

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, November 26, 2016

Peace is elusive. It's there one moment and gone the next. Somewhere in this world there's always strife and discontent. Yet many of us feel this deep desire to see the whole world live in peace. Well, if that's your mantra, you won't find the answers you're looking for in this discussion. You see, I've come to the conclusion that this present world will never see true peace. What I believe we need to address is inner peace and the ultimate peace that has been promised by God and His prophets throughout scripture. If you truly long for peace, I suggest you go to the Source of all peace. In my early thirties, I was given a hardback copy of a book penned by a rabbi that truly got me thinking about peace. The book entitled *PEACE OF MIND* written by Joshua Loth Leibman in 1946 is considered a classic in American Jewish literature. That book unfortunately and perhaps fortunately left me with more questions than answers.

The answers to those questions started being addressed one by one as I delved into God's word a decade later. I've come to conclude that world peace is impossible without the dramatic change in the heart of every human being on earth. In Matthew 5:8 Jesus proclaims, *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."* and continues in verse 9, *"Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God."* These words from the Beatitudes have developed a special meaning to me in recent months as I've attempted to glean a better understanding of the peace that all men seek. The problem as I see it is simply the deceit that lies in every man's and every woman's heart. In Jeremiah 17:9, the prophet declares, *"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"* Jeremiah was right. We cannot fully comprehend the deceitfulness of the heart. But we can delve into scripture to better grasp this longing for peace in our lifetime.

We're all familiar with the Hebrew word *SHALOM*. This salutation has been used in Jewish culture throughout the centuries to convey *"peace be with you"* whether greeting or parting company. Moreover, this salutation affords a deep blessing of well-being and inner spiritual contentment for the person or group being addressed. It's one thing to wish peace and it's totally different to actually experience or convey peace. Remember, Jesus talked of peacemakers. A peacemaker actively seeks to reconcile people to God and to one another. That's a formidable task. It requires a right heart, continual prayer and an attitude of love for God and mankind that can only transcend from a supernatural source. In other words, it's not natural to put God and others before our own selfish desires.

In Isaiah 9:6, the prophet proclaims, *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."* Did you hear that? Prince of Peace! I imagine many Jews do not consider Jesus to be the Messiah, since He did not bring peace to Jerusalem and the world. Yet in Matthew 10:34, Jesus said, *"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."* He continues in the ensuing verses to explain that following Him will lead to spiritual divisions in families, since some will follow and others will deny Him. Yes, in all ways Christ Jesus is truly the Prince of Peace, yet that peace will not be visible until He returns in the End Times. In the meantime, you can join me in experiencing the Peace of God, if you simply ask Him to change your heart, mind and soul and sincerely trust Him as Savior and Lord of your life this day forward. That's because He's already completed the work of salvation on the cross when He came to earth 2000 years ago.

Let me end with what's known in scripture as the Aaronic benediction given by God to Moses to convey to his brother Aaron and Aaron's sons in Numbers 6:24-26. *"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace."* SHALOM!

Here to serve,

Jim Langley. CLU

Passages to Ponder: Luke 12:51-53; John 14:27; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Ephesians 2:14; Hebrews 12:14-15; James 3:17-18

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Luke 12:51-53 New International Version (NIV)

⁵¹ Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. ⁵² From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. ⁵³ They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

John 14:27 New International Version (NIV)

²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

2 Corinthians 13:11 New International Version (NIV)

Final Greetings

¹¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

Ephesians 2:14 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,

Hebrews 12:14-15 New International Version (NIV)

Warning and Encouragement

¹⁴ Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

James 3:17-18 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.