

Peace in a Chaotic World

Chaos reigned! My world was whirling so fast I was certain that I could no longer see the stars at night. I knew that if I looked up, there would only be a blur in the ebony sky. Or at least, it seemed that way.

Christmas was all around me but I didn't have time to see it. I was rushing from the nursing home where my mother was confined to stand beside my seriously ill father. I dashed by the house to catch any phone calls and dropped in at the church to help with Christmas plans. Shopping was somewhere on my ever-growing list of things to do, as were some doctor appointments for myself. I was recovering from my own serious illness.

My husband, children, grandchildren and extended family all seemed to desperately need "something" and I was the designated person to handle it. Everywhere I went it seemed that I was overwhelmed with needs ... things I absolutely had to do!

The "Tyranny of the Urgent" replaced any sense of order in my life. I could barely hear the telephone ring over the rush of so much pressure. There was absolutely no hope of hearing Christmas carols or chimes from a church steeple. Vaguely, I knew this wasn't right but I didn't quite know how to stop the whirl.

Then, it happened. The doorbell rang, calling me from the dining room where I'd been frantically wrapping presents. I snatched open the door and stood open-mouthed at all our neighbors gathered on the front lawn. Coats, hats, scarves and mittens kept them warm while they caroled our home. My husband joined me at the door and we drank in the music, the tender smiles and the genuine love they offered. It was a delightful moment, yet

one fraught with sadness. I had been so busy I'd forgotten the promise to join our neighbors this night to share the love of Jesus in song. When they departed amid volumes of well wishes, I sat quietly on the floor and stared at the pile of yet to be wrapped gifts.

The twinkling, bejeweled tree towering beside our fireplace seemed far removed from the real meaning of Christmas. The presents stacked in the dining room would be received with joy by our friends and relatives. Yet, I wondered, would those people, after receiving my gifts, have any more peace in their lives than I did at this very minute?

I turned down the bright lights, pulled a cushion near the blazing fireplace and reached for my Bible. "God," I whispered in the stillness, "I don't think You meant the celebration of your birth to be like this. My world is so chaotic — show me how to regain Your peace. I'm so busy doing 'things' that I don't seem to have time to share Your love and the true meaning of Christmas with my family and friends."

Ignoring the insatiable demands of my "list," I started thumbing through the Scriptures, searching for verses that showed God's peace.

*"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."
~John 14:27*

*"I have told you these things,
so that in me you may have peace.
In this world you will have trouble.
But take heart! I have overcome the world."
~John 16:33*

More ...

*"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 4:6-7*

There was my answer. Peace comes from Jesus. The only way I could end the chaos was to turn to Him. I laid aside my Bible and closed my eyes in order to focus on Christ.


"Lord, I bring all my chaos to You. I'm seeking Your peace. You know the needs around me and You know exactly how much I can do. Help me to see this list of 'to do' items with Your eyes. Show me what is truly Your direction for me and allow me to see what isn't necessary. It's more important that I worship You and help my family and friends to do the same than it is to try to do "everything" that I thought I needed to do. Amen."

I reached for my list and a pencil. Immediately I saw three items that weren't needed. I couldn't understand now why I had ever thought they were necessary! Crossing those off, I looked again and found two things that could be handled by someone else. A couple of phone calls the next day would take care of those. Slowly I worked my way through the list and was amazed at how much could be deleted. In the end, I knew for certain that God had answered my prayer. I'd seen the list through His eyes.

Then, I added one item that hadn't been on my list: Afternoon Christmas Tea with my mother and her nursing home friends. I could picture sitting in their cheery Day Room, serving tea in my fancy Christmas Pot and passing a plate of decorated Christmas cookies. Not all of them would know who I was, but that didn't matter. I'd take along a tape of Christmas music so we could all sing along. All the Christmas songs would bring joy to them, but there would be one phrase that I knew I could really sing with meaning: PEACE ON EARTH, GOODWILL TO MEN!

~ Marcia Mitchell
Walla Walla, Washington, USA

*Lord, please Lord,
Help me to get the priorities of the season
in perspective. Do not let me permit the ex-
cesses of my plans become detrimental to what
You are attempting to do in me this year. You
did all this to repair our broken relationship.
You did that so well that I can now come
boldly before you. Help me to put healing back
into my relationships. Let me live the spirit and
ministry of reconciliation with others as I cele-
brate Your gift of reconciliation with me. Amen*

 *It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth
to touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, good will to men,
from heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay,
to hear the angels sing.*

*Still through the cloven skies they come
with peaceful wings unfurled,
and still their heavenly music floats
o'er all the weary world;
above its sad and lowly plains,
they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o'er its Babel sounds
the blessed angels sing.*

*And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way
with painful steps and slow,
look now! for glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road,
and hear the angels sing!*

*For lo! the days are hastening on,
by prophet seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years
shall come the time foretold
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendors fling,
and the whole world send back the song
which now the angels sing.*