



GYR

PEOPLE

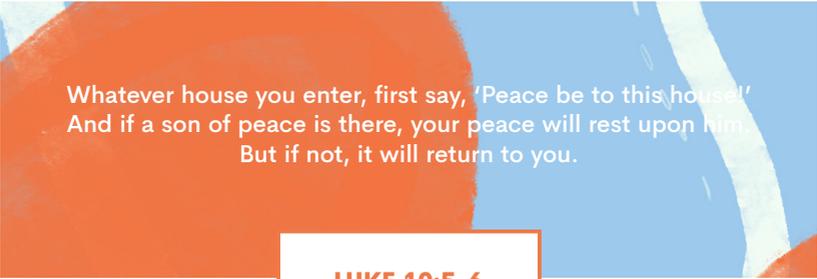
*of* PEACE

## The world is pretty crazy at the moment.

We believe God has positioned us as his church to be a unique presence amidst all of the chaos. We have the power to be people of peace.

We'd like to encourage you to daily take a moment with us, for the next few weeks, to stop, be still and reflect. To consider how we can be people internally full of peace, and how then we can bring peace to others.

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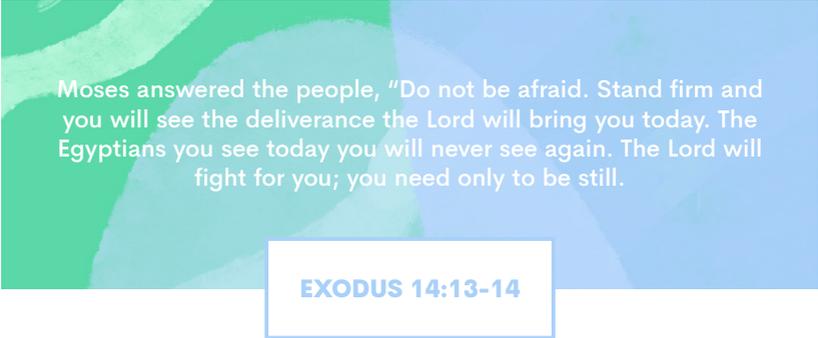


Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!'  
And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him.  
But if not, it will return to you.

**LUKE 10:5-6**

Jesus calls us as we interact with the world to be a person of peace, someone who brings His life into every situation. Bringing peace, and having peace comes from a deep internal intimacy with Jesus, from an acceptance of oneself. Being happy with where you are, but resting in the knowledge that where God has you, isn't where he is leaving you, knowing he is constantly growing and refining you. Henri Nouwen in his book "Life of the Beloved" calls it self-acceptance and self-rejection (different than the kind of acceptance that doesn't allow yourself to change and arrogantly says, "I'm fine the way I am"), he says, "Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the "Beloved." Being the Beloved constitutes the core truth of our existence." True self-acceptance isn't saying "i don't need to change", but it is accepting one's flaws and limitations and then resting in that fact that Jesus has an overwhelming love for you. Only in this rest of the beloved can one experience true peace, and invite people into that peace.

What would it look like for you to be a person of peace today? To be totally rested in "being the beloved that constitutes the core truth of your existence"?



Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still."

**EXODUS 14:13-14**

Amidst the chaos, anxiety and pressure the Israelites were facing, Moses urges his people to stop, to be still, and rest in the knowledge that God goes before them and that he fights for them. Peter Craigie calls stillness, "the practice of letting go of our grip on life to relax in him." This is crazy, because the world says, "you need to work really really hard, and then you can rest!" But God flips that script on it's head and invites us to rest **FIRST**. Then from that rest, you get direction, you get the way you can work and move. It's the total opposite.

What does it look like for you to be still today? To let go of your grip on life and rest in him? Maybe stillness looks like; restricting social media use; only looking at news once or twice a day; spending time in the scriptures before looking at your phone. We encourage you in prayer, to ask God, "How can I be still in you today?"

Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

#### MATTHEW 6:31-34

It is often easy to let anxiety take hold of our lives, and at first glance it can seem like Jesus' idea of not worrying is easier said than done. You can't just tell someone, "don't worry" and they magically stop. God knows we need something else to focus on, something actually life-giving that can squash worry in our lives.

That is: seeking his kingdom before our own kingdom. When Jesus says kingdom, he essentially means a place, space or person where his will is being done. A kingdom is a place where the king's will reigns. When we seek his kingdom above our own, we look for his will to be done in and through our lives more than our will. Jesus knows that this is the only way to truly eradicate worry and anxiety from our lives.

So we invite you today to step in to God's will for your life. Usually that just means a little baby step we might take, one small little area, where we surrender to his will above our own. It could be as tiny as having a short conversation with someone we would normally ignore, or as small as refraining from joining in on a negative conversation. When we do just the little things, we invite his kingdom to come and reign, and through that, we eliminate worry and anxiety from our lives.



Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

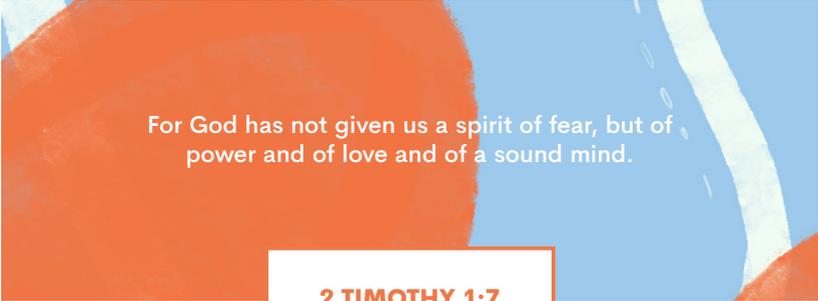
**MATTHEW 11:28-30**

Yoke is a funny word. It is the piece of wood tied across two animals that then attaches to whatever they are pulling. Yoke is often thought of as a negative word, "throw off the yoke of slavery, the yoke of imperialism etc" This directly ties to our cultures idea of what it means to be free.

Our idea of freedom can often be to throw off every yoke in our life, to have no restraints, or restrictions on us, that is how we truly find peace and happiness. Jesus knows that this way of thinking is actually what leads to burden, and to weariness.

This completely countercultural, radical statement of "take my yoke upon you and learn from me" invites us to not throw off all restraint, but to humbly accept Jesus' way, to learn from him about how to do life, accepting the restraints he has that lead to life.. He says by doing this, we find rest for our souls, because following in his way is the way to true life.

We encourage you to spend some time in prayer asking God, "what does your yoke look like for me in this time?"



For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

**2 TIMOTHY 1:7**

The Passion translation calls a 'sound mind', 'self-control'. Self-control is a fruit of the spirit that can be difficult to practice. Without God, self-control requires us to strive, and striving on our own is exhausting. The word, however, says self-control is a gift, a part of what God gives to us, one of the fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

In this current time, to be set apart from craziness and hysteria, we need to show a way that practices self-control. Self-control that trusts in our Heavenly Father and his divine plan, over the world's narrative. Self-control that also listens to the right voices within the news and media; self-control to not buy into a hoarding mindset; self-control to not let our conversations be focused on fear and concern.

To experience His spirit, that gives us self-control, as well as of power and love, we need to be positioning ourselves daily to receive it. Spending time in prayer, in silence and solitude, in His word, and in Godly-minded conversations with others. We invite you into that today.

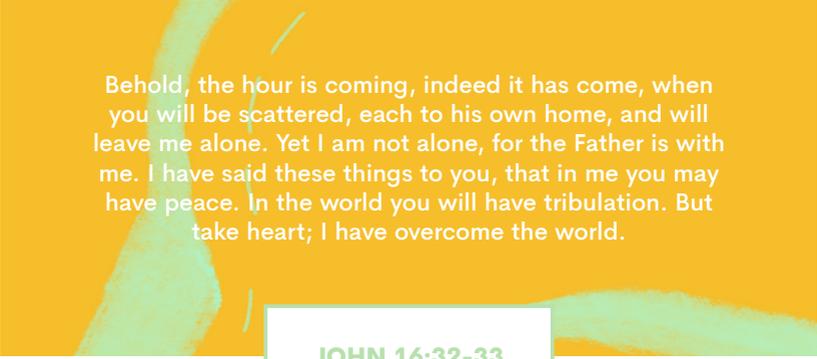


But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

**JAMES 3:17-18**

Where are you getting your wisdom from? Is it from the headlines, from Facebook Moms or from Instagram influencers? Look at all of the qualities of the wisdom of heaven, I can't say the wisdom I get from other places has that. When it says 'pure' that can be translated as, 'perfectly in tune and with a clear tone'. When we receive wisdom from heaven, through the word and through the Spirit of God, we can trust it, and we NEED to trust it over the wisdom of the world. In this we reap a harvest of righteousness, meaning that we are changed from the inside-out.

Are you trusting in heavenly wisdom or in the wisdom of the world?



Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

**JOHN 16:32-33**

Oof. That, “scattered each to his own home” is a bit too real right now. But Jesus shares that even when he is alone, he’s never really alone. What if this crazy time where we are stuck in our homes, isn’t a time to be afraid of, but a time to really sink into our relationship with the Father. What if it’s a time to go from believing in our MINDS we’re not alone, to believing it in our HEARTS. Often, for things to go from our heads to our hearts we need a crisis that is out of our control. God lovingly uses the tribulation in the world to bring us closer to Him. That’s why we can have peace in tribulation, because he says, “Take heart, I have overcome the world.”

Pray today that being alone with your loving Father, isn’t just a thought or an idea. But actually becomes a living reality. That through this tribulation, you’d find peace, through the God that has overcome the world.

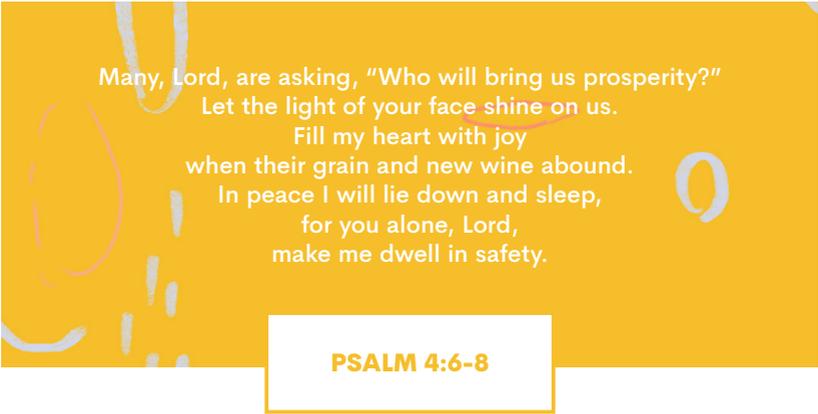


I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

**ROMANS 8:18-21**

Frustration leads to freedom and glory. Even creation is going through this process. We suffer now, but amidst that suffering and frustration, an internal work is happening in us. You might feel like this season is a "winter" season, a time of frustration and suffering. In winter, a tree's roots grow deep, a tree actually grows stronger in the winter, so that it can produce fruit in the spring. So if we are a tree planted next to the stream of living water (Psalm 1:3), we are actually growing stronger in this season.

We invite you now, to read that verse again and just spend a few moments in silence. If your mind wanders, that's okay! Just bring yourself back to focus, just say, "here I am Lord." You might not hear anything, or get any great revelation, that's okay! Sit with this verse at the forefront of your brain and just be silent in front of it.

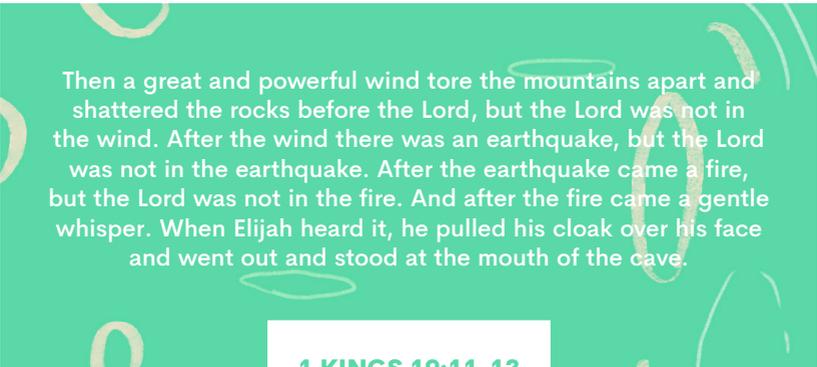


Many, Lord, are asking, "Who will bring us prosperity?"  
Let the light of your face shine on us.  
Fill my heart with joy  
when their grain and new wine abound.  
In peace I will lie down and sleep,  
for you alone, Lord,  
make me dwell in safety.

**PSALM 4:6-8**

Comparison kills gratitude: Yes we all do it, we all compare ourselves to other people. It says, "Fill my heart with joy when THEIR grain and new wine abound." Key word is "their", it's not, I have joy when I am blessed, but give me joy when THEY are blessed. Pray this over yourself this morning. That you could be filled with joy when you see someone else winning.

When we are able to pray that prayer it says we will be able to have peace when we sleep because we trust more that God is in charge. We invite you to pray this verse over your life this morning. Trust that God is in charge, and have the courage to rejoice in other people's wins.



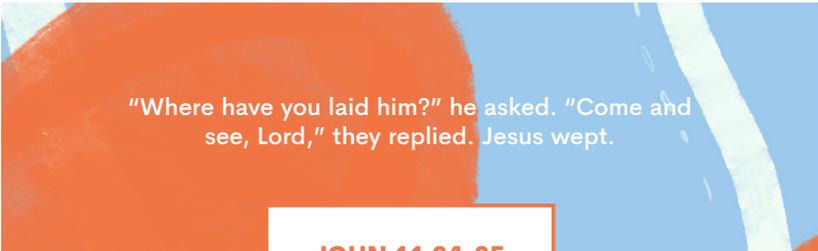
Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

**1 KINGS 19:11-13**

The wind, the earthquake and the fire. These are all ways that God showed up to his people in the past, but God was not in any of these things for Elijah. He came in a small quiet whisper. How often do we look for or even try and force God to show up for us in ways he did in the past? God is always wanting to grow us, and often that means as we change, the way he speaks to us changes.

We're believing that in this season, a season of relative silence and quiet as we are stuck at home. That God is wanting to speak to us in a "gentle whisper", the God of wind, earthquakes and fire, wants to meet us in our silence through a gentle whisper, to give us a piece of himself that we wouldn't get in the midst of the noise.

Spend time this morning positioning yourself, and quieting yourself to hear from the God of gentle whispers.

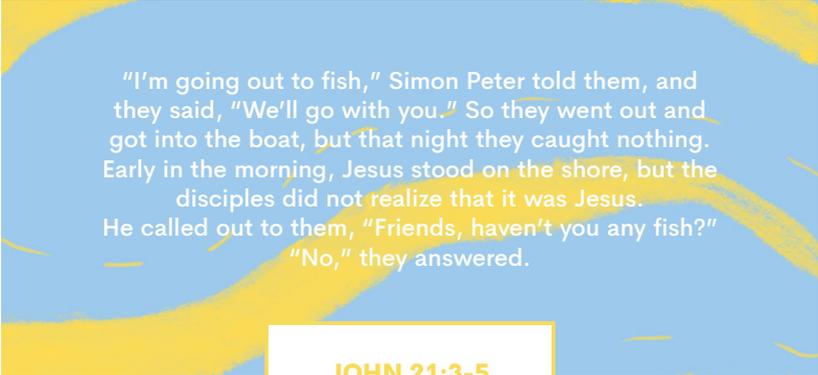


"Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. Jesus wept.

**JOHN 11:34-35**

In these iconic lines in the story of Lazarus being raised from the dead, we are met with a problem. Jesus wept... Why would Jesus cry? Jesus, who had healed the blind, made the lame walk, and cast out demons was moved with emotion. I'm guessing he still knew the outcome of the situation, he knew he would raise him to life. But still, he wept, he was moved with sorrow.

Nouwen reminds us that Jesus didn't lead "as the conquering hero, with staunch determination and an iron will" but that he felt pain and sorrow. Jesus had to be connected to the pain of the world, so that he could overcome it. The same goes for us, to overcome pain, we cannot hide from pain with a veneer of togetherness, we must connect with our pain in order to allow Jesus to conquer it. And as we do this we actually gain a deeper intimacy with Jesus, because Jesus wept.

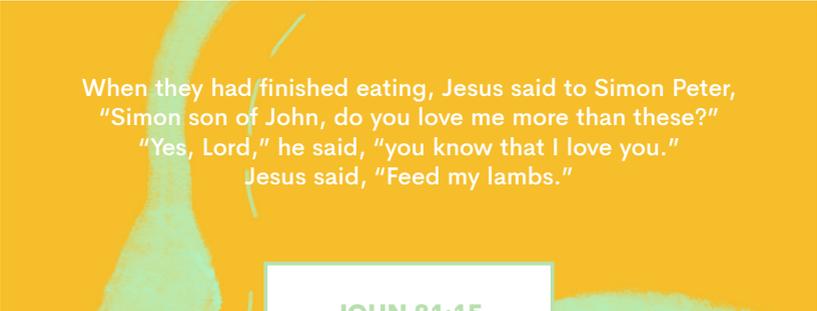


"I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered.

**JOHN 21:3-5**

After Peter had betrayed Jesus by denying him three times, in shame, he left his calling and went back to what he knew; fishing. When we're feeling shame, it's easy to revert back to old habits, easy to go back to what we know, instead of living in what God has called us to. Jesus amidst this, meets Peter and asks him, is the life you've gone back to working for you? He asks us the same, when we feel shame and we go back to what we know, does it really work for us? Does it produce joy and peace and love in us? As was for Peter, the answer is always, "no".

In isolation, it can be easy to revert to old habits, old ways of living that aren't the way of Jesus and aren't producing fruit in our lives. Jesus meets us there, and gently calls to us, saying come back to me. Come back to my way of living, because my way of living brings life in all its fullness. Leave your shame in the boat and run towards Jesus and back into the calling on your life to live knowing Him and being with Him.



When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter,  
"Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"  
"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."  
Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

JOHN 21:15

After the betrayal by Peter and after Jesus calls him back to him, they have breakfast together on the beach. Then Jesus asks Peter this question. "Do you love me more than these?" Some Bible scholars have said Jesus is referring to the other disciples, but others have said he is referring to his old way of life. The "more than these" is actually his catch of fish, his boat, his old lifestyle that Peter had returned to after betraying Jesus.

Jesus calls to us, saying, "do you love me more than these", more than our job, our friendships or our money. Jesus calls us to evaluate, do we love him more than our preferences, or our comfort? When we come to a place where we are willing to answer, "Yes, Lord you know that I love you". He will call us to "feed my lambs" meaning; lay down those things so that you can serve me and serve people. Not necessarily losing any of those things, but laying them at his feet, to let him use as he wants.

So, Jesus is calling to you, saying, "Do you love me more than these?"



"Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."

**JOHN 21:18**

This story of Peter ends with Jesus indicating the new kind of life Jesus wants Peter to live. The English translation can come off a bit harsh, but in reality it was a gentle invitation into total surrender to God and his will. Jon Tyson in his book, *The Burden is Light* says, "Peter's spirit melted from that of a harsh and driven leader into the soul of a gracious and loving shepherd."

Going where "someone else will lead and dress you" takes humility, because it means admitting we're not in charge of our life, and seeking to serve others before ourselves. This humble servant leader is exactly the kind of person Jesus is looking for to shepherd his people and to bring his glory to earth. Reflect today, are you a part of that? Are you going your own way, or are you living in the resurrection transformation that Peter found?