

Open Table Community Church
Advent Devotional
2019



Week 2: Peace

Introduction

Each week of Advent has a theme. Week one is HOPE. Week two is PEACE. Week three is JOY. Week four is LOVE. In this Devotional, you will be offered 1-4 scripture readings if you wish to read the lectionary passages for this year. There will also be a short devotional reading followed by a meditation for the week. As we use Advent as a contemplative discipline to quiet our hearts and wait for the arrival of Jesus, I suggest using the meditations to aid you. Whenever you get caught up in the crazy pace of the holiday season, return to the meditations to resist being swept up in the chaos.

After the meditations, there will be a devotional for the whole family, especially the kiddos. It will include a review of what the kids are learning in The Kids' Table so you can refresh your kids on the content from Sunday. It will also come with challenges you can complete with your children during the Advent season.

We pray that this Devotional will help your family to slow down this season and prepare yourselves for God's Big Gift, the Advent of Jesus.

Scripture Reading

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

Isaiah 11:1-10

Devotional Reading

I grew up breaking rules and often times, the law. I did drugs and shoplifted on a regular basis. In fact, it was often the money I made selling stolen goods that paid for my drugs. Because of this lifestyle, I was terrified of the police. It didn't matter what I was currently doing, if a police officer walked up, I was immediately sweating and overwhelmed with guilt. The police were the enemy.

I vividly remember the day when I was walking into a Quik Trip at the same time as a police officer. I had been married a couple years and it had been over five years since I had wantonly broken any laws, but nevertheless, upon seeing the cop, my heart rate sped up, my upper lip began to sweat and my voice raised a couple octaves. I was nervous that I was going to be found out. Then it dawned on me... I had no reason to fear or dislike the police. I was a law abiding citizen. I was on the same team as this uniformed human who was holding the door for me.

The moment I realized that I was no longer a criminal, I was flooded by what I can only call PEACE. It was profound. I was like a weight or fear that I had been carrying in the back of my mind suddenly vanished and what was left in its place was peace. I lost an enemy. It was as if I were a lamb who could suddenly lay down with a wolf. I know this sounds overly simplified, but it was world changing for me.

Peace is more than just a cease fire. Peace is when we turn an enemy into a friend. Peace is when we see ourselves in the other person no matter how different they are from us, we love them as we love ourselves. We can never know peace in our lives and definitely not in our hearts if we are living with the constant pressure of fear and hate. Jesus said, "my yoke is easy and my burden light". Many of us have struggled with this passage because many parts of the Christian life seem to be anything but easy and light. I wonder if Jesus was talking about the amazing peace that is available to us when we actually choose to walk the way he desires for us. I wonder if we would find life considerably more easy and light if we refused to carry fear and hate around with us everywhere. I wonder if dropping animosity and bitterness would leave us with a peace we never imagined possible. I do know that I no longer fear the police and that my life feels considerably lighter for it. If that is what Jesus is offering, trust me, it's worth the price of Shining Peace to the world.

This Week's Meditation

Who is your “police”? Who’s presence adds stress to your life?

What could you do this week to view that person as part of your team rather than your enemy?

What could you do to serve them and make their life better?

From The Kid's Table

This year for Advent, The Kids' Table is going to lean into the concept of SHINE-ing hope, peace, joy, and love to the world we live in. We would love for you to join us. Our hope is that this year, we will all interact with this grand story of God's Big Gift to mankind, **JESUS**, and in that process that we will all find ourselves in the story of God.

Each week we will tell a part of the story leading up to Jesus, and we will focus on one of the 4 ways we want to SHINE this Advent season. Your children will be bringing home “ornaments” that they can make at home to help them retell the story with you. You can choose to do this however you want, one each day, all together on one day, or any other way you can dream up that best fits your family and life. The important thing is not how or when you do this, but that you are exploring together ways to SHINE.

We pray that this year as you read and interact with God, your family, and the people you meet each day that you are able to embrace the fact that you are relentlessly pursued by a God who gave up everything to come and find you. What a gift that we can share with ourselves and our families! Let's SHINE together OTCC!

Week Two PEACE

This week in The Kids' Table we covered these stories:

- **Moses**
- **The 10 Commandments**
- **Ruth and Boaz**
- **Hannah**
- **Samuel**
- **David**
- **Solomon**

Allow your child/ren to tell as much or as little of the story as they remember. Help them to recognize and learn that each of our voices are important in our church.

Moses-

A long time after Joseph died, the Israelites became slaves in Egypt. The families of Joseph and his brothers had gotten really huge, and because there were so many of them the Egyptians became afraid they would quit listening to their masters so they decided to kill all the little boy babies. To save baby Moses, his mother hid him in a basket and placed the basket on a river. The daughter of Pharaoh, who was the Egyptian's king, found baby Moses and raised him like her own child. When Moses grew up, God told him it was time to lead the Israelites out of Egypt to a new land, but Pharaoh didn't want to let them go. God had to send some really bad plagues in order to free the Israelites, but the Pharaoh finally let the Israelites go.

The 10 Commandments-

After the Israelites left Egypt Moses led the people out into a desert, where the Israelites wandered around for 40 years. While they were in the desert God gave them 10 rules that He himself wrote on stone tablets. We call these rules the 10 Commandments. In those rules, God was trying to give his people and all of mankind ways that they could live a peaceful life by loving God and loving other people.

Ruth and Boaz-

Many years after the Israelites left Egypt there was a wealthy man named Boaz who noticed a beautiful woman working in his fields gathering leftover grain. In those days people who didn't have enough money for food could go into a field after they had picked all the food and the poor could pick up anything that had dropped to the ground. Boaz asked about the beautiful woman and found out that her name was Ruth. He learned that she had lived a hard life, and he also learned that she was the widow of one of the men from his family. Boaz invited Ruth to eat with him and his workers and he made sure she had plenty of food. Later, Boaz married Ruth, and they had a son they named Obed.

Hannah-

A few years after Boaz and Ruth had their son, there was another woman named Hannah who was really sad that she didn't have any children. She prayed and prayed to God and promised that she would dedicate the child God gave her to Him. Later, Hannah finally had a son and she named him Samuel. Not only did Hannah take Samuel to the tabernacle to serve God when he was old enough, but she returned each year to bring him new clothes and to spend time with him. Samuel grew and grew and became a great man of God who led the Israelites for many years.

Samuel-

Samuel went to live with the prophet Eli when he was very young. One night Samuel lay down in the temple to go to bed. It was getting dark, but God's lamp had not gone out. Samuel heard

a voice calling his name, and he thought it was the prophet, Eli. When Samuel went to Eli, he told Samuel he had not called him. After the same thing happened 3 times, Eli realized that God must be calling Samuel's name. Eli told Samuel the next time he heard the voice he was to answer, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening." That began Samuel's many years of serving the Israelites by helping them to obey God.

David-

When Samuel became an old man, the Israelites decided they wanted a king to lead them and not a prophet of God, like Samuel was. God had Samuel choose a man named Saul. Saul became king, and he was a good king at first, but then Saul made some bad choices and he became very angry and sad. About this time, God sent Samuel to a young shepherd boy named David. Samuel told David that God had chosen him to be the next king of the Israelites which didn't make very much sense because there was already a king, and David was just a young boy who got picked on by his older brothers and wrote a lot of songs about how beautiful God's creation was. For many years David actually served King Saul in his army. David killed a giant named Goliath, and did many other great things while serving King Saul, but eventually Saul became jealous of David, and David had to run away and hide from Saul. Many years later, Saul was killed in battle and David became king. David was a good king, but he spent his whole life writing songs to God because he loved God so much and taught the Israelites to love God and to serve Him always.

Solomon-

David eventually grew old, and when he was an old man he had to name one of his sons to be king after he died. David chose his son, Solomon. Solomon wasn't his oldest son. Usually the king's oldest son became the next son, but Solomon had something else that would make him a great king. One night Solomon dreamed a dream where God told him he could ask for whatever he wanted and God would give it to him. He could ask for riches, or more land, more people, more food, cooler toys, anything he wanted. Solomon asked for something that might seem a little strange to many people. He asked for wisdom. He wanted to be able to make good decisions for his people and he knew that in order to be a good king he was going to need wisdom. God was so pleased with Solomon's request that He not only gave Solomon wisdom but He also gave Solomon all those other things, more riches, land, people, food and toys. He also gave Solomon a reign that was marked with peace with other nations. When Solomon grew old he made some bad choices, but God still remembered his promise to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob that he would use their family to bless all of mankind. I wonder what God was going to do?

This week we're looking for ways we can find and SHINE peace. Peace can often be defined most easily for children in the concepts of quiet and stillness, and in the times when everyone is getting along and there is no fighting. Peace can often seem hard for children to grasp until we begin to teach them that they can lead and create peace in their world. We can help them to

learn to stop when they are anxious or angry and think of ways and recognize ways they can create peace. This very concept can become contagious in all our lives as we learn to pause, take a deep breath, and ask God to help us to create peace around us even in the midst of chaos. Let's look together in each of the stories we read this week for ways the characters create peace. Sometimes we have to look under the surface to find ways to create peace around us.

Moses helped to create peace in the Israelites world by leading them out of Egypt.

God began to lay the foundations of living a peace filled life by giving us the 10 commandments.

Boaz helped to create a peaceful life for Ruth after the heartbreak that she had lived, and he was able to further the legacy of peace by becoming the grandfather to King David.

Hannah learned to go to God with her broken heart. As she poured out her tears to him God gave her the assurance that she would not always be marked as a childless woman.

She remembered her promise to God, and gave her son, Samuel to serve God as a child. Then she faithfully returned each year grateful for the peace and gift that God had given her.

Samuel spent his days faithfully serving God and the Israelites and leading them in the ways God had commanded the Israelites to live peacefully with one another. Even as the Israelites grew dissatisfied and begged Samuel for a king he continued to serve. As he transitioned to serving a king, Samuel showed the people what it was to follow God even while serving a man, striving to create peace for his king and to love the Israelites.

David's life, though he was a warrior, was actually a beautiful picture of peace in the midst of chaos. David's life was spent writing beautiful songs, songs that brought him peace as he was running for his life, songs that praised the God who created him and loved him, songs that praised God for his goodness. David learned that above all else it was God who gave him peace. God even promised David that though his life had been marked by war, he would give his son, Solomon a reign of peace.

Solomon's reign and life were marked by not only peace but also by the wisdom that God so graciously granted to him.

It is so beautiful to see that God has always known that since Adam and Eve's sin all of creation is longing for peace. He gives us the gift of becoming part of restoring peace to this world every single time we choose to SHINE peace into the world we live in. What an incredible gift we can give!

Challenge:

- This week, read this story: <https://jeremiahproject.com/culture/values/peacemakers.html>
Then talk and dialogue about how peace was created between the bears and the eagles.
- Be imaginative, and actively try to create peace in the everyday things you do and see. Create a list together that celebrates the finding of peace in your lives.
- Spend 2 minutes each day as a family in silence. Then pray together asking God to help you to SHINE peace.