

**Psalm 91:9-12** is a well-known passage, and it is also one of God's promises to us, to his children through his covenant. God promises *"<sup>9</sup>Because you have made the LORD your refuge, the Most High your dwelling place, <sup>10</sup>no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent. <sup>11</sup>For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. <sup>12</sup>On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."* This is such a well-known promise of God that the devil used it to try to tempt Jesus to test God by throwing himself from the pinnacle of the temple. But though Jesus trusted in the Father's love and protection, he refused to do so. He refused to squander the life he had been given. Though he had been fasting and praying in the wilderness for many long days, he accepted that the trials he would face were necessary, and he would face them with God by his side. He knew his Father's love and had no need to put God to the test and so refused Satan's misuse of Scripture.

Surrounded by the angels of God, we can find such peace and rest as we have never known! According to **1 Peter 1:5**: through faith, we *"are shielded by God's power for the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time."* Nothing you have done will keep you from finding peace and rest in our Savior, Jesus Christ. In him we can find our peace, but we have to be ready to accept it. Being in conversation with the Father is a necessary first step, and as I mentioned in my last sermon, **prayer** is our way of staying in communication with our Father. Prayer is a necessary act on our part for following the pathway to God's peace. Note that, in **Philippians 4:4-7**, God has promised us peace when we pray. This passage proclaims: *"<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything **by prayer and supplication** with thanksgiving **let your requests be made known to God.** <sup>7</sup>**And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**"* Actually, beyond the peace we find by dwelling in Christ, we are told that his peace provides protection, for it will "guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

In **Matthew 11:26-30**, Jesus first assured his followers, saying that *"All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."* Not only did the Father give his Son control over his own fate, but we know that Christ chose to go to the cross without a fight, showing that good can triumph over evil without resorting to ungodly measures. Christ was able to defeat the powers of sin and death without lifting a finger in defense, without allowing even his followers to fight on his behalf. Through his model of true faith, Jesus became the ultimate figure to look up to, as he chose to be lifted up on the cross so that he might draw all people to him, along with our sins, our cares and our burdens. Believing in him is to believe in God, to come to know the Father by revelation of him through the Son. And accepting that Jesus walks beside us at all times, we become yoked to him. He would share our burdens, but *we must choose to allow him to share life with us.* We must choose to be yoked to Christ.

Indeed, each one of us has been invited to find rest through the sharing of our burdens. For in this passage from Matthew 11, Jesus went on to say, *<sup>28</sup>"Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

Note that to find this rest, WE must make a choice to be yoked to Christ. To do so, we must learn from both his words and actions. Our Savior was not boasting when he said, “I am **gentle and humble in heart**”! These words of his were saved because this claim of his is important. Before promising rest for our souls, he let Christians know that “gentle and humble in heart” is *what **we** are expected to be* if we are to choose to be yoked with him.

***Have you ever seen oxen yoked together?*** “Together” is the key for work to be done, such as to pull a plow in preparation for sowing seed. One ox cannot take off in its own direction, for both must move together. While yoked to Christ, we will be held back from violent action, from seeking our own will or doing things by ourselves. If we seek to do such things, we must choose to become unyoked from Christ, which means to bear our burdens alone. And the choice is ours, make no mistake. God does not force his will on us, but allows us to pray “thy will be done” and choose the yoke.

In today’s charged political and social atmosphere, it takes great restraint to remain yoked to Christ, to remain gentle and humble of heart. It takes great faith that peace will only come **through** Christ if we are to let go of our biting come-backs, of our right to argue our point in a country with freedom of speech. Abiding in Christ, choosing to remain yoked to him, we accept that arguing will only cause greater rifts to grow between us and steal away the chance of peace, whether it be our own peace or that of the world.

Yes, the work that brings peace has already been done by the Son of God through his gentle resistance and humility, but the choice to seek for ourselves such peace – to remain walking alongside Christ, trusting that his way is best and God’s wisdom is greatest – this choice remains with us, with humanity. For we cannot be created in the image of our God and not have freedom of choice, since God himself is able to choose freely. We are not made to be puppets on strings to be jerked around at the whims of our Creator. We are created as children who need to make choices, and make mistakes, if we are to learn and grow to become all God has given us the potential to be.

The end of the Beatitudes even states, in [Matthew 5:9-12a](#)

*“<sup>9</sup> Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. <sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup> Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven...”*

We can choose to live peaceably, living in Christ, and many will leave us be. But, when we encourage others to seek peace with one another – in today’s world many view this as an outright attack on their freedoms to express themselves Christians who encourage others to *find peaceable solutions* or to compromise might as well have thrown down the gauntlet. It is as if peace has become a challenge to freedom, as if compromise is seen as admitting defeat or at least that we are wrong. However, **peacemaking is an act of Christ**. Yoked to him, we may find ourselves working in that direction, and so find ourselves persecuted for the sake of Christ’s righteousness. In such times, we may discover that peace is only able to be found in prayer, in

resting in the presence of God. But we are promised the kingdom of heaven, which is the only place where true peace exists, at least the peace that God intends for this world.

When we stay yoked to Christ, even during life's turbulent moments, we can find profound serenity through him, as he guards our hearts and minds. In [John 14:27](#), Jesus even tells his followers *"27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."* This passage clarifies that peace is a gift from God through Jesus Christ, one that cannot be taken from us, unlike earthly gifts. The only way we lose it is if we turn our gaze from Christ...**In grasping for other things, we can let go of the gift of peace.** The good news is that Christ remains beside you, holding peace for you, awaiting your return to the yoke so that he might bear your burdens with you once again. Your gift of peace remains with you while you remain with him. It is not something others can take from you, but it is something you can reject, pushing it back into Christ's hands until you are ready to share in his peace once more...All it takes is 4 words said in prayer, with unity of your mind and spirit – *Your will be done.*

That is where victory lies – not in having our own way, nor in others changing over to our ways of thinking. Victory lies in these words, which are not always easy to say. Jesus Christ bears witness to the difficulty in uttering these words during some of the most stressful times in life, times of life-altering decisions. Before his arrest and crucifixion, while he prayed alone in the Garden of Gethsemane, he asked for another way to defeat sin and death. All three of these synoptic gospels record the important words of his prayer. In [Luke 22:42](#) (much as in [Matthew 26:39](#) and [Mark 14:36](#)) he ends his prayer with: *"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me, yet **not my will but yours** be done."*

If this prayer had not given him peace, come what may, would he have been able to peaceably face his betrayer? Or his accusers? Or the soldiers sent to arrest him? Would peace be in your heart facing such things? --- You might think it would not, but if you pray with unity of heart and spirit, praying for the Father's will even if it does not coincide with your own, then **peace would be yours**, for you will remain yoked to the Son, who bears your burden. Your burdens will never be too heavy for him to bear with you, to lighten your load that you might share in his peace.

This is the truth found in the words of Danny's offered music today. When we lean on Christ's everlasting arms, we remain in fellowship with him, and are enabled to say *"What a joy divine!"* even amidst our trials. *"What a blessedness, what a peace is mine..."* The words of this hymn speak the truth of God which he spoke to his people through Moses in [Deuteronomy 33:26-28](#). Today, I proclaim this message to you, as God's people in this time and this place. In this passage we find God's message of hope and peace. Viewed through the lens of Christ, **the good news for you**, as people of God, when you share the yoke of your life with Christ, **is this:**

*There is none like God, who rides through the heavens to your help, riding in majesty through the clouds. He subdues all the false gods that try to rule your heart, shattering the forces of old. He drives out the enemy before you, so you may live in safety, untroubled as you abide in your Messiah, Jesus Christ. You are saved by the Lord! He is the shield that helps you and the sword by which you gain victory.*

May you know this deep within your soul. May your trust be in him so that you willingly accept the invitation of our Lord, as he says to all who would follow him: *“Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

Within him is the only place where true peace can be yours, and only in Christ will your rest be complete. Only in Christ can we say in truth: “It is well with my soul.”

As you join together in Christ in celebration of the Eucharist, may you find the strength to pray as Christ has taught us in **Matthew 6:10**: *“Thy will be done”* and mean it with your whole heart and soul. Then the Spirit of Christ will well up within you, welling up like a river of living water, satisfying your soul, bringing you God’s promised peace and rest.

*May the peace of Christ be upon you all.  
To God we ascribe all glory and honor and power forever! Amen.*