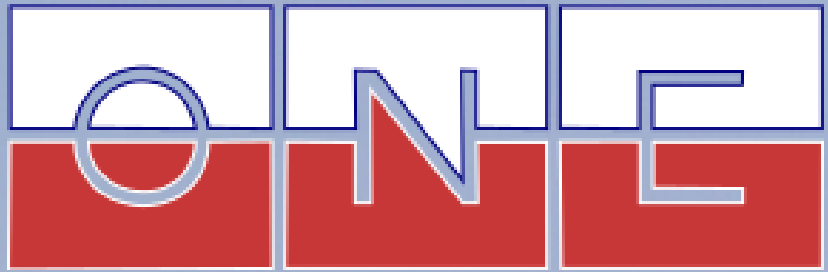


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ONE is the official publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA) which guides its mission, content, and theme. The ECMA encourage submissions from ECMA congregations. Photographs, stories, testimonies, and other submissions should be directed toward your church leaders or sent via email to one@ourecma.com.

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Installation Service for New Pastor

First Baptist Church, 1111 Fort Street, is proud to welcome new pastor Reverend G. Christopher Prater. His installation service will be on Sunday, August 30, at 2:00 p.m. in the afternoon at the church. An RSVP is requested to 785-625-9454 or firstbaptisthays@gmail.com. All are welcome.

Embodying Peace

Brandon Nimz

Unite Ministries

In Philippians 4:6-7, Paul writes, "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."

These verses written to the Philippians are easy to understand, but they can be challenging to implement. Part of implementing them involves being self-aware of our own thoughts and emotions so that we know

when we are worrying. Worrysome thoughts can sometimes become obvious when we circle back to the same thing again and again, even when we realize that no new information will come of it and we will be unable to find another solution. When this happens repeatedly, we have to "take every thought captive" as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10 and "make it obedient to Christ" by praying the worry over to God. Praying about this worry to Him makes the worry cease to be the thing that is driving our minds and wills. Instead, we re-center on God's presence, His sovereignty, and the fact that He alone can help in this situation. From that

position, we surrender the worry over to Him, asking His help if we are not strong enough to let go of it (much like the father who asked Jesus to help him with his unbelief in Mark chapter 9). Then, our emotional and mental cores are back to being free to be driven by God instead of the worry. This action of taking the thought captive and surrendering it keeps God seated in His place as God (instead of letting our earthly worries drive us). It is also an action that is living out Proverbs 4:23 (guarding our hearts, because they affect everything we do) and the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew when Jesus talks about not worrying in

Embodying Peace (Continued)

anything but praying in everything. All of this is part of our greater task of constantly surrendering our lives to gain true life (Matthew 10, Matthew 16, and other gospels) and offering ourselves as living sacrifices (Romans 12).

While being surrendered so that we can clearly rest in God's sovereignty instead of our worries is key, it is only the first part of the verse. It moves us away from a mental and heart focus on a perceived problem and towards a mental and heart focus on God, surrendering to God, and comfort in God. The second part of the verse—thanking God for all He has done—takes us the rest of the way into peace. It moves us even further from focusing on the area we've turned over and into focusing on other areas where God has already done great things or is actively doing great things now. This focus on the areas in which we are free and can see God's strength further helps strengthen and heal our heart of its worries and fears. Though this can be a simple

exercise of being thankful for what's around us, I find it can also be worthwhile to keep a prayer journal that includes a space in which I write down moments during which I've clearly sensed or felt God. These moments are usually quite striking at the time, but as time and memory fade, I can forget they even happened. This is part of the reason the Israelites built so many stone monuments—to constantly see and remember the great things God had done. I think having something like this to open up can help me not just intellectually know God is there, but to remember the feel of His presence. This feeling of my heart can be very important, for true worry can be fueled and driven by the mind, but it is ultimately a condition of the heart, and that is what this remembrance and thankfulness further addresses.

Once we are in a place of surrendering worry to God, trusting God, and being thankful for what we have, we tend to start resting in His peace. This peace can be

strengthened by continuing this process, or it can be weakened by stopping the process and getting back to worrying. Thankfully, whenever I slip, I simply have to remember that God is always as close as He's ever been, and He's faithful to help us if we call sincerely. Calling out to Him, asking forgiveness, and turning this new worry over to Him is not only the best thing for me, but it is also the re-start of the process mentioned above.

That said, when practicing this or any spiritual discipline, I think it's critical to remember that the process itself is a process God has created and set up. It is neither the process itself nor me who is doing the process that frees me—it is God and His Holy Spirit living within me, constantly transforming me, and He is only there due to the sacrifice and freedom that Christ purchased on the cross. This forgiveness, renewed relationship with God, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, which ensures our salvation on the day of judgment, are ultimately the source of our peace.

Peace in the Word

Reverend Mike Rose

Hays First United Methodist Church

Greetings in the Name of Shalom!

This summer, I preached a sermon series on the Fruit of the Spirit, as the Apostle Paul discerned in his letter to the Church in Galatia when he wrote, "By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things" (Galatians 5:22-23). Each Sunday, I focused my sermon on a particular 'fruit of the Spirit' from the Scripture.

First, I found it interesting that Paul began with love, because it is the 'agape' love of God that seasons all the other 'fruits.' The next thing that I found interesting was that while Paul studied in Hebrew and lived in the world of Roman rule and language of Latin, he wrote in Greek. So Paul, in his letter to the Church in

Galatia, would have used the Greek word for peace, which is 'eirene.' 'Eirene' is pronounced phonetically like the English word irony. The Roman or Latin word for peace is 'pax,' and the 'Pax Romana' or 'Roman peace' was to use whatever force was necessary to maintain civil unrest in the Roman empire. As I thought about the Roman 'pax,' it reminded me of the English word 'pox' as in pestilence or a festering boil-like lesion, which is a descriptor that many non-Roman citizens must have felt they were living in during that time.

So it is with 'irony' that the 'eirene' of which Paul writes was lived out through the 'pax' of Rome which was a 'pox' on the lives of the people. In Jeremiah's writings, we find the question, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" (Jeremiah 8:22). The Hebrew Prophet Jeremiah was living through similar days in his time in Israel some six centuries earlier, and Paul would have been steeped

in Jeremiah's writings as a 'Pharisee's Pharisee' (Acts 23:6).

Both Paul and Jeremiah would supply an answer for this 'pox' in the Hebrew word for peace, which is 'shalom.' 'Shalom' means not only civil peace, but it also means harmony, wholeness, welfare, completeness, prosperity, and tranquility. Jeremiah would prophesy of a 'physician' who would come to Israel with the 'balm of shalom' and the Apostle Paul would spend his life sharing it with the people throughout the Roman empire.

Today, some two millennia after Paul, we find our world struggling with the 'pox' of Covid 19. Unrest abounds and political polarization divides us. Somedays we may feel helpless and hopeless and alone and ask Jeremiah's question, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" And the 'good news', or 'gospel' is a resounding "YES!" And the balm and physician can be found in the

Peace in the Word (Continued)

person of Jesus, the Christ.

The writer of John's gospel would describe the balm and physician as the "Word of God made flesh" (John 1:14), the anointed One, who came to "proclaim good news to the poor, to bind up the

brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and to release from darkness the prisoners" (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18).

In other words, the 'Word' came to bring us 'shalom.'

So my challenge for you, as we go through these challenging days is this: don't rely on the 'pax' against this pox; rather turn to the Word for 'shalom.' And I write this without a hint of irony, and only wish you much 'eirene'... I mean 'shalom'.

Finding Peace Amidst Anxiety

Cheryl Glassman

St. Nicholas of Myra Catholic Church

COVID-19. Civil unrest. School starting. Frustration. These words hit each and every one of us in one way or another on a daily basis. Our lives have changed over the past few months. Situations occur, and fear and anxiety can take over and get the best of us. How then, in the midst of all these things can we find peace?

I have personally always been an anxious person on the inside. I think it's a family trait. That being said, I have come to terms with my anxiety through prayer and the presence of Jesus in my life. It's not always easy, especially when life

throws unexpected curve balls, and I get frustrated and swing the wrong way. When anxiety tries to overwhelm me, I first take a deep breath; then I remember that I am a child of God. I think of the words of John 16:33, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." I also take time to redirect myself to God, either through meditative prayer, song, or just reveling in the peace of silence. It is an ongoing process; you see, faith, like life, will ebb and tide. Such it is with finding peace.

I think the one thing I've taken from the Bible

regarding peace is - be at peace with who you are. God will always love you. Don't beat yourself up for events of the past; God will forgive you, and therefore you must forgive yourself. It is then we can share His peace with others.

I always also reflect on the words of Colossians 3:16 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." It is during good times and bad we must remember the most important thing of all - God loves us and He will never leave us.

Finding Peace in the Pandemic

Becky Rogowski

Hays First Presbyterian Church

In the midst of a global pandemic, we are hearing the words anxiety and stress more frequently than we hear the words peace and contentment. The Bible, however, shows us the truth and the Way. It mentions peace throughout. How does one go about finding peace in one's life? There are many things mentioned, but a main way is by trusting Jesus. Ever hear the phrase, "Let go and Let God?" It truly should be a mantra for many right now.

Uncertainty breeds anxiety. The unknown breeds anxiety. Change breeds anxiety. Sickness breeds anxiety. Separation breeds anxiety. Disagreement breeds anxiety.

Turning our concerns and anxieties over to God is an important way to find peace. It is also important during these uncertain times for adults to show children how to find peace in their lives. Children

need the example of calm, cool, confident adults. With the amount of unknowns in society right now, this is a mindful task to undertake. It is not an easy one, but it is vitally important. It can be made easier by turning things over to God.

As believers, we need to trust that our Lord will guide us to realize His blessings of feeling peace and contentment. We need to trust Him to relieve us from the pressing crush of everyday life. It is important to trust Him in handling the challenges we face and to let go of our own worries and fears.

Peace and contentment. What does it mean to feel peace and contentment? Merriam Webster defines peace as, "freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions," and contentment as, "the quality or state of being contented (feeling or showing satisfaction with one's possessions, status, or situation)." Words such as still, quiet, calm, happy, pleased, and satisfied might be used to describe

feelings of peace and contentment.

Philippians 4:6-7 tells us, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Just saying to "trust Jesus" is a tall order for many. There are simple steps that can help to find peace, even for children and young people. Drawing pictures. Deep breathing. Journaling. Taking a walk. Yoga. Having a conversation with a friend or someone you trust. It is important for people to find some type of outlet for their stress and anxiety. As a reminder, there are always counselors available when stress is too much bear. Never be afraid to reach out. If you don't have a friend or local pastor, reach out to a teacher, advisor, or counselor.