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Issue  
**ONE**

Sunday, March 22, 2020 - Pastoral News – Ebenezer Baptist Church Vancouver

# EBC Update



## Sunday Worship Plans

In 27 years of pastoral ministry I have never suspended public worship, whatever the circumstances. But in our current situation, we have no choice, if we're to honour our responsibilities to each other and to our neighbours.

This past week, Grant Gwynn, Brian Kinniston and I have been working hard on preparing to record a service for viewing online. The first will be available at our standard worship time of 10:30 a.m. next Sunday, March 29.

We'll be sending out details of where to find the service and how you can access it this coming week!



## Finding Peace in an Anxious Time

*“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:4–7)*

We all have a need for lasting peace and security in our lives. Yet with the current COVID-19 crisis, we also live in a time and a place, where they are becoming increasingly rare commodities. The question is how to stay calm and committed, when the world often seems so troubled or so threatening.

Writing to the Greek church in Philippi in the first century, the apostle Paul knew all about the challenges his readers faced. And one of Paul's major concerns is to offer his readers sound instruction on how to rest secure in their faith, whatever their circumstances.

The apostle's goal in verse 7 then is very clear. "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding," he writes, "will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." In other words, Paul is arguing that God's "peace" will be a natural result of following certain biblical practices.

And it's important to recognize what the apostle really means by the word "peace." This "peace of God" has more to do with the state of spiritual and mental rest and wholeness that can only exist among those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ and have thus been reconciled to God. So Paul is drawing on the Hebrew idea of "shalom." He is pointing, in effect, to a state of heart and mind, where one can enjoy a deep sense of assurance

and security even amid the most hectic challenges of life.

How do we find that kind of peace? We need to cultivate those special practices that God has designed for our emotional and spiritual well-being. The apostle lists five in particular.

First, we should rejoice and rejoice always. The obvious assumption here is that we always have something to cause us to rejoice, whatever our circumstances. Second, we should be gentle or forbearing with each other. Third, we are not to be anxious. God has everything under control and God has only our best interests at heart.

Paul's fourth point is that we should be prayerful. Instead of being anxious, we should pray and trust God to work out things for the best. "But in everything, by prayer and petition . . . present your requests to God," the apostle writes in verse 6. That way we share our burdens and we give them over to God.

Paul's last piece of advice in these verses, to be thankful, is a familiar theme throughout Scripture. But why is thanksgiving so important? Because God wants us to recognize, as James says in the first chapter of his epistle, that "every good and perfect gift is from above" (Jas. 1:17). We may change, and our circumstances with us, but God never does. God is consistently generous.

God is "the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort," as Paul states in 2 Corinthians (1:3). It is God in whom "we live and, move and have our being," as the apostle preaches in Acts 17:28. God is "Jehovah-jireh" (Gn. 22:14), our "Great Provider," and we can only give what we first receive (1 Chron. 29:14). Not only so, but God has given us the greatest gift of all in and through Jesus Christ, who has not only brought us salvation here and now, but the gift of the Holy Spirit as our constant companion and enabler, and the promise of a glorious inheritance with all the saints in heaven.



So in the midst of our current turmoil, let's reflect once more on Paul's five steps to peace in Philippians 4:4-7. We are to rejoice in our blessings. We are to be kind to one another. We are not to worry unduly. We are to pray and we're to do so "with thanksgiving." If we do all that, the promise is that we will know God's peace and security. We will find peace with God and one other and it will be God's peace, the peace that lasts forever, the peace that truly "transcends all understanding!"

*Pastor John Oakes*



## Prayer Needs

- Our church leaders
- Our sick and shut-ins
- Government leaders
- Doctors, nurses and health care workers
- Our witness to the gospel
- Our online services
- All who are anxious and/or lonely

## Staying in Touch

I will be sending out a regular newsletter like this twice a week and devotionals like "Finding Peace in an Anxious Time" more regularly. In addition:

- Our leaders aim to call people and/or households on our mailing list to check in with you and to ask about possible prayer and practical needs.
- Our Prayer Chain remains fully functional. Confidential prayer requests can be made by phone or email to me, Sharon Iseli or Freda Ross.
- We will be exploring the possibility of organizing prayer meetings using Skype and other media. Watch this space!
- I will be regularly in the church office and can be reached in the event of an emergency at any time on 604-779-2356.
- We will be posting updates on our church website: [www.rockofhelp.com](http://www.rockofhelp.com) and different social media