ANXIOUS *for*

NOTHING

FINDING C ALM *in a* CHAOTIC WORLD

By Max Lucado with Jenna Lucado Bishop

**The Peace of God will Guard Your Heart**

Read Philippians 4:4-8 / specifically v 7 Specifically

OPENING REFLECTION

*Our Father gives us the very peace of God. He downloads the tranquility of the throne room into our world, resulting in an inexplicable calm. We should be worried, but we aren’t. We should be upset, but we are comforted. The peace of God transcends all logic, scheming, and efforts to explain it.* ~ Max Lucado

When strolling the streets of Istanbul, Turkey, there is no sight more majestic than the Hagia Sophia. Its central dome, standing 105 feet tall and surrounded by four pencil- shaped minarets stretching more than 200 feet into the heavens, can be spotted from miles away. The dome often serves as a “north star” for lost tourists.

In AD 532, Emperor Justinian I made the Hagia Sophia what it is today. It served as a Christian cathedral for more than a millennium, until AD 1453. That year, the Ottoman Empire took over Constantinople (modern day Istanbul) and declared the Hagia Sophia to be a mosque. Today, it is a museum.

When I (Jenna) stepped into the Hagia Sophia, I could immediately see the layers of history within its walls. Much restoration and repair have peeled back the yellow paint the Ottomans used to cover up Christian symbols and mosaics. One particular mosaic that caught my attention stood over the Imperial Door, which was used only by the emperors.

The mosaic depicts Jesus sitting on a throne of jewels. Some people are around him, but I didn’t pay much attention to them. My focus was drawn to his hands. Jesus is holding what looks like an open scroll or book. I couldn’t read the words, but after doing a little research I learned they say, “Peace be with you. I am the light of the world.”

Peace be with you.

Written high over the twenty-three-foot-tall oak doors are the words, “Peace be with you.” Written above the doors that more than three million tourists walk through a year are the words, “Peace be with you.” Written above the doors that welcomed emperors who worshiped themselves and sultans who prayed to a different god are the words, “Peace be with you.”

I wonder how many people over the centuries have actually looked at those words and received the invitation. Peace. Not just any peace. God’s peace. A peace that surpasses all understanding. And just as this peace frames the doorway of the Hagia Sophia, so it frames our hearts **if we will allow it**. It’s a peace that guards our hearts and minds in Christ.

This peace is a constant invitation in our lives as we walk through the doors of decisions, of relationships, of daily tasks. But how many times do we stop to accept it?

“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7). Today, let’s look up and say yes to the invitation of this beautiful promise.

A couple of way’s for you to grasp the idea that Max is talking about (the perfect storm) is google the movie of the true story or turn in your Bible to 2 Chronicles 20:1-12.

What was one thing that stood out to you from the Scripture?

Why do these words stand out to you, and what fresh insight do they bring?

What was Jehoshaphat’s response to the perfect storm of armies that were preparing to attack (vs 3 and 12)? When the perfect storm of anxiety is looming in your own life, how can you respond like Jehoshaphat?

Many of us ask “Where is God” when facing life’s storms.

The disciples must have asked this question as they were tossed about by the Galilean Sea, no Jesus in sight, alone in the storm for nine hours.

When we face the tempestuous storms of life, Paul encourages us with these words from Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus,”

As we do our part—rejoice in the Lord, pursue a gentle spirit, pray about everything, and cling to gratitude—God does his part. He bestows on us the peace of God.

This peace ***of*** God that Paul promises is not just from God, It’s ***of*** God.

As we rejoice in God, continue to pray, and cast our worries on him, he builds a fortress of peace around our hearts and our minds.

When Paul and his fellow shipmates were tossed at sea for fourteen days, an angel of the Lord appeared to Paul and gave him three promises we can hold onto in the storm:

1 We are not alone. God sends his heavenly helpers to guard us.

2. We belong to God. Heaven has a place for us.

3. We are in the Lord’s service. God will never let you live one day short of the mission he has given you.

God never promised a life without storms. But he promised to be with us when we face them.

Read John 14:27. What is the difference between the “peace” the world gives and the peace God gives?

Matthew 8:23-27 God never promises we will live a storm-free existence. The Bible is full of stories about storms and how to face them. Jesus and his disciples dealt with storms and problems. They were not problem free just because they were with Jesus. But he was always with them in the storm he never abandoned them to deal with the storm by themselves. In this story what was Jesus doing during the storm?

When you gave your life to (God), he took responsibility for you. He guarantees your safe arrival into his port. You are his sheep: he is your shepherd. Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me” (John 10:14). You are a bride; he is your bridegroom. The church is being “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband: (Revelation 21:2). You are his child; he is your father. “You are no longer a slave but God’s own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir: (Galatians 4:7. You can have peace in the midst of the storm because you are not alone, you belong to God.

What specific anxieties are weighing on you today? Write down any worry on your heart. Be as specific as you can be. Your Father wants to hear from you.

Northeasters bear down on the best of us. Contrary winds. Crashing waves. They come. But Jesus still catches his children. He still extends his arms. He still sends his angels. Because you belong to him, you can have peace in the midst of the storm. The same Jesus who sent the angel to Paul sends this message to you: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you” (Isaiah 43:2). You may be facing the perfect storm, but Jesus offers the perfect peace.