RECAP:

We started this journey into ‘The Dawn of a New Day’ during Easter week, embracing the opportunity to trade the good life for God’s better life.

Last week, Pastor Reggie reminded us of the ‘New Hope’ we have when we surrender our failures to the forgiveness of Jesus.

And today, we are digging in to the ‘New Peace’ made available to us through Christ. This peace is the key frees us from the chains of performance.

Hello and welcome to Southside Church. My name is Wendy Bruce and I am a ministry volunteer and a part of the teaching team here.

It’s my privilege to spend some time with you today exploring the peace that is possible through the resurrection of Jesus.

When is the last time you embarked on a project, big or small, but you didn’t get the result you were hoping for? I mean, Pinterest made it look so simple. Why didn’t your project turn out like the picture?

Have you ever ordered the most amazing, “life-changing” kitchen appliance or skin care product from a late-night infomercial, only to receive it 6-8 weeks later and realize that it didn’t change your life at all? Nobody? Okay.

Maybe some different examples will help…

* SLIDE 2 Brightly colored pens… but all the same INK color.
* SLIDE 3 Family portrait – pay the professionals, they said… and the result is this editing disaster
* Ariel cookie – Mom bought a special baking pan with a guide picture. Here’s the first attempt.   
  SLIDE 4 It didn’t turn out so well, so here’s   
    
  SLIDE 5 the second attempt.
* Swimming pool – how about when you order a refreshing inflatable pool for the yard, only to be disappointed that it’s…  
  SLIDE 6 the size of your shoe!
* On the side – Somebody went way to LITERAL with this request for   
  SLIDE 7 cheese “on the side” and this   
    
  SLIDE 8 sour cream “on the side”

And isn’t this exactly how life goes sometimes? Our best efforts sometimes yield less-than desirable results. Our expectations are all too often not met!

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Performance anxiety –

* Definition – according to WebMD “the fear of doing something in front of people;” can be singing/playing music, speaking, sports, acting  
  + Symptoms can include SLIDE 9 rapid breathing & heart rate, dry mouth, tight throat, trembling hands, knees, lips, or voice, sweaty/cold hands, nausea/upset stomach, vision changes…anyone feeling uncomfortable yet?
  + Can be helped by   
      
    1) confronting your fears and vulnerabilities, accepting yourself for who you are, and not feeling like you have to prove yourself to others and   
      
    2) learn how to redirect your negative thoughts, beliefs, images, and predictions about performing in public   
      
    3) remember that nobody is perfect and it’s okay to make mistakes

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Expecting Perfection:

* Here’s the truth. We expect perfection while we live in an imperfect world. We pressure ourselves to live up to impossible standards, we feel disappointed by others when they can’t overcome the unspoken hurdles we’ve created for them in our minds & hearts, and we resent the God who knows how many hairs are on our heads when he doesn’t do things the way we see fit.
* We want His will, as long as it revolves around our preferences. After all, don’t we need ease and comfort to live our best life?
* How do we escape this pressure to perform and to live up to our own expectations of perfection?
* We can start by realizing that   
  + 1) God doesn’t expect perfection and
  + 2) that Jesus’ death and resurrection settled the issue of “I’ll never be good enough” forever!
* Romans 6:10 “The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.”(NIV)   
  + Once and NEVER AGAIN
  + We are no longer slaves to sin!
  + We are restored to peace with God.
  + These are reasons to be excited!!

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\*\*Context for today’s scripture:

SLIDE 10-11 Romans 5:1-2 “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice hope of the glory of God.”

These verses are a bridge between the “What?” of Romans 1-4 and the “what now?” of Romans 5-8. Let’s look closer.

* 1-2 The power of sin over humans is universal
* 3-4 Paul shares God’s response to the plight of humanity  
  (we can stand justified by God’s grace through Christ’s righteousness, NOT by works prescribed in the law)  
  + But the book of Romans doesn’t end there…“Justification is not the religious equivalent of the fairy tale ending, ‘They lived happily ever after.’”
* 5-8 Paul answers the question of “now what?” We see that even in the world Christ redeemed, sin still rears its ugly head of influence and that suffering is ongoing (although it cannot separate us from the love of God)
* Romans 5:1-5 reminds us that “the life of the justified is a mix of peace, hope, suffering, and love.”

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NEW PEACE:

Peace with God –

Our sin separated us from God (Ephesians 2:13)

* But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.(NIV)

Jesus restored our relationship with God when he took on our sins and died our death on the cross (Ephesians 2:14)

* “For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us." (NLT)

This provided a path to reconciliation with God (Romans 5:10)

* "For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!" (NIV)

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Peace with others –

We are reconciled not only to God, but also to others and we can live at peace with them (Colossians 1:19-20)

* He empowers us through his spirit to be peacemakers with those around us
* Have you projected your peace onto another person?

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Peace within –

John 14:27 “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.” (NIV)

* MY peace- this is a gift directly from Jesus.
* NOT as the WORLD gives- the world gives ‘security’ in powerful position, retirement accounts or bank balance, the right neighborhood with the safest security system, even health insurance & life insurance (Jesus wants to give us peace that endures even if all of these things go away). \*\*NOT based on circumstances or performance!
* Don’t let your HEARTS be troubled-not don’t let your country be troubled or don’t let your government be troubled \*\*Don’t let your HEARTS be troubled.

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LIVING:

Where are my fellow grammar nerds? As conscientious stewards of the English language, we realize that punctuation makes a big difference! SLIDE 12 How are you LIVING?

* Living in the ellipsis SLIDE 13 – the waiting…
  + Delays that the enemy wants to use to cause doubt
  + Romans 5:3 “Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,” (ESV)
  + We cannot build endurance without a struggle. Endurance, by its very nature requires resistance. ( ie athlete)
  + Elizabeth Auguste - I can choose to endure my circumstances with PEACE or with anxiety. Am I living like I trust God for the end result?
* Living in the exclamation point SLIDE 14 – the extremes (high or low)
  + Multiple trials at once, birth of a child, sudden, surprising life event
  + This is all about enduring both the mountaintops as well as the valleys.
  + SLIDE 15 Romans 5:4 “and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,” (ESV)
* Living in the question marks SLIDE 16 – uncertainty
  + A diagnosis, a struggling marriage, an unsaved child
  + Share about Mom
  + John 16:33 “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.”
* Living in the period SLIDE 17 – the endings
  + Loss of a child, death of a parent or loved one, getting laid off, a divorce
  + Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
  + As humans we can’t even grasp it; we definitely can’t make it happen! God does that!

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\*\*Survey Insights:

I put together a 6-question survey and posted it to my Facebook profile as part of my preparation for this message. This is an overview of the responses I received.

* Define peace. Calm, serenity, wholeness, contentment, feeling that all is right with the world, settled assurance, transcends difficult situations, absence of chaos, sobriety
* What brings the most peace?
  + People (family, friends, students, loved ones), Knowing that God is in control; centering thoughts in truth, being in nature
  + Boils down to 3 areas: God, ourselves, others/outside influence
* What brings the least peace?
  + Conflict, relationships that need resolution, loved ones I disagree with, cranky people
  + chaos/overwhelmed, things out of my control (outside circumstances)
  + When I grip the reins (not trusting God)
* What helps you find peace or keeps you from it?
  + God is in control, only God can change my current state, I only need to do my part and let God do his part, prayer, God hasn’t failed me yet, looking back on/remembering all that God has done
  + I am an over-thinker, I think I know best, run through multiple scenarios in my mind, depression, I fill my mind with God’s word, fear, go with my gut, use problem solving process, sing praise songs, claim scripture, disobedience, try to “fix it” in my flesh,
* Words you associate with peace?
  + Serenity (from the Greek eiréné) – stillness
  + Just for fun, we’re going to put the top 5 answers on the board. If you’re joining us online today, take a few moments and respond in the chat before we reveal the answers.

SLIDE 18-23 \*\*REVEAL along with her as she goes

5) God 4) love 3) happiness 2) quiet 1) calm

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Peace bookends:

Hebrew word translated as peace is shalom – encompasses completeness, soundness, welfare; familiar greeting in Jewish culture meaning ‘well being be upon you’ or ‘may you be well.’ Used as a hello and a farewell…(bookends of a conversation or visit).

Birth of Jesus – the gift of Peace

* The Prince of Peace came in weakness; as a baby in a manger, not in power & royalty
* He lived a human life, with all of its burdens and struggles

Death of Jesus – our peace was at the front of Jesus’ mind

* The Prince of Peace died in weakness; on a shameful Roman cross, ridiculed & abandoned
* He died a human death, enduring the process that took him to Gethsemane and led him to crucifixion

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WRAP UP:

* SLIDE 24 The peace of God cannot be earned by works because it isn’t based on performance.
* “PEACE IS a PRESENT possibility for those who have accepted the grace of God through the resurrection power of Jesus.”  
  + Am I waiting for peace to find me? No need to wait…embrace it now.
  + Am I projecting my peace onto a person? An accomplishment? A perfect set of circumstances? My own preferences?
* Having the peace of God does not require perfection because it’s all about the process.  
  + The journey may not be what we expect. It may be strange. It probably won’t make sense.
* SLIDE 25 The peace of God cannot be found in human strength because only God can give it…and He grants us peace through our biggest weaknesses.   
  + Zechariah is singing over his son, John the Baptist…the one called to prepare the way for Jesus.
  + Luke 1:76-79 76And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,  
      
    77to give his people the knowledge of salvation  
        through the forgiveness of their sins,  
    78because of the tender mercy of our God,  
        by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven  
      
    SLIDE 26 79to shine on those living in darkness  
        and in the shadow of death,  
    to guide our feet into the path of peace.”
  + Walk in peace now! Scripture says path OF peace; not the path TO peace (which implies that peace is a destination…out “there” somewhere)

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* This is what peace looks like SLIDE 27 – Daisy growing in gutter
* This is a picture that I took toward the beginning of COVID, lots of uncertainty, none of us knowing what to expect
* Are you constantly struggling to achieve, thinking that the next goal accomplished will finally bring the peace you need? Is perfectionism driving you to performance anxiety?
* Do you feel like real peace is impossible because of circumstances that are beyond your control? What is robbing you of the peace that God desires for you?
* Have you accepted the peace of God that comes through faith in Jesus Christ?

CLOSING:

\*We are going to pray in just a minute. Every person in attendance today, whether you’re watching online, attending in person, or viewing via replay can respond to this invitation for real-life, readily available-in-the-present peace.

If you have never asked for salvation through faith in Jesus, then today is the perfect time for you to accept the peace of God by faith in the resurrection power of Jesus.

SLIDE 28 Say Yes to Jesus

If you are a new believer and you want to learn more about how to walking in the peace you heard about here today…even in the midst of difficult circumstances. Today is a wonderful opportunity to talk with someone about it! We have pastors available online and in person to pray with you specifically.

Maybe you accepted Jesus many years ago. You are walking with him, but you haven’t embraced his peace in your everyday life because of difficulties you have endured or people that have hurt you. Ask God to help you let go of whatever is robbing you of your peace. Let’s pray.