

Broken Cisterns: Finding Our Peace Outside of God - Week 4

My Target: Consider where we get our peace from, and why we look for it there.

Just as we crave acceptance and significance as people, we also have a God given craving for peace. A craving that God alone can fill. But that doesn't stop us from trying to substitute other sources of peace.

An opposite of internal peace is anxiety or fear. Many of our broken attempts to bring peace into our lives are really an attempt at removing sources of fear.

Ex. I'm afraid my kids won't follow God so I work hard to control their behavior. I'm afraid I won't have the resources I want to purchase the things that make me feel powerful and in control so I save, I strive to earn, because money can bring peace to my concern.

People are Looking for Peace:

Matthew 6:25-34

[25] "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? [26] Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? [27] And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? [28] And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, [29] yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. [30] But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? [31] Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' [32] For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. [33] But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

[34] "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (ESV)

I know that for folks who struggle with clinical anxiety these verses can feel more like an attack than a comfort, however they are meant to offer hope to our very common struggle. They highlight that people tend to worry about their present circumstance as well as what the future holds. We tend to be afraid. What do we do with those fears? God

says in these verses think about my character. Think about who I am and let that bring comfort to you. Easier said than done some times but true nonetheless.

The World's Sources of Peace:

What are some unhealthy places we attempt to get peace from?

Control: Over relationships... Domineering spouse, helicopter (exasperating) parenting. Over details... obsessing over the calendar or the clock, sorting details and managing them can help us manage our fear of an uncertain future.

Power... Sometimes physical (I am not afraid because I can physically defend myself), or authority (I can control my circumstances by being in charge and not under the authority of others who may steer me to wrong and or uncomfortable places), even social influence (Maybe you lead your peer group, activities, dinner locations, conversation topics).

Political... We look to our party or our candidate to steer our culture or community into "the promised land" In an increasingly polarized political world we seem to be placing an undue quantity of hope in the cistern of our political perspective.

Financial control... perhaps present capacity to pay bills or purchase your way out of difficult situations that arise, perhaps it is future oriented where you are investing in retirement accounts that promise you a stable future free from difficulty and stress. Maybe you are obsessed with safety, never taking risks. We can often feel we are in control by playing the odds. As long as we consistently choose to avoid risk we ensure our safety. Interesting because by living in fear we attempt to avoid a more significant fear. Maybe you like to drive because you trust yourself more than you trust others.

How do these "unhealthy" sources seem to offer us the hope of peace?

Honestly they must deliver in some way or we probably wouldn't invest in them. I mean wise financial planning isn't foolishness it is wisdom, but is also a broken cistern because even financial planning cannot deliver to me what I need most. Husbands leading their wife and parents leading their children is not wrong, it is right and necessary but if we have bound our happiness to the product of that leadership we may be greatly disappointed. In fact we may move from leading to controlling and domineering. These things aren't wrong, they just aren't God. They are wise but not our ultimate source of hope.

We love the tangible. We prefer exerting our plan as we believe it is better than what God might have for us. We make gifts from God into gods.

How do they fail to deliver?

Money can be stolen, lost, the economy changes... Even children whose parents work diligently to lead them into godliness can walk away from faith and deny God. Despite all our effort to control things in the end we just can't control them enough or perfect enough. Even a strong man has a hard time defeating a bullet. All these things may offer to hold some water but they leak too much out and even the hope they offer is stagnant are undesirable in comparison to the living water we have in God.

Jeremiah 2:12–13

[12] Be appalled, O heavens, at this;
be shocked, be utterly desolate,
declares the LORD,
[13] for my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me,
the fountain of living waters,
and hewed out cisterns for themselves,
broken cisterns that can hold no water. (ESV)

Luke 12:15–21

[15] And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." [16] And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, [17] and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' [18] And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. [19] And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'" [20] But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' [21] So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." (ESV)

James 4:13–16

[13] Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"—[14] yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and

then vanishes. [15] Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." [16] As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. (ESV)

Take some time to talk with God. Ask him to reveal some of the broken cisterns you look to for peace in your life. Where God has revealed these patterns in you, admit you need help. Ask God to give you greater thirst. Ask God to lead you to His living water.

When it comes to the struggle we have with our desire for control I think the first place is a healthy reminder that God is the only one who is truly in control.

Remember God is in Charge:

Isaiah 46:8-10

[8] "Remember this and stand firm,
recall it to mind, you transgressors,
[9] remember the former things of old;
for I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me,
[10] declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times things not yet done,
saying, 'My counsel shall stand,
and I will accomplish all my purpose,' (ESV)

Psalms 115:2-9

[2] Why should the nations say,
"Where is their God?"
[3] Our God is in the heavens;
he does all that he pleases.
[4] Their idols are silver and gold,
the work of human hands.
[5] They have mouths, but do not speak;
eyes, but do not see.
[6] They have ears, but do not hear;
noses, but do not smell.
[7] They have hands, but do not feel;
feet, but do not walk;
and they do not make a sound in their throat.

[8] Those who make them become like them;
so do all who trust in them.

[9] O Israel, trust in the LORD!
He is their help and their shield. (ESV)

Job 42:1-6

[1] Then Job answered the LORD and said:

[2] "I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

[3] 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?'
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

[4] 'Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you make it known to me.'

[5] I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;

[6] therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes." (ESV)

In these three various instances people were prone to look at their circumstances and think that God was not sovereign over them, but they learned, they were taught by God that He alone is in control. When we try to control the world we take his job, assuming we can do it better which is pretty ignorant. I think of King Nubuchadnezzar who thought he was in control until God caused him to live like a beast for seven years. Seems like it would be better of us not to require that education and listen to the Bible. So lead where God has given you opportunity, plan where God allows you the resources and trust in God to bring good and bad into your life as he knows is best.

Remember Where True Peace Comes From:

John 16:33

[33] 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." (ESV)

John 14:25-27

[25] "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. [26] But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to

your remembrance all that I have said to you. [27] Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. (ESV)

Luke 12:32-34

[32] "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. [33] Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. [34] For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (ESV)
We will talk more about our treasure next week but certainly there is a strong correlation between what we treasure and how we find peace.

Isaiah 26:3 (Trusting God with execution of justice)

[3] You keep him in perfect peace
whose mind is stayed on you,
because he trusts in you. (ESV)

Romans 8:28

[28] And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (ESV)

2 Thessalonians 3:16 (Farewell / Benediction)

[16] Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all. (ESV)

Philippians 4:4-7

[4] Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. [5] Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; [6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (ESV)

Colossians 3:15 (Part of a list of general instructions for living in the new self)

[15] And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. (ESV)

Romans 8:5-6

[5] For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. [6] For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. (ESV)

How has God brought peace into your lives?

Let's praise God together for the peace He brings us.

Next Week:

Broken Cisterns: Filling Our Heart with Joys that aren't God (Worshiping the gifts over the Giver)