



Reconciled: From Lament to Advent - Peace and Confession

For Advent 2020 we will consider how the incarnation of Jesus, God with us, leads us from a place of deep lament, to the hope that comes through Advent. We will explore how we can be reconciled with God and with one another through Jesus, and respond to Christ's invitation of hope. In this time of COVID-19 and great societal turmoil and injustice, our hope is to reconcile the brokenness within us as individuals as well as our greater contexts with the healing presence of Jesus.

Each week will consist of two parts: 1) Step to Reconciliation and 2) Advent Invitation, each featuring the above elements. There will be five steps to reconciliation and five advent invitations, coinciding with the lighting of each advent candle. Our sermons and corresponding lifegroup curriculum will further explore these themes, and invite us into honest lament and Advent hope. This week we will focus on peace and confession.

LOOKING BACK:

FAMILY TIME (25 min)

- Vision Statement: Explain the vision of your lifegroup. Invite someone in your lifegroup to share your vision piece next time.
- Intro Question: What is your favorite book and why?
- Prayer Requests, Praise Reports and Updates from previous week(s) - Perhaps the challenges shared by group members from the intro question will lead nicely into this time of prayer together.

LOOKING UP:

WORSHIP (20 min)

- Spend time in worship together.
- Last Week's Worship Set:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y0jOvQxT1EM>

BIBLE STUDY (20 min)

Philippians 4:6-7

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Guided questions for your group to explore together:

- 1) What commands does Paul give us in these few short verses?
- 2) What does Paul say will happen if we are able to hold fast to these commands?
- 3) What do you think it means to have your heart and your mind guarded in Christ Jesus?
- 4) What are you, specifically, anxious about in your life today? **Take some time to ask Holy Spirit to reveal your anxieties to you right now (Identifying these is key for the Looking Forward portion).

Three key vision pieces from next Sunday's sermon to share with your group:

- 1) **We cannot find peace in the circumstances surrounding us or in our world.**
- 2) **Jesus wants to give peace that is far greater than what the world can provide.**
- 3) **Confession allows for the exchange of what is ours with what is His.**

LOOKING FORWARD (20-30 minutes)

Below, point (a) is a prayer of confession regarding each of our anxieties. Point (b) is a prayer of peace after we have released these anxieties before the Lord:

- a) Lord, I confess that I have been anxious about (fill in the blank) in my life. I have failed to release my worries, concerns, and thoughts regarding (fill in the blank) and it has led to restlessness and anxiety in my life. It has caused me to be distracted, divided, and burdened as I've been drawn away from Your heart and drawn near to other things in my life. The pressures of legitimate concerns in my life have caused me to focus so much on worldly matters that I've forgotten to relate my needs and my worries to You. I now choose to release any and all anxieties I have carried regarding (fill in the blank - can be many different things!), and I ask that you take them from me, seal them in Your courts, bind them in our arms. Amen.

- b) Father, I ask now that I have released these burdens, worries, and anxieties to You, that You would cover me and mark me with the peace of Your Spirit. While the pressures I feel of my concerns in my life today are legitimate, I ask that You would allow for me to walk in Your deep-seated peace today. May the foundation of my life, my families' life, be built on Your life-giving Spirit of peace today. I love You and I trust You in and through everything. Through all of life's trials, with all of my anxieties, and I choose to walk in Your peace today. Thank You, Lord, for meeting me right where I am and helping me to have Your deep-seated peace today. Amen.

If you have some additional time, spend it sharing your experience through these prayers (particularly the anxieties) and praying for one another.

KIDS' LESSON:

There's oftentimes things that we worry about or feel sad about that we don't realize or remember until we let God reveal them to us. Let's take some time to reflect and let God speak to us.

Philippians 4:6-7

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Instructions:

1. Think about what the apostle Paul is saying in this passage - what does he encourage you to do?
2. What does Paul say will happen when you give your requests and anxieties to God?
3. What are some things that are anxieties for you? What are you worried about, or what does God want to speak truth into? Let's take some time to let God speak to this.
 - a. Grab a piece of paper and a drawing or writing utensil.
 - b. Ask God: Is there any anxieties, worries, or things in my heart that I am not aware of? Take some time and draw/write (or ask your parent for help) them down on one side of your paper.
 - c. Just like the passage says, let's practice it. Take each thing that you put down and turn it into a prayer request to God. Ask Him to give you His peace.
 - d. Ask God if there's anything He wants to say about these anxieties. On the other side of the paper, write/draw a truth, a declaration, or anything else that He gives you!