

Peace Devotionals

Christmas Eve Devotional - Spiritual Peace

Luke 2:8-14 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

Have you ever had someone promise to do something for you? I mean something really big? And then after what seemed like an eternity, they came through for you. The promise was fulfilled and a tremendous sense of relief swept over you. My most recent experience was the Grace Lutheran Christmas Food Basket deliveries. It was somewhat overwhelming. People stepped up to take care of a seemingly daunting task of organizing the food drive. From collecting the names, collecting the food, sorting the food, filling the baskets, all the way through delivering the boxes of food. Probably the most dramatic example of God's promise of His grace being sufficient is the manner in which the boxes of food were picked up after our 11:00 service on Sunday the 20th. The boxes just disappeared. People lined up and pitched in. Some people even asked how many they could take, because just delivering one set of boxes was not enough. Talk about a promise being fulfilled. Praise God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for pouring his love into the hearts of the Grace Lutheran congregation until it overflowed in love! 33 deliveries had to be made to fulfill our commitment. And it just happened. People did what was the right thing. And this was accomplished not out of obligation. Our salvation does not rest on accomplishing a list of works. Ours has been bought and paid for. These boxes were delivered out of love. In most cases it was out of love for people that those who stepped up to make the deliveries did not even know where the part of our community where the boxes were to be delivered to. Let alone who they were to be delivered to. Thank God for turn-by-turn GPS systems! We had so much food that we had several boxes full left over that went to the Faith Lutheran Food Bank. Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Son, once more His love came down.

The love of the Father for us is such that over 2000 years ago, he sent his Son to earth. He fulfilled his promise to send us a savior. He sent us our deliverer. He told us we would be set free, and He fulfilled His promise. We were set free from death in sin. We were reconciled

once more with the Father. We who had distanced ourselves in the Garden of Eden were fully restored to righteousness through that baby born in a manger. The same baby the Angels told the shepherds would be found “in cloths and lying in a manger.” And so peace, a spiritual peace, was given to the shepherds. His promise was fulfilled. A spiritual peace first lost in Eden by Adam and Eve was restored. It is a peace that has been restored to all who have faith in Jesus Christ. And when you stack up the promises fulfilled in our lives, including those made by us and those given to us by friends and family, they cannot even come close to what we have been given in Christ. There is a sense of relief for all believers that surpasses anything we can experience on earth when an earthly promise is fulfilled. Friends of the Savior, share the Good News this Christmas season. Let that same spiritual peace flow out from you to all who are in need. Share the peace given to the shepherds long ago.

PRAYER: Father, Abba, Your children have been truly blessed by You. Your love for us is such that Your Son came down to earth. Your Love came down to us. And that love saved us in a way , and at a time, when we needed it most. That love granted us the spiritual peace we so desperately need. You have restored us to You O God. And for that blessing we thank You in the name of one who delivered us. Christ Jesus. Amen

Christmas Day - The Peace Of God

Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Normally we think of the Christmas season as one of joy and happiness. Our hearts are warmed by the many gatherings of friends, coworkers, and family that occur during the holiday season. At Grace Lutheran, we look forward with anticipation to the celebration of the birth of our Savior. Candle light services are among my favorite. To me there is no substitute for a candle lit sanctuary on Christmas Eve. You can almost touch the Spirit in the air because it has so filled the room. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.

I remember a few Christmases which have a bittersweet memory to them. You may also have the same kinds of memories. The last Christmas with my Mother is one I treasure in my heart, and yet there is a sadness to that memory. She went on to be with her Savior a few months after Christmas about 15 years ago. Yet that Christmas will forever be in my heart as one of the most special in my entire life. Do you have a similar memory? Chances are you do. For adults it is usually the passing of a family member or a friend. Or it may be a relationship that ended. For a child it may be the loss of a pet. In each case there is a sadness that cannot be replaced. It is an emotional loss that leaves a virtual hole in the heart. Many people will search for something to fill that hole in their heart. It can be an endless, and futile search. That search can lead to self-destructive behaviors. Studies show that the Christmas season is one of the busiest times of the year for crisis hotlines. Many people reach the end of their rope. They think all hope is lost and it will not get better. But the Apostle Paul reminds all of us in Romans 15 of the ultimate solution to that hole in the heart. It is God through His Holy Spirit. When we trust in God, we are given renewed hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. A joy will return to hearts broken or left with a hole. It is by reaching out for that hope that healing begins. It is the healing of the spirit that can only take place through faith in God. And when we grasp onto that hope we know God will fill us, once again, with joy and peace that cannot be substituted by anything of the face of the earth. Dear friends of the Savior, if you know of someone who is struggling this Christmas season, reach out to them in love. Share the love that the Father has poured into your heart by His Spirit. Share time in the Word with those who are in turmoil. Help them to know that there is peace, hope and joy out there just waiting for them. May this Christmas find you overflowing with the hope, joy and peace that can only come from our Father in heaven.

PRAYER: Most Merciful God, we ask for Your peace to surround us this Christmas season. We ask humble Lord, that you would open our eyes to the need that also surrounds us. We ask that our hearts be opened to reach out in love to those we know in our lives that so desperately need to know Your love and peace. Open our ears to the cries of the lost dear Lord. These things we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Day After Christmas Day – The Peace of Christ

Colossians 3:15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

The presents are open. Stocking have been “unstuffed” and are no longer hanging by the chimney with care. The big Christmas day dinner is now leftovers. I know that the meal on Christmas Day is supposed to be great. But I really like the leftovers. There is something about all the flavors having more time to mix and mesh together just works for me. Give me a sandwich made of left over ham or turkey on rye with Swiss cheese, a little cranberry sauce, and a slice of pie and I am a happy guy. While munching on the leftovers I am also remembering all the wonderful things that happened when my family gathered for the Christmas Day meal. A meal twice blessed. How about you? Do leftovers bring back fond memories?

Celebrating the birth of Jesus is a big deal for us at Grace Lutheran. We have a lot of traditions wrapped up in the Advent season celebrations. We start preparing weeks ahead of time. We hold a series of Wednesday evening services. There is a crafts night, a Christmas around the World night, a drama night, and much more. We have three services on Christmas Eve so that we do not turn people away because our sanctuary is full. And then on Christmas Day we continue the celebration with a service in the morning with a celebration of music and worship of the birth of the Christ Child. And then it is time for rest. Outside of Grace, in our own lives we each have our own way of preparing for Christmas. Parties, caroling, visiting relatives and friends, shopping and more shopping. All these things and much more. The activities fill our lives until we can scarcely think. And then the day after Christmas Day rolls around and we have this feeling of accomplishment. We made it! We survived! And after the joy of the revelation of survival, we start to wonder “Okay, what do I do now that Christmas has come and gone?” What is next? Friends of the Savior, that is when the words from the Apostle Paul to the church in Colosse need to ring in your hearts. After all the turmoil, ceremony, and celebration it is time for reflection. It is time to let the peace of Christ sink in. Let it rule in our hearts. We do not need to feel remorse at having to put Christmas away until next year. We can keep the spirit, the true meaning of Christmas alive all year long. I am reminded of Ebenezer Scrooge and how it took a visit from three spirits on Christmas Eve to change him. He was transformed into a man who kept Christmas the whole year through. We, as Christians have been visited by a spirit. We have been visited by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has been poured into our hearts and we are given faith. That saving gift of faith which others yearn for, try to earn in various ways, and yet ignore when it is right there in front of them. And that gives us a reason to be thankful. For we have been given a gift that we celebrate each and

every Christmas Day. Our Savior has been born. We have been given a new lease on life. We can rejoice with all the Angels in heaven at what has been accomplished for us by this child who was born of a virgin, wrapped in cloths and placed in a manger in the town of Bethlehem. We can give thanks for the gift of eternal life. A gift more precious than the gold, frankincense, and myrrh that the Wisemen offered to the Christ Child. For our gift was bought and paid for on the Cross at Calvary with the blood of God's own Son. He paid a price we could not. The baby born of a virgin would one day take the ultimate sacrifice because of the love our Father in heaven has for us. His will was done. And that my Brothers and Sisters in Christ gives you and I the peace we need most of all. The peace of God. That peace of God that transcends all understanding. That peace which will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. That is the greatest peace of all and for that peace let us give thanks.

PRAYER: Almighty God, we humbly give thanks for the tremendous gift you have lavished upon us. The depth of Your love, mercy and grace given to us is beyond our comprehension. Help us O God to understand with our minds that which our eyes cannot see. Help us, as we do about our days, to find opportunities to share Your love with other who are in need. Guide us forward and strengthen us to the task at hand. Let the peace of Your Son, our Lord and Savior reign in our hearts today and every day. Let the true meaning of Christmas never fade from our understanding. This we pray in the name of Your precious Son. Amen