

FOTS - Wk 4

“Peace > Anxiety”

9/5/21

Mark 4:36-41

Introduction

Cole. Lead team. **Mark 4:36-41**. Pray.

Today we are going to continue our series called “The Fruit of the Spirit in a Time of the Flesh” where we are addressing this internal war going on inside of us between these two distinct internal operating systems - God’s Spirit and our Flesh.

And today we are going to be focusing on peace. As I prepared this sermon, the idea of peace was a difficult concept for me to get on the ground. When I think of peace I think of drinking coffee by a waterfall, or laying in bed on a Saturday morning, reading a book maybe. And although that may be an aspect of peace, I do not believe that is the peace that Paul is referring to in Galatians 5. We are going to dive into this idea of peace, and specifically **Peace in a time of anxiety**

Anxiety in America and in us

Webster's dictionary defines anxiety as: **A feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.** Most of us wouldn't have trouble admitting that in the midst of a global pandemic there have been times where we have felt nervous, and unsure about what to do and how to do things. When you start reading about anxiety as an issue in America the evidence is overwhelming:

- The **average high school kid today** has the same level of anxiety as the average psychiatric patient in the early 1950's.
- 200 billion a year spent on mental health in the US, antidepressant market valued at 14 billion
- The **ADAA (Anxiety and Depression Association of America)** states Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting 40 million adults in the United States age 18 and older, or 18.1% of the population every year.
- And as far as the last year is concerned During August 2020, through December, 2020, significant increases were observed in the percentages of adults who reported experiencing symptoms of anxiety disorder (from 31.4% to 36.9%), depressive disorder (from 24.5% to 30.2%), and at least one of these disorders (from 36.4% to 42.4%).

So conservatively about 1 in 5 Americans deal with some form of anxiety and aggressively those numbers are closer to 1 and 3.

We are seemingly at this point in America where anxiety is at every turn.

And those are just the numbers. Let's just get anecdotal for a second. How should we react to covid? Should we let our kids be around other kids, should we let our kids be around people that are unvaccinated. Should we get vaccinated? Should we stay in our house, is it unloving to leave our house if there is a chance by me leaving my house that I might be the result of someone's death. I am not really interested in your response, I don't pretend to have the answer I am just trying to prove a point. There are a lot of questions about what we should do and how we should do it. And that is just the extra stuff, what about the normal stuff.

How are we supposed to parent our kids? How are we supposed to think about our finances? Whether on a macro level such as Afghanistan, race relations, finances, relationships, parenting.

And that is just big picture, what about just everyday things like:

- Is my friend upset with me? Were they offended by the way I said that?
- Did I handle that situation at work correctly?
- I just got home and I still am getting emails from the office
- Do we seriously have to go to that wedding?
- Who is paying the bills? We need to switch out wifi

There is just anxiety to the minutiae of life at times. How do I get through today, but why is that a problem. If anxiety is normal, just a part of the human experience, why is it opposed to the way of a Christian, why is anxiety anti peace?

Anxiety is a work of the flesh, a part of our sinful nature against God because it reveals that we believe we are the masters of our world not God. At the core of anxiety there is the statement **Everything would be fine if...**

- Everything will be fine if I have enough money
- Everything will be fine if I my life is comfortable
- Everything will be fine if I have good enough friends
- Everything will be fine if I find the perfect partner
- Everything will be fine if I get the dream job
- Everything will be fine if I get on the right medications with the right counselor

Anxiety says if I was God, if I was in control, then I would not have issues. Instead of trusting in God our flesh says you need to be in control and if you are not worry about it nonstop until you are in control. Because if you are not in control... If you don't have the answer to the uncertainty in your life... If things don't go exactly the way you want it then the world will fall apart. We buy fully into this idea that we know better than God, and anxiety is the unfortunate byproduct of our situation.

But Paul tells us that the fruit of the spirit is peace, not anxiety. That God offers a better way than the anxiety the world offers us. **So What does peace look like in a time of anxiety? How do we rebel against this time of anxiety?**

What is peace

We rebel against anxiety by resting in the peace offered to us by Jesus. But in order to talk about what talk looks like we have to define Biblical peace really is. Earlier I talked about how when I hear peace I think of waterfalls and good smelling candles.

I think that is probably where a lot of our minds go when the word peace is thrown around but that is more in line with the idea of tranquility. Others of us run to ideas of zen or stoicism. Just a steady presence always, and still others of us jump to an absence of conflict.

Not necessarily bad things, but honestly not things that I tend to enjoy. I am an enneagram 8, which is a nice way to say I thrive in conflict, I like to argue, I like to compete so this version of peace is not particularly compelling to me and is a term and an idea that has probably seldom been used to describe me or my life.

And although these ideas of stoicism or tranquility may be part of what the bible is referring to when it uses the word peace a better translation would be the word **Eirene**. Eirene means peace but it also means completeness or wholeness. Everything as it should be.

One scholar defined Eirene this way: **the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot. The reconciliation and flourishing of all things to God through the work of Christ**

The tranquil state of the soul.

Sounds nice, still kind of sounds like the name of a candle though. Let me see if I can explain it better with a story:
When the Simpsons go on vacation: mom, brothers and sisters, Bethany and I. Some things change depending on the year but there are some consistent patterns. We tend to go to a Big house, too many rooms, usually in very obscure places, but without fail there is always this massive kitchen table that most people would see and think wow, what a great table, we can eat all our meals together be around a table with one another, what a beautiful thing to do on family vacation. But that is not what my mom sees, my mom, we will call her Debbie, mostly because that's her name, Debbie sees this huge table, originally created so we can all eat together and enjoy one another's company, and thinks that is the perfect place to put my brand new 1300 piece puzzle of the identical blue ocean.

And if you're anything like me an 1800 piece puzzle of the same blue ocean as the opposite of peace, it is incredibly anxiety producing trying to find where the slightly different blue piece goes, but eventually, after a week full of yelling and tears we complete the puzzle. The puzzle that consists of 2352 identical blue pieces and there is a sort of peace, partially because the nightmare is finally over, but also because it is complete, each piece where it is supposed to be. That feeling of putting the last piece into the puzzle, what a dream. Some of us knew this was going to happen, my mom without fail never doubts, she just quietly looks at me when I am talking about how impossible it is to put together a 2700 piece puzzle of the ocean and says, look at the box, we know where we are going, we know we are going to complete it.

And if you're thinking, did he just compare Biblical peace offered by Jesus to a way to complex, waste of time puzzles that his family does on vacations. Then I would say, I absolutely did, **Eirene is the completed puzzle.**

Because we have two options, we can choose anxiety, we can frantically work on the puzzle and question whether we can complete it, I mean do we even have all the pieces? Or we can have peace. We can look at the box and say, I know where we are going and I know that we are going to get there.

Let me show you this peace, this Eirene in the life of Jesus and how our anxiety opposes it.

Mark 4:36-41

36 And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. 37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling.38 But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

1. Anxiety does no't trust in the kindness of God

Disciples and Jesus have been traveling together, speaking to crowds, performing miracles, and they have decided it is time to keep moving. They get on this boat, probably the sea of Galilee, so that they can cross to the other side and out of nowhere this huge storm comes and waves start to hit the boat and water starts to fill it. Water coming into the boat. Disciples are starting to get worried. But Jesus is asleep, and it appears as though they get frustrated with Him. And finally they say **Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"**

In other words, Jesus, do you not realize we are going to die, that this storm is going to capsize us and you cannot even care enough to be awake. **The disciples are asking will he give us peace?**

It is easy for me to kind of sneer at the disciples here. To think how ridiculous is it that they would ask if Jesus cares about them here. They are here thinking, will he do anything, will he help us, it is not a question of if can but whether or not he will.

At this point the disciples have seen Jesus, heal multiple people, bring people alive from the dead, provide food, be inconvenienced over and over again for strangers and they have the audacity to ask if he even cares? If he will help them?

But then I remember how quickly I do this. It is embarrassingly easy for me to get to “Does God even care about me”, like the disciples I so quickly forget everything he has done because in the moment things seem to not be going my way. In his book *God in the Dock* one of the major takeaways that C.S. Lewis has for the reader is if we are going to put ourselves in the position of judging God, if we are going to count God’s injustices against us, all the ways he has failed us then we must remember all the things he has done for us. The disciples are so quick to forget, we are so quick to forget all that Jesus has done, but peace remembers the kindness, it looks at the whole picture and in seeing the whole picture it trusts God with the parts that are unclear.

Anxiety forgets. We say just because God did this doesn’t mean... Anxiety questions. If he really cared then God would... But peace remembers the kindness of God. We remember that we have been here before, that we follow a God who has always been patient and kind and will continue to be patient and kind. Peace trusts.

39 And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?”

2. Anxiety does not have faith.

This is something that has always fascinated me. A decent group of these guys are fishermen. **FISHERMEN.** These guys aren’t new to the water, in fact some of these guys probably fished in this specific sea. In other words not only are they not new to the water, boats, storms, they are familiar with the way things work on this specific body of water.

And Jesus looks at them and says, **“Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?”**

The disciples are not being hyperbolic. They are experiencing anxiety because they are in danger. They are looking at the situation around them and they are saying I am in trouble, I am worried about what is going to happen. I have been in this type of situation before and I know how this goes. We need to do something about it.

Jesus does not rebuke them because they are incorrect about the situation, he rebukes them because they are incorrect about who he is.

The Disciples are asking, Does Jesus actually offer peace? When things are bad, when we are in the middle of the storm does Jesus actually show up? Look at what Jesus does. He does not say, why do you have such little faith, you need to do better if you want me to show up. No Jesus calms the storm first. And then he looks at them and says why did you not have more faith.

The order of this is important. This is where religion gets this wrong: the order is not to do better and then Jesus will show up, the Order is Jesus shows up despite you, and then he helps you look more like him.

It actually goes even further than this, which we can see in Mark 9. A father brings his son to Jesus, his son is demonically possessed and the disciples cannot cast out the demon, the Father asks Jesus to cast out the demon and this is what he says:

22 And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”**23** And Jesus said to him, “If you can! All things are possible for one who believes.” **24** Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!”

After this Jesus casts out the demon and the boy is healed. Let me explain why this is so beautiful. Jesus looks at this man who says **I believe; help my unbelief!**, and based on that he casts out the demon. Here is what that means: Jesus not only shows up, He not only calms the storm, He not only offers peace during times of trial. He also helps us have faith! So not only is it not about what you do, its not even about what you believe in the moment. How crazy is that! Jesus offers peace if you have faith in him, but he also helps you to have faith in him when you are struggling to have faith in him!

Peace does not look like having all the answers, it does not mean never having doubts, faith means looking at God and saying I trust you. Help me to trust you. I believe help my unbelief.

What peace is found in that, that God not only loves us, that he not only is kind to us, but he helps to have faith, he helps us in the midst of unbelief. Jesus doesn't look at the disciples in the storm and say, seriously, still you still don't trust me, nah he stops the storm. He stops the storm and then reminds them, I am here, you can trust me, you can have faith in me.

Some of us need to hear that today. Some of us are in the middle of the storms of life, and we need to be reminded that Jesus is there, he cares, and he is offering you peace. He is offering you wholeness and fullness that can only be found in him. Not found, in the changing of circumstances, that is what He does in this story but there are plenty of passages where Jesus says this world is going to be hard, but we can find peace, we can have faith that Jesus has overcome the world. Lets keep reading.

41 And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

3. Anxiety forgets who God is

Fear here is more like 'awe', they were amazed. This is an ongoing theme in the book of Mark the disciples are becoming more and more aware of who Jesus actually is. In this story they call him teacher, he is a teacher who they believe is the chosen one, the messiah who can do these amazing things. But eventually they will recognize that he is more than a teacher, they will realize He is God incarnate, the lamb of God who has come to take away the sins of the world.

The disciples are asking after this encounter, how. How does Jesus provide peace to their anxiety? And although the disciples do not fully understand the answer to this question, they do not fully comprehend who Jesus is, we do, we know the rest of the story.

Jesus on the cross to bring us peace

Micah 5:4-5 And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And he shall be their peace.

This is a prophecy about the messiah that would one day come, you see Micah is preaching to the jews, warning them of their coming destruction by the hands of the Assyrians. But he tells them not to worry because one day God will send a messiah, a savior who will liberate us and he will provide peace not just to us but to all people.

Around 700 years later a baby is born in a manger. A child who is called **Emmanuel** or God with us. And he is born during a time where again the Jews are under the oppression of a foreign power. This man called Jesus, who many start to call a messiah, starts to travel, teach, perform miracles and people start to worship Him as this promised messiah, the one who will deliver them from the power of their enemies like was promised 700 years ago.

But the Jews misunderstood the promise, and in a rage crucify this man who they once claimed was their savior.

And this is the most beautiful part, God used the most terrible thing that has ever happened, the death of himself, the death of God, what a crazy concept, God uses the death of himself to bring peace.

You see God used that, God used the total misunderstanding of the scriptures, the death of the most innocent man, the death of the spotless lamb in order to defeat Satan, sin, and death.

This is how God deals with our anxiety. This is how he offers a peace that surpasses all understanding, the cross. When we see the cross clearly we understand the kindness offered to us, that we can put our faith in God, and that God is who he says he is. The cross takes on our anxieties, it shows that Jesus paid the price for us despite the fact that we were his enemy and he offers a way for us to be in relationship with Him. The cross takes away our temptation to doubt God.

Because If God was control on the cross then he is control of your circumstances

Regardless of our circumstances we can trust that God is working all things together for your good and his glory. The invitation is open, all our invited to believe in Jesus, he offers peace. He knows the anxieties of this world and he asks us to have faith. He doesn't ask us to have everything figured out, to have perfect faith, to be free of doubt. He says follow me, cast your anxieties on me and know that I am the one who gives life and gives it abundantly.

God is not surprised by your life, he is not anxious about the problems in our lives no matter how big or small. No matter how many pieces your life is in right now, no matter how complicated those pieces are to put back together, God has got you. He is not worried about the ocean puzzle on the kitchen counter, he already knows how he is going to put it back together.

Cultivating peace

As we have been talking about this entire series we are going to need grace and grit in order to be able to cultivate peace in our lives. We are going to need to do some things, take action even if we don't feel like it and we need the holy spirit to work in and change our hearts.

1. Silence

I want us to take some intentional time this week, about 15 minutes a day and just be quiet in front of God. Take time to surrender the things that you are and have been anxious about and ask God to help your unbelief. Create some space to allow the holy spirit to move in and through your heart.

2. Cast your anxieties on God

We have a God who we can cast our anxieties on, take an hour and talk to God about what is going on in your heart. Ask him to give you faith and to help you see him clearly.

Prayer.

