

## Re-Gifting Peace and The Other Divine Birth

Luke 1:5-25; 67-80 (121414) December 8, 2019 Bob Szoke

**Illustration:** When I was in college, most of the guys in the dorm were famous for this thing of re-gifting. Sometimes a guy would break up with a girl and she had bought him aftershave for his birthday present, and he never opened it. He would re-gift it to someone else in the dorm. If the guy he gave it to didn't want it, or didn't like how it smelled, he would then re-gift it to someone else, and this could continue for quite some time, until eventually, (you guessed it) it wound up being re-gifted back to the guy who originally received it.



**However, there was one occasion** when there was a broken stereo system that was being re-gifted and making its way through the dorm. The problem was, this stereo system didn't work or at least (most didn't know it didn't work) and no one knew how to make it work after receiving it. Since no one wanted a broken stereo system, it was given to someone else. (Guys do this). There were always the oohs and the ahhs about what a wonderful stereo system it looked like, and how marvelous it must be. Little was ever said about how well it worked, until later on when the recipient was able to unpack it all, and get it all set up and plugged in. Only then would one discover it really didn't work, but it sure was a nice gift, otherwise.

The subject we will be looking at today is pretty much like that broken stereo system, at



least on the surface. **It's the gift of peace.** The gift of peace is something people want to give to one another, but the bigger problem is that we are often only giving something which is broken and won't work. The concepts of peace thrown around at this time of year sure do look good, sound great, and even are couched in some pretty good musical formats, **but the problem is, they won't work.** Here's how it's been done.

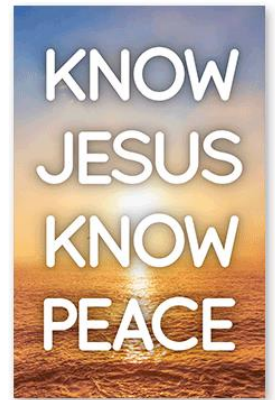
- To use some terminology, go ahead and buy the world a Coke and see if they will sing in perfect harmony. I don't think so. (The commercial from the 80's was all about living in perfect harmony). Didn't work.
- Hug a tree, and see if that brings peace to anyone. I doubt it will.
- Buy a pair of Nike Peace shoes, but make sure they fit but don't expect world peace. I think it was 1993 that Nike introduce the Peace Shoe. To bring us up to date, since then Nike has introduced the Air Zoom Ultraflight, the Air Flightposite, the

Brokenbats shoe, and most recently the Besty Ross Revolutionary shoe. None of these shoes contributed anything to world peace, I'm sure.

- Paint your car with the colors of the rainbow and walk about saying the words, "peace dude." Again, doubt this will help.
- *I've yet to hear even one person say, "I think I'm a more peaceful person because of the car I drive, the food I eat, the pop I drink, or the shoes I wear."*

The problem is that the kind of peace being re-gifted doesn't work. Gun control doesn't work, singing Christmas songs about peace doesn't work, another set of peace talks with terrorists won't work, and nuclear treaties won't work, and so on. But, this is the kind of peace that our world has been re-gifting to each other. *The sad part is that the real peace all seek can be found, but few look there.*

*The peace which everyone sings about at the birth of Christ is the peace that will change the world, the peace which will transform lives for all eternity, but it must be sought, and thankfully, can be found, in God through Jesus.*



With the idea of Advent being about peace, I want to look at the announcement of peace through what is called, *"the other divine birth, that of John, whom we will come to know as John the Baptist."* Let's begin with a bit of Bible study,

### **Bible Study Notes:**

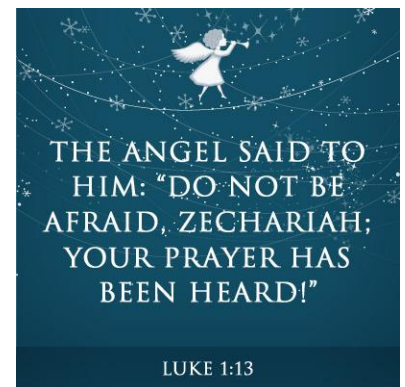
In beginning to reflect upon the birth of John the Baptist, perhaps the best place to begin is to place it along-side the birth of Jesus as the kind of thing "only God could do." The story of the birth of John is nothing less than marvelous, and sadly though, often overlooked in the whole strategy of God's plan and announcements.



***The Perspective: Luke 1:5-7 In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. 6 Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. 7 But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.***

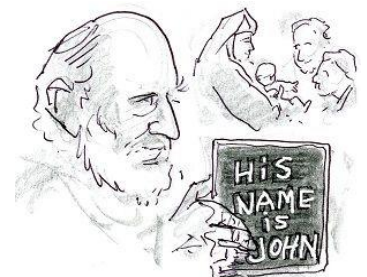
- We don't know a lot about Zechariah and Elizabeth other than what we read here. Evidently both were from the tribe of Levi, which makes them both of priestly lineage.
- Elizabeth was considered "under the curse" of being barren by her contemporaries, or so it was assumed because she was not able to get pregnant. (Here is where we get the idea that this is only possible by God's intervention.) **For a woman not to have a child in this culture was difficult, if not a cause for ridicule.**
  - We know that people can be cruel to each other and one of the areas cruelty showed itself was among women who couldn't get pregnant. Because they weren't able to get pregnant, it was assumed there was some punishment God must be giving, some significant reason why a women could not get pregnant.
- It was considered normal for women to have children, and the other side of this is that having at least a male child would be beneficial to a woman in her old age, **for the child would be expected to provide for her.**
- As far as age is concerned, we really don't know the age of Elizabeth and Zechariah, but the context here leads us to conclude that they were old... and according to Jewish tradition, being old meant at least being 60 and above..
- We won't go into it, but for your own personal Bible study, reference the idea of later in life birth with Abraham and Sarah.
- But, what's most important here is their faithfulness to God.

**The Conversation: Luke 1:13-20** *But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. 16 Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." 18 Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." 19 The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. 20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time."*



- Zechariah was on duty. There was a cycle where he would have to appear in Jerusalem to serve his duty as a priest about once every 6 months. This was his turn.
- The angel appears to Zechariah and he is petrified. The angel confirms what must have been an old prayer (that they had probably given up praying), but none-the-less that is the prayer which the angel addresses, that of having a son.
- Zechariah questions all this and evidently has a hard time accepting what is said to him. **As a way of ‘proving’ that all would take place as the angel had said, Zechariah is either punished or ??? because of his hesitation to accept it all.** He becomes deaf and unable to talk. Only when the child is born will all this change and he will be able to speak and hear once again.
  - One commentator makes this distinction between what Mary says and what Zechariah says when both are told about the wonderful power of God and the birth accounts. *Gabriel’s action may not have been punishment at all, and if it was punishment, it was punishment for the sin of unbelief. Zacharias was not punished for “asking a question (because Mary too asks a question) ... he was struck dumb for unbelief – an event perfectly consistent with every page of the Holy Scripture.* <https://www.biblewheel.com/Blog/so-why-did-gabriel-strike-zacharias-dumb/>
  - Another commentator adds this note: *He (Zechariah) had come to terms with God over the matter: “God is sovereign. He is free to bestow His blessings on whom He wishes. For some inscrutable reason, He has withheld that blessing from us.” And now, Zacharias was not willing to open himself to the roller coaster of hopes and fears that he had long left behind.* And so he doubted the word of the angel. <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-3-problem-doubt-luke-118-25>
- Meanwhile, those outside, when Zachariah does emerge, know something is up. Zechariah has taken longer than expected inside the holy area, and when he does come out, is unable to speak but through the use of sign language is able to communicate that he has received a message from God.

**The birth** *Luke 1:57-66* **When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. 58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. 59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, 60 but his mother spoke up and said, “No! He is to be called John.” 61 They said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who has that name.” 62 Then they made signs to his father,**





*to find out what he would like to name the child. 63 He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." 64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God. 65 The neighbors were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. 66 Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him.*

- The birth of John becomes a community event, after Elizabeth comes out from her 5 month time of seclusion. Everyone has been able to figure out that if she is going to give birth, it is an act of God.
  - It wasn't all that unusual for a birth to become a community event, especially if the child was being born into a family that was important. It was the community people who would then act as **"birth certificates"** that the child was born, and could give testimony to the child's authenticity and parents.
- When it comes time for naming the child, tradition seemingly takes over, but Elizabeth is the first to insist that the boy's name is John. A little bit of a family feud develops as unsatisfied relatives and neighbors are unwilling to accept this decision to call him John, and so they turn to Zechariah who affirms what she has just said.
- Again, why was the child not named "Little Zechariah? Here's a possible reason and I think it has great merit:
  - *Had John been named "Little Zach," he would have been expected to grow up as a priest, just like his father. He would thus have gone about with his father as he carried out his priestly duties, learning how to do things, just like his daddy did them. ... To be named by any other name would have implied just the opposite. John would not follow in his father's steps. He would not learn to do what his father did. He would not be a priest. This, of course, was precisely the case, and thus the reason for the name John. It isn't the meaning of the name "John" which is so important, then, but the message implied by having any name other than Zacharias which is such an emotional issue. If many of those gathered at the circumcision ceremony were relatives, Elizabeth's insistence that the boy be named John was to renounce the family, its work, and its perpetuation through the next generation.*  
<https://bible.org/seriespage/3-why-john-was-not-named-little-zach-luke-157-80> The door is open for God's plan to unfold, all because of a name.

**Zechariah's Song, A Celebration of Redemption Luke 1:67-79** His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: 68 "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. 69 He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David 70 (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), 71 salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us—72 to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, 73 the oath he swore to our father Abraham: 74 to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear 75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. 76 And 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, 77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, 78 because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven 79 to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."



- Zechariah's tongue is loosened and he hears again. The words which he speaks are words comparable to Mary's magnificat in **Luke 1:46-55**. A quick review of what Zechariah says:
  - **Israel will be redeemed**, God is raising up his Horn of Salvation (power), and is completing the promises he made to the people of the Old Covenant (Moses, all the Prophets, etc); **God will provide salvation from the enemies, God will be served without fear and the one who is born is the "forerunner of the Messiah," will announce forgiveness of sins.** The light of God will shine in the darkness.
- Essentially what Zechariah is saying is that this is a celebration of redemption. A new day has started! A new day is here with hope.
- Pay specific attention to **verses 76 – 79** and see the things which were told John would do.
  - **He would prepare the way for the Messiah.**
  - **He would give the people knowledge of salvation.**
  - **He would guide our feet into the path of peace.**
- That's what John was about, those three things.

**Answers to Questions not asked: Luke 1:80** *And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.*

1. Verse 80 serves as the conclusion to Luke’s account of the birth and childhood of John the Baptist. It is the key to understanding the text: **And the child continued to grow, and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel (Luke 1:80).**
2. Here, Luke gives us his reason for including the account of John’s childhood, even though his public ministry was to begin many years later. In addition, Luke here informs us as to his reason for including the account of the “family feud” in conjunction with the naming of John. Here are some elements in this very brief concluding statement.
  - a. (1) **This statement capsulizes and summarizes the entire period of John’s life prior to his public ministry.** In less than 30 words, approximately 30 years of John’s life are characterized.
  - b. (2) **This statement speaks of John’s physical, but especially of his spiritual growth during his growing-up years.** Luke tells us that John “became strong in spirit.”
  - c. (3) **This statement speaks of John’s preparation for public ministry.** While John’s physical and spiritual growth is of great importance to his own walk with God, Luke’s purpose is to inform us that he was being prepared for the day of his public appearance, for the time of his public ministry as the forerunner of Messiah. In other words, John’s spiritual growth was essential for his spiritual ministry.
  - d. (4) Finally, and most importantly, **Luke informs us that John was being prepared for his public ministry in solitude.** John’s spiritual growth and development, Luke tells us, took place “in the deserts.” <https://bible.org/seriespage/3-why-john-was-not-named-little-zach-luke-157-80>



**From this Bible study, especially these verses, we can learn a lot about the kind of peace that everyone needs, the kind of peace the Christmas songs are about, the peace that isn’t broken.** It’s the peace which John came to announce, as he said, **“to guide our feet into the path of peace.”** A lot can be learned from verse 79, where Zechariah speaks about the purpose of the son, John, guiding our feet into the path of peace.

Thus, let’s look at this small phrase, **to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace** and **learn about peace and how to re-gift it to others.**

## To Regift Peace, Recognize the Huge Barrier to Peace is Sin

### **Illustration: What are the common barriers to peace?**

Search the internet and one can find a lot of things. One web site listed 10 things that stand as barriers to peace among people. Here's the list. **What do you think?** *Inadequate Planning and Preparation; False First Impressions and Perceptions; Grief; Systemic Distrust; Failure to Communicate and Listen; Insufficient Focus on Underlying Interests; Partisan Perception, Judgmental Overconfidence, and Wrong Baselines; Reactive Devaluation; Misunderstanding the Loss/Risk Analysis; Failure to give Opponents Face, Respect, and Dignity.*

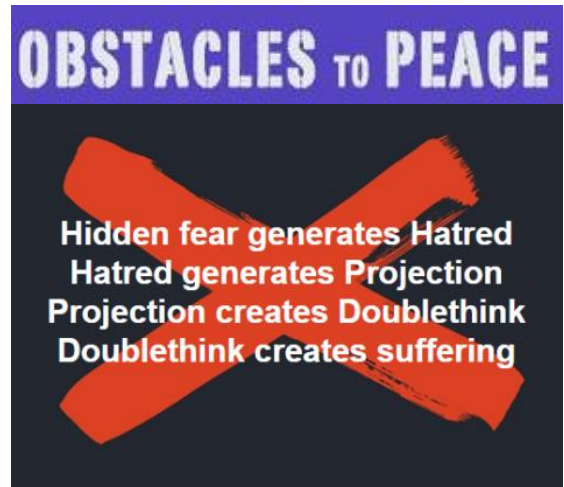
<https://www.mediate.com/articles/epsteinJS2.cfm> I find it interesting that the word sin is not used in any of those barriers, but that's probably our desire to think it's something else. It really isn't something else, but the biggest barrier to peace is sin. What do you think?

**The big HOWEVER is this: The biggest barrier to peace among people, family members and God is this very thing of sin.** It's a sin issue. Peace with God, sin that prevents peace.

1. **Let's begin with the clearest way of understanding and accepting the truth about the lack of peace. It's not about compromise, it's not about give and take, but it's about sin.**
2. **James 4:1-3 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.**

# SIN

- a. **Sin is a huge issue, much bigger than what we might even want to imagine. Sin prevents peace.** The issue preventing peace is us, the sin in our lives, our wants, our unwillingness to recognize how much of our lives are directed by sin and not God.
- b. We may want to argue this point, and say, "No, it's about others and their unwillingness to compromise." **But, with God, there is no compromise. Sin is a hard issue.**
- c. Who among us wants to address the sin issue in our lives and stand in front of God and admit, **"God, I'm the reason there is no peace in this world."** We would much





rather stand in front of God and say, **“God, if they all did it my way, there would be peace.”** *How foolish we must sound.*

3. **Sin influences us more than we will ever want to admit.** We even develop new words for things so that we don't feel so bad about ourselves and the lack of peace.
  - a. Consider these things: An **act of sexual adultery** is called an indiscretion. A life of sexual promiscuity is called an **“alternate life style.”** Theft under any other terms is called stealing, but somehow justified because **“I deserve it.”**
  - b. Sin influences us to call **greed** something else, like “getting ahead,” or saving up for a rainy day. No one wants to be considered ‘selfish,’ but rather is just looking out for his/her own good.
  - c. **Sin influences our relationships so that that which is otherwise considered as “wrong” is better seen as assuming we know the answer to “Doesn't God want me to be happy.”**
  - d. We turn God's wisdom upside down, we edit what He said so as to make it what we want.
  - e. Yet, we talk of peace as if it's entirely possible with our evil and sinful hearts and desires.
4. Another text that illustrates the barrier to peace is sin is found in **1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.**
  - a. **Scripture is endless in telling us that the barrier to peace is sin.** I don't know why we won't listen to this and deal with the sin problem, but we won't. We kill, we hate, we argue, we isolate, we tell lies, we do so many things because we are convinced that the barrier to peace belongs to others, not to us.
5. And we wonder why there is so much turmoil, but the answer is the absence of peace.
6. **The hard truth of sin is that it is the enemy of peace.**
  - a. The barrier to peace, on a national level or personal level or in our homes is the issue of sin. Sin needs addressed if there is to be peace at any level. (As much as

## The Corrupting Influence of Sin

## The Enemy of Peace is Sin

we might want to believe it's something else, it's not).

b. Said another way: **Proverbs 16:7** *When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.*

7. So, what do we do when we realize that there are barriers to peace in our lives, and that barrier is our own sin or the sin we see in others? Do we just struggle and hope it somehow works out, do we start throwing the blame on others and develop endless criticism? Or, do we get back to the pathway of peace which John the Baptist was all about leading us to? I'm suggesting that when we see barriers, obstacles to peace, we get back to that pathway to peace, which is about who Jesus is in our lives as believers.



a. Here's counsel from Scripture: **Ephesians 4:29-32** *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

## **Second, To Re-Gift Peace, Accept Instruction... to the Pathway of Peace**

1. **Illustration:** How willing are we to accept guidance that the direction we are heading is wrong? Perhaps the easiest way to illustrate this is to acknowledge why instructions are included with most things. A few years ago I bought an outdoor grill from Menards. While I was stubborn and waited for the outdoor cooking season to end, I was also aware that there would come a time when the prices would come down. The price did



come down and with my Menards rebate, I purchased a grill, unassembled, still in the box. It came with instructions, **and only took me over 4 hours to assemble...** much of that was because I had to undo what I thought needed to be done in assembling. There were pieces that I was sure went together, but really didn't. **After assembling and again checking with the instructions, I had to take it all apart**

2. **The text is pretty clear, we need guidance to and along the pathway to peace.** We need it because obviously nothing we've tried has worked. In almost insane ways we try again something that didn't work before, hoping that this time it will.

3. Carefully, when we consider being instructed in peace, there are a few things that we need to do if we are to seek that peace before we can re-gift it.

a. **First, there is a sense of urgency with which we need to begin.** **Illustration:** The story of told of three apprentice devils being trained by Satan. ‘What are you going to try today?’ asks the leader. The first apprentice replies, ‘I’m going to tell them there is no God.’ ‘Well,’ says Satan, ‘you can try. A few fools will believe you. But the universe shouts the existence of God. There is evidence all around and you’ll not do very well.



Indeed, even in the secular twenty-first century you may find your self witnessing the slow death of atheism. Any other ideas?’ The second apprentice tries this: ‘I’m going to tell them there’s no judgment.’ ‘That’s a better idea,’ says Satan. ‘You will persuade more people of that, especially some of the clergy. But human beings have a gut sense of accountability, that actions have consequences. They know what it is to feel guilty even when there therapists tell them not to. So I think you’ll find it an uphill struggle. Anyone else have an idea?’ The third apprentice pipes up, ‘I’m going to tell them there’s no hurry.’ ‘Brilliant,’ says Satan. ‘That is just what you want to say. You will have great success. Let them listen to the word of God and whisper in their ears, “This is good stuff. One day you ought to do something about this. But tomorrow will do.” – Christopher Ash, *The Priority of Preaching (A Mentor Commentary)* (Norhaven: Christian Focus, 2009), 65. <https://hereiblog.com/illustration-urgency-starring-satan/>

b. The sad reality is that most of us don’t work with any great sense of urgency. We take our time, we investigate, we go slowly. But of necessity is the sense of urgency to abandon other ways to find peace with God and with one another, and the sooner we begin, the sooner there will be peace. **There may not be a tomorrow!**

c. **Second, what I would call re-alignment is necessary.** What I mean by realignment is that we need to change how we think of peace.

Rethink  
How You  
THiNK

i. We think of peace meaning, “No more war,” or that there are no enemies ready to pounce on us.”

i. About 27 years before Jesus was born, Rome experienced something unique that history has called the Pax Romana, the Peace of Rome. Beginning with the reign of Augustine, Emperor of Rome lasting till about 180 A.D. (a period of about 200 years), Rome was at

peace. Rome has few internal conflicts and the nation rarely went to war. But that peace, the Pax Romana, was only yours if you were Roman. If you weren't Roman, you could have peace with Rome, but it was often a peace enforced at the point of a sword. You did things their way, or there was no peace for you. Even for the Romans, the Pax Romana was a time of violence and uncertainty. During this period most of the Emperors of Rome died by assassination. Among the Emperors, Caligula was insane and cruel who engaged in various drunken parties and orgies. Nero burned Rome to the ground and then blamed the Christians for this and sent them to die in the Coliseum to amuse the crowds by their deaths. Titus, an emperor who was an famous general, slaughtered the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This was a time of great national security for Rome, but also a time when people were filled with uncertainty and violence. There was peace from war in Rome, but there was no real peace within the hearts of people. This was how Rome thought about peace. Good ideas, but not for everybody!

- iii. **The reality is we are willing to settle for way less than what true peace is all about, so willing in fact that we are often willing to disregard what God says about peace at the expense of more failure.**
- iv. And as **1 Thessalonians** points out, people aren't always willing to consider that peace with God is the first pathway to pursue.  
**1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.**
- v. People will develop their own ideas of peace, so much that they become blinded to real peace and what it's about.
- d. **Realignment needs to get us to the place where the number one priority is peace with God before peace with someone. Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The peace which counts, which all should pursue first, is peace that comes through Christ.** More important than peace with men is peace with God.
- e. **Third, there is the sense of anticipation that this plan works,** this way which God is telling us about through what John the Baptist will present, it works! Guaranteed! It works.





- i. **Illustration:** Did you know that in the field of counseling, only 1 out of every four people would really be helped, that is, only one out of every four people was willing to consider that the help they were seeking was actually worth the time and personal investments needed. Sad to say that many who enter counseling today do so with the idea that **“it’s not going to work,”** and so it doesn’t.
  - ii. As Zechariah says these things prophetically, he speaks confidently that those who pursue the pathway of peace expecting to find peace according to God’s plan will find it!
4. ***So rather than point fingers at one another as the reason peace isn’t working, the best place to start is with one’s heart, and one’s own desire for peace... the kind of peace that can only come from God.***

### To Re-Gift Peace, Travel the Correct Pathway to Peace



1. **Illustration:** Some of you may remember a man by the name of Jim Jones who led a group of people from Indianapolis to Guyana, South America. An interview with one of the survivors said this about him and why she followed Jim Jones. (She said, “This was to be a place where no one had to worry about food or clothing. The leader was a visionary who was building a new future. ... The leader, Jim Jones, was committed to civil rights, he was a charismatic leader who attracted people who were feeling vulnerable and disenfranchised. He was a father figure to those who needed him to be that. Most never knew he was a drug addict. He presented himself as someone who could read minds and use religion to get you where you wanted to be.) ***The sad part of this whole illustration is that others have taken his place, and people are still searching, and travelling to wrong places. Sadly, they will find something, just not the true pathway to peace, which can only come from God.***
2. ***Directions to the pathway to peace starts with repentance. Luke 3:3 He (John) went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.***

## REPENTANCE

- a. ***The linkage with sin is something which has already been said, but needs to be said over and over again. Sin is the biggest barrier to peace in our lives and in this world.***
- b. We might ask the question as to **“why”** repentance is the place to begin. The beginning place for peace begins here because ***repentance is more than just***

*feeling sorry for one's sin, but the opening of one's eyes to the ugliness of sin in the presence of The Holy God.*

- c. Repentance is about **opening one's heart to grasp the great contrast of rebellion** (which is the absence of peace) with the forgiveness of God.
  - d. Repentance is **about abandoning trust in ourselves that sin doesn't matter or that we can create a lasting peace**. Sin greatly matters, and repentance is about shattering the idea that "one can be good enough for God with sin in one's life." That's Satan's lie, not God's truth.
3. What needs to be said about sin? It's awfulness? It's destroying power? The devastation which it causes? **Sin is the product of evil**. Sin destroys and no good thing comes from what sin is about. Nothing. But are we convinced of that? **The next conflict you are involved in, ask yourself the difference it would have made if sin had not been committed**. Sin is awful. Scripture says that the power of sin is death!



a. **Note, how sin works: James 1:14,15 but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.**

b. There is nothing at all glamorous about sin. It is the product of evil. Sin is essentially calling what God has said is evil, calling that good. It's the foolishness of valuing our own wisdom above God's.

4. **The dirty secret of sin must be addressed first of all**. It can't be reworded, or seen as not all that bad. It must be owned. One's sin is the first thing to deal with on the pathway to peace.
5. **Next, on that pathway to peace, is to find the forgiveness which John speaks about, forgiveness which only Christ can give.**
- a. As Zechariah said about the pathway John would announce, **77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins... Sin is the barrier to peace.**
  - b. The pathway leads to Jesus. **Romans 5:10 For if, when we were God's enemies, (because of our sin) we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!** Peace can only come when it's found in Christ.

It's only through Christ that we can take full advantage of God's mercy and forgiveness through repentance in Jesus' name.

- c. ***The peace we seek, the peace the world seeks, the peace we sing about, the peace the world wants is only available through Christ. I say this without hesitation.***
  - d. We are too willing to settle for far less because of our unwillingness to recognize that peace is only found through Christ. We are willing to settle for wrong pathways to peace because somehow we just don't want to believe, or travel this road where it begins with repentance. We just don't want to admit that the sin in our lives is so destructive that it always leads to death!
  - e. Perhaps it's our stubbornness, our unwillingness to deal with sin, or even call it sin, or just because we don't want to, but we are too willing to accept substitute things for peace. How sad!
6. ***A third thing on the pathway to peace then is to live as a peaceful person, a person who is deeply influenced and changed because of Jesus Christ. Here's how peace is Re-Gifted!***
- a. It begins in our hearts. ***Colossians 3:15-17 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.***
  - b. The Scripture from **Colossians** is what it looks like to begin to live in peace. As far as the world is concerned, this probably makes no sense. But remember God's plan just hasn't been tried by enough people. There are many who yet believe peace can come through other means.
  - c. Peace will only exist in our lives and the lives of those with whom we encounter when Christ is Lord, and we see one another first through Christ, not our prejudices or sinfulness.
7. Re-gifting peace begins with having the peace of Christ in your life, and then sharing it with others. **Illustration:** A Sunday school teacher asked her class if they could tell her what a saint was. The kids offered a couple of ideas—a good person, someone who lived in Bible days... Then one boy, remembering the beautiful stained glass windows in his grandma's church. "I know!" he said. "A saint is someone with the light shining through

**Re-Gifted**



From God to Me to You

him.” <http://www.cloquetchurch.com/2014/12/regifting/> That sounds like a great way to begin re-gifting peace to a lost and hurting world!

**Conclusion:** Hindus, Buddhist, Muslims, and even Jews all regard Jesus as a great teacher. And if they do, why then is Zechariah, John the Baptist and Jesus wrong about peace? Is there anyone other than Jesus who can give peace? I don’t think so. And as I say this, more songs will be sung about peace and how wonderful it is. Yet, without Christ, there is no peace, and there will not be peace. There will not be any sense of life that is at peace with God and with one another without Christ. **2 Peter 1:2 says it best: Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.** Peace, it’s only through Jesus.

Peace, the real peace, can be re-gifted through us, to others, but only if it’s the peace that comes from Christ.

**Questions:**

1. What’s the sin that is the big barrier to peace in your life? Ready to do something about it?
2. Are you ready to pursue peace with God with a sense of urgency? Ready to realign yourself with what peace is about?
3. Are you ready to follow the pathway to peace? Repent of sin? Find peace and life in Christ as your Lord and Savior? Live a life that honors God?
4. What do you need to do, because Jesus is Lord, the Originator and Completion of Peace?

