



The Real Meaning of Peace

Jesus said: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27)

There once was a king who offered a prize to the artist who would paint the best picture of peace. Many artists tried. The king looked at all the pictures. But there were only two he really liked, and he had to choose between them

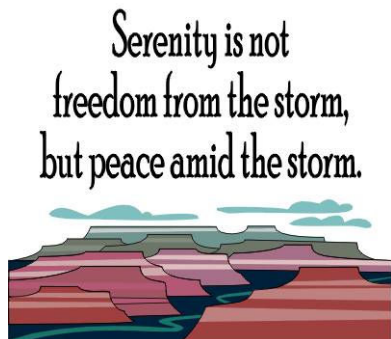
One picture was of a calm lake. The lake was a perfect mirror for peaceful towering mountains all around it. Overhead was a blue sky with fluffy white clouds. All who saw this picture thought that it was a perfect picture of peace.

The other picture had mountains, too. But these were rugged and bare. Above was an angry sky, from which rain fell and in which lightning played. Down the side of the mountain tumbled a foaming waterfall. This did not look peaceful at all.

But when the king looked closely, he saw behind the waterfall a tiny bush growing in a crack in the rock. In the bush a mother bird had built her nest. There, in the midst of the rush of angry water, sat the mother bird on her nest - in perfect peace.

Which picture do you think won the prize? The king chose the second picture. Do you know why?

"Because," explained the king, "peace does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. Peace means to be in the midst of all those things and still be calm in your heart. That is the real meaning of peace."



... the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace." (Luke 1:78b-79)

The Trouble Tree

I hired a plumber to help me restore an old farmhouse, and after he had just finished a rough first day on the job, a flat tire made him lose an hour of work & his electric drill quit, his ancient one ton truck refused to start. As I drove him home, he sat in stony silence.

On arriving he invited me in to meet his family. As we walked toward the front door, he paused briefly at a small tree, touching the tips of the branches with both hands. Upon opening the door he had undergone an amazing transformation. His tanned face was wreathed in smiles and he hugged his two small children and gave his wife a kiss.

Afterward he walked me to the car. We passed the tree and my curiosity got the better of me. I asked him about what I had seen him do at the little tree.

"Oh, that's my trouble tree," he replied. "I know I can't help having troubles on the job, but one thing's for sure, those troubles don't belong in the house with my wife and the children. So I just hang them up on the tree every night when I come home and ask God to take care of them. Then in the morning I pick them up again." Funny thing is," he smiled, "when I come out in the morning to pick them up, there aren't nearly as many as I remember hanging up the night before."

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. (Matthew 5:9)

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. (Romans 12:18)

It is God's plan that we live in peace every day of our lives, in fact, it is one of the ways He has told us that we will know whether or not His Spirit is in charge. *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace" (Galatians 5:22)*

Peace is something that has to be received. It's something that has to be chosen. It's something that requires surrender on our part - not having to be right; not having to look good; not having to be understood; not having everything around us peaceful and pleasant. Peace is living for God and surrendering our hearts and minds every moment to Him, knowing that if we are living in His will, He will make all things right. As the serenity prayer reminds us, *"accepting hardship as a pathway to peace. Taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it, trusting that you will make all things right if I surrender to your will..."*