have no part to play? Absolutely not! Look at the next few words: **“whose mind is stayed on You!”** Your part is to keep your mind FOCUSED ON HIM! This will be a change for most of us.

When it comes to **searching for Peace**, we always want to CHANGE SOMETHING. Usually, this involves CHANGING OUR CIRCUMSTANCES or changing our RELATIONSHIPS, or changing our JOB, or changing our SCHOOL, or changing our CHURCH, or making NEW FRIENDS. The list goes on and on!

But the only change that has to take place is a change in how we think. Our thoughts must be centered on the Lord Jesus. They can not be focused on our own desires, or on our own problems, or on our own limitations!

Our minds - our thoughts - our mental focus - must be on God - In other words, **the way we think must change - the things we think about must change - Even our thought patterns must change!**

In Romans 12:2, Paul described this as **“the renewing of our minds”**. This is A CHANGE that takes place where we are NO LONGER THINKING as the world thinks (**being conformed to this world**) but as minds are BEING TRANSFORMED into a new way of thinking.

Paul is THINKING OF THE PERSON whose mind is programmed to think in worldly ways. ALL OF US - **our thoughts are dominated by lust or greed or fear or worry**. It does not matter the topic we are considering. We approach the topic from the perspective of how our mind has been TRAINED TO THINK.

Because of fear, you might always think in terms of **what might go wrong**. You consider only the extreme dangers. You are dominated by the fear of loss, rather than the possibilities of positive change - the GOOD OUTCOMES that might follow a decision.

This is the mother who doesn't allow for any adventure in their children's lives for fear that something might happen to them. Yes, there is risk in almost everything, but without **growth & new experiences**, so many lessons are never learned!

I remember as a child my parents LET MY BROTHER AND I BUY a HONDA 70 mini-bike (**Show Picture**). It was like a small motorcycle. It would top out at about 45 MPH. We would ride that thing for hours.

My best friend had a pasture in his back yard. We would build ramps to jump. He had a go-cart and we would race each other. It was wild. The only rules were we had TO WEAR A HELMET, and we couldn't ride ON THE STREET.

This was back in the days of EVIL KNIEVEL. For you youngsters, he was the guy who used to jump all the cars with his motorcycle ([Show Picture](#)). At some point DURING HIS DARE-DEVIL CAREER, he broke almost every bone in his body! We never jumped a car, but we jumped a FEW SMALLER THINGS! Sometimes we cleared them and sometimes WE DIDN'T. But we never BROKE ANY BONES!

I am so thankful my parents were crazy enough to let us have that much fun! Yes, we could have GOTTEN HURT. Experiences like this have an **element of danger in them**, but it did help us **grow up and take responsibility**. We also had to learn how to fix things when we broke them, and we certainly couldn't go CRYING TO MOM when we crashed!

My point is this, if my parents had been consumed in **thoughts of fear: "What might happen?"**, I would have missed out on a lot of fun as a child, and I would have missed some IMPORTANT GROWTH as a person!

When you FACE A NEW CHALLENGE, do you feel only dread and fear because that is how you have been trained to think? Do you see only the problems and miss the POSSIBILITIES?

When you think of the future, do you only see failure because you have had some disappointments in your past? When you think of the past, do you only think of regrets because of some bad decisions you made years ago?

**To have your mind "stayed on Him" is to be able to view all of life through the lens of God's presence and God's promises.** It is to filter all that we think and experience through the perspective of God's Word. It is to begin to see life as God sees life. It is to think about life as God thinks about it.

**So many of us are prisoners of our past.** Our minds will not allow us to think in ways other than the ones our scars have etched in our minds - that is exactly why are minds MUST BE RENEWED!

God wants to help us THINK DIFFERENTLY. He so wants to SET US FREE from the bondage of our past and the NEGATIVE THOUGHTS that



have tied to that past! This can happen, but it takes hard work and a willingness to change!

In Phil. 4:8, Paul puts THIS SAME THOUGHT in the practical when He writes, **“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things.”**

A huge part of renewing our minds is done by changing what we allow ourselves to think about. When you find yourself thinking with THOSE OLD THOUGHT PATTERNS, stop yourself - think about a POSITIVE OUTCOME rather than a negative one - think about a JUST OUTCOME rather than a HURTFUL ONE.

If a GREEDY THOUGHT enters your mind, stop and consider how you might be generous instead. If a LUSTFUL THOUGHT fills you mind, stop yourself and replace it with wholesome thoughts about that person.

**We will talk more about this process** in a few minutes, but for now, understand what Paul is saying. We change our ATTITUDES AND OUR OUTCOMES by changing what we think about!

There is a SECOND PROBLEM. For many of us, we routinely fill our minds **with destructive things**. We watch things on TV that only makes us ANGRY OR FRIGHTENED OR FRUSTRATED then we wonder why are emotions are rare, sad, or anxious.

Here, Paul tells us exactly what we are to fill our minds with. We have to **learn to fill our minds with the right things** - things that are TRUE - not the lies we are so often fed by our TV screens though SITCOMS & COMMERCIALS - things that are NOBLE - not the garbage that flows to us daily on **social media**.

Things that are JUST & PURE - NOT entertainment where **OUR HEROES ARE BAD GUYS** - and there is **aberrant sexuality** that is without consequence!



We need to think about **lovely things and things that are of good report** - not the bad news that constantly flows across the airwaves & cable news.

I really don't think God created us to consume A CONSTANT DIET of bad news that we see on the cable news channels. Yes, this world is a BAD PLACE. That does not mean you need to know about every awful thing that happened in this fallen world of 7 Billion people!

We need to find **things of virtue - things that are praise-worthy**. These are the things that will keep our minds focussed on the concerns of God! I'm not suggesting you TUNE OUT the world around you. We all NEED TO BE INFORMED of current events - especially those that AFFECT US. But, there NEEDS TO BE LIMITS to that knowledge.

As I said earlier, CONTROLLING OUR THOUGHTS is the key to finding **peace in this life**. The battle for PEACE IN OUR LIVES is fought in our minds! Will God control my thoughts or will the enemy?

In 2 Cor. 10:4 Paul urges us **“to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”**. This is how the Spiritual Warfare for our minds is won. **We capture those wayward, negative, fearful, lustful thoughts** and we bring them into obedience to Christ!

We refuse to FOLLOW THEM. We refuse to CHASE THEM DOWN that path to sin and destruction!

When you think a sinful or destructive thought, do you know how to capture it? Do you know how to STOP IT from making a home in your mind?

When those old ways of thinking come, I have to stop myself and say **“I'm not going to think that way!”** Sometimes I will literally say that out loud. Then I ask myself, **“How would God want me to think about this?”**

Some of you may not even yet recognize your DESTRUCTIVE THOUGHTS. They are so much a part of your life! But you must BEGIN TO RECOGNIZE them in order to stop them.

Please understand, we are not talking about the POWER OF POSITIVE thinking. We are talking about the POWER OF PURE thinking, or we could call it the POWER OF GODLY THINKING, and there is a big difference!

TO RENEW OUR MINDS - to think differently - we have to:

1. **Recognize sinful, destructive thoughts**
2. **Capture them from taking hold in our minds**
3. **Replace them with Godly, pure, virtuous thoughts**
4. **Act on those thoughts instead!**

Where does your mind “stay”? Or ask this question: **“Where does your mind live?”** Where does it spend most of its time? What is it most vested in?

**Your life . . . Which is your mood - your feelings - your heart - your devotion - and ultimately your body and your actions - will all go to the place your mind goes. Where it stays, you will stay! Where it lives, you will live!**

This is why it is so important to keep your mind in the right place. It needs to “stay on Him”! Are you LIVING WITH JESUS?

But there is ONE LAST KEY in our search for Perfect Peace. It is found in that LAST PHRASE, **“because he trusts in You”!**

Please know this SPIRITUAL TRUTH - **Your mind will follow what you worship, and you worship what you trust in for safety and security!**

**Everything we trust in has an outcome.** In other words, WHATEVER YOU TRUST IN will take you down a path to a SPECIFIC LOCATION. Every god that is trusted and worshiped WILL TAKE US TO A DESTINATION. Where is THAT THING you are trusting in taking you?

When we truly trust in Jesus - when we “stay” in Him, the outcome (or the fruit) of that relationship is always Peace! You can always judge the WORTHINESS OF YOUR GOD BY WHERE IT WILL TAKE YOU! We just have to be smart enough to LOOK AHEAD or to LOOK AROUND at others who are chasing that god!

**Who are you trusting in? Who are you listening to? You will find that they are usually one and the same!**

In 1 Kings 19, we have the story of the PROPHET ELIJAH just after he had battled the PROPHETS OF BAAL on Mount Carmel. He was **physically and emotionally exhausted**. He had been a GREAT TRIUMPH, but in the aftermath, he was discouraged.

He made the mistake of thinking that after such a great victory there would be a time of REST AND RELAXATION. He was hoping just for a few moments to VACATION IN PEACE.

But, moments after the victory, that EVIL QUEEN JEZEBEL sent a death threat to Elijah and He was on the run again! So much for PEACE & REST! He was quickly off to the WILDERNESS OF JUDAH to hide from the Queen.

Alone in the wilderness, he was ready to GIVE UP. At one point he cries out to the Lord, **"It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!"** Elijah is ALONE & DEPRESSED - the place some of you have FELT LATELY.

God had a recipe to help Elijah - (1) God tells him to GET SOME SLEEP; and Elijah gets some much needed rest. Sleep (not late-night TV) is a powerful beginning place to find HEALING & PEACE.

(2) God tells him TO EAT. It is amazing how a healthy meal or two can CHANGE OUR OUTLOOK. We call it COMFORT FOOD for a reason.

(3) God allows Elijah to VENT HIS FEELINGS - **1Ki 19:9-10 And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" So he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your**

**covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."**

Elijah is having a bit of a PITY PARTY, **but what is interesting** is that God ENCOURAGES IT, or at least, God ALLOWS HIM to express his feelings!

God is NOT AFRAID of your feelings! Even if they are COMPLAINTS about Him, which is exactly what Elijah's are. Can't you hear the ACCUSATION in his words directed at God? **"Look at what all I have done for you God, and I am still here in the mess!"**

Part of our HEALING PROCESS is to be honest with our feelings. **I have vented to God on more than one occasion!**

(4) After we talk, we need to LEARN TO LISTEN! - specifically to the VOICE OF GOD. He wants to ENCOURAGE US & INSPIRE US, but so often we just talk, and we never listen, or we miss HIS VOICE because we are listening for the WRONG VOICES.

**1Kings 19:11-12 Then He (God) said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; 12 and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice (a whispering voice).**

Today, the WIND and the EARTHQUAKE and the FIRE are all screaming at us. They scream through our RADIO'S, our TVS, our INTERNET CONNECTIONS, Social Media - Yes, even our FRIENDS & our FAMILIES.

Yes, the WORLD SCREAMS, but GOD WHISPERS. Which do you spend more time doing? It seems today we all WANT TO BE HEARD, but I wonder sometimes, **in all the screaming, is anyone listening to each other? Is anyone LISTENING TO GOD?**

It is SO NOISY OUT THERE, it is hard to hear yourself think - much less to hear THE WHISPERING VOICE of God. Yet, He speaks:

Words of Encouragement  
Words of Instruction  
Words of Comfort  
Words of Assurance  
Sometimes Words of Correction

But, all of HIS WORDS to us are there to BRING PEACE to our weary hearts and minds. Are you listening?

So, do you need PERFECT PEACE today:

- Stop looking for a WAY OUT - God will supply HIS PEACE right where you are!
- Keep your mind in the RIGHT PLACE - Begin today RENEWING YOUR MIND. Capture those old destructive thoughts and replace them with Godly thoughts!
- TUNE OUT the screaming of the World and learn to listen to the Whispering Voice of the Holy Spirit!

Allow me the freedom to PERSONALIZE verse 3: **God will keep you in perfect peace when your mind is stayed on Him, because you trust in Him.**

Let's Pray





