

ADVENT AND THE HEART

“A Guarded Heart”

Scripture Reading: ISAIAH 9:6-7

-) **SLIDES 1-6.** Bible Jeopardy!
-) **SLIDES 7-8.** Read today’s Scripture text.
-) **SLIDE 9.** We are presently in a short 4-week series to talk about this Season of Advent for the year 2020. I have titled this series *“Advent and the Heart.”* In this Season we eagerly anticipate celebrating the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.
-) This Savior will (not may) will make many changes in the heart of the believer. And each week as we go through Advent, we will have a theme word for that Sunday. I will talk about how our Savior uses that word, that trait of character, to make those changes within us.
-) **SLIDE 10.** Last week our word was *“hope.”* We learned that hope matures the heart of the believer. Hope (a noun) is the object I expect to obtain. Eternal life is our hope. I expect to obtain eternal life not because I earned it or I deserve it. But only because the Word of God promises it to every believer.
-) **SLIDE 11.** I have titled today’s message *“A Guarded Heart.”*
-) **SLIDE 12.** And what is our theme word for today? Today’s word is *“peace.”* (LIGHT CANDLE)
-) Today we are going to see how peace will guard our hearts. This message will be more practical than theological.
-) The word *“peace”* or some form of that word is used 352 times in the NASB. What idea comes to mind when you think of peace? Often, we think of 2 neighbors getting along in friendship or 2 countries getting along without war.

-) **SLIDE 13.** How does Webster define “*peace*?” Read.
-) I think we all understand and could apply those definitions of peace in a worldly sense.
-) But when the prophet Isaiah speaks of the Messiah in ISAIAH 9:6-7, what kind of peace will He bring? Isaiah says He will be the Prince of Peace and of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. What is the peace in this text referring to? Is it world peace?
-) No, it is not. It is not 2 countries getting along without war. It is not 2 neighbors living amicably beside one another. That kind of peace comes and goes.
-) **SLIDE 14.** Jesus even says in LUKE 12:51 that He has not come to bring a worldly peace.
-) Isaiah is speaking of spiritual peace. Spiritual peace is much different than worldly peace. And we will see that Spiritual peace will guard our hearts.
-) So, I ask. Do you have spiritual peace in your life? Repeat. For sure a person cannot have spiritual peace unless they first have the hope that we talked about last week. But if you have hope, the true hope of eternal life, you should have peace.
-) **SLIDE 15.** The Apostle Paul tells us in GAL 5:22-23 that a believer will have the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control). Notice one word on that list? Peace.
-) God’s Word tells us that we should have these characteristics. So, do we have spiritual peace, and if not, what is keeping us from having it and living it?
-) When Jesus said in JOHN 10 that He came to give us life and life abundantly, I believe one thing he meant by that was for a believer not to live a defeated life. We need to start living in the promise of hope and of peace!

-) And that doesn't mean the world as we know it changes. Family situations may not change. Financial situations may not change. Health situations may not change.
-) Those haunting memories of our past won't change. And COVID is still real and changing our lives. But what it does mean is how we deal with those things will change.
-) **SLIDE 16.** There are 27 books in the New Testament. Twenty-One of those books are what we would call epistles or letters. Out of those 21 books, 18 of them begin in some fashion with the author sending his peace on the readers of that letter. For instance, read PHILIPPIANS 1:1,2.
-) Why would the writers of these NT books want to send peace to the readers of that time at those churches? Explain. Life is tough and persecution awaits.
-) So, let's get right to the point. How do we have this "*peace*" rule our life and not the world? How do we get past the worry and anxiety that prevents peace from saturating our lives?
-) **SLIDE 17.** In MATTHEW 6:25-34 Jesus tells us not to worry. And He tells us in 6:33 what to do to help overcome that. Explain. When we have worries, we have no peace.
-) **SLIDE 18.** To have peace in our lives, we must **SEEK** His righteousness. What does that mean? It means we have this longing inside us to become more Christ-like. It means we strive for a lifestyle of holiness. It means we go more often to God with a sincere confession of our sins.
-) **SLIDE 19.** Review.
-) **SLIDE 20.** How do we get past the worry and anxiety that prevents peace from saturating our lives? 1PETER 5:6,7.
-) **SLIDE 21.** To have peace in our lives, we must **HUMBLE** ourselves. What does that mean?

-) We humans too often try to fix things that are so far out of our control. And we get even more frustrated and anxious when we can't fix those situations. We need to humble ourselves, admit we can't fix it, and give it to God.
-) (I think I heard someone say that same thing last week) He is big enough to take care of all of our anxieties.
-) **SLIDE 22.** Review.
-) **SLIDE 23.** How do we get past the worry and anxiety that prevents peace from saturating our lives? PHIL 4:6-7.
-) **SLIDE 24.** To have peace in our lives, we must present our requests by **PRAYER** and pleading with thanksgiving. What does that mean?
-) This is a similar response as our last FITB. We must give our worries and anxieties to God. And these verses tell us exactly how to do that—in prayer **PLEADING** with thanksgiving.
-) I understand prayer. But why pleading with thanksgiving? You mean that I should be thankful for this terrible situation that is happening in my life? Yes. Two reasons. 1) God has allowed that situation for your good (ROM 8:28). I may not understand it, but God has a perfect plan for your life and sometimes that perfect plan includes trials (JAMES 1:2-4).
-) But let's look at this in another way. We pray for that situation while pleading with thanksgiving for what we have. I might be going through this (hand) but thank you Lord I still have this. We still have and will never lose our salvation.
-) There are some people who have allowed COVID-19 to absolutely consume their life. Explain. This is where they live.
-) **SLIDE 25.** And 2) we plead with thanksgiving because we know that the sovereign God of the universe will give us a peace that surpasses all understanding.

-) And that peace will do what? Guard our hearts. When we worry and we are anxious, it as if our hearts are open and vulnerable to anything and everything. And sometimes in this life we feel like our heart is getting stomped on by the world and all those situations going on out there.
-) Have you ever had a broken heart? I have. They can be extremely painful. This (heart) needs protected. And that, my friends, is exactly what God's peace will do for you. I assure you that world peace will never do that. Only God's peace will do that.
-) **SLIDE 26**. Review.
-) **SLIDE 27**. Hope **MATURES** our heart. Peace **GUARDS** our heart.
-) We have two more ways our Savior changes our hearts. Let's see what He brings us next week.

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