

# Peace, Be Still:

## Subconscious Ammo for Anxiety

Adventure Series: Peace  
Advent Week 4 - Dec, 19th, 2021  
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Judges 6:24  
Daniel 10:15-19  
Matthew 13:1-23  
Mark 4:35-41  
Luke 2: 8-20  
Philippians 4:5-9

If you pray for space, and you pray for space, and you pray for space and then space is gifted to you and all you do in that space is be anxious about the lack of other things to experience then you never appreciated that space. That may sound complicated, but if you have ever experienced that restlessness that comes from trying to be still when you are used to chasing your tail a mile a minute trying to keep up, then you know exactly what I am talking about.

We as humans are so used to being tasked or entertained. We want to rest so much. We obsess over getting it, relieving ourselves of responsibilities, and just having nothing to do. But then if we achieve that opportunity, most of us are vibrating much too fast to actually rest into that rest.

Chuck Swindoll has a beautiful little book called *Intimacy with the Almighty* and throughout that book, he maps out how to simplify our lives and make space for God. It is, in large part about simplicity, or what Marie Condo teaches about reducing clutter. Physical clutter promotes mental agitation. When we want peace we need to simplify and find comfort on all fronts so that we can actually be present enough to receive the experience of it.

Not only do we need to reduce our workload and clutter, but the most difficult part of the whole process is actually how we adjust to that change. How do we shift modes into that state of receptivity for the experience of peace?

Now, God is a God of peace. The Bible tells us that there is a peace that surpasses all understanding, but this goes both ways. Firstly, it means that we cannot wrap our heads around it. So the more we try, the less we resonate with it, and the harder it is to experience it, which is the only way we would prove it to ourselves. Some things can only be experienced, not understood... and just about anything to do with the qualities of God are on that list.

Secondly, it means that it will overwhelm and overcome all mental anxiety when we need it to. That's the moment when you push so far beyond your comfort zone that it's almost like a switch gets flipped and you can't connect to caring about what you were so anxious about before. It's that moment of acceptance. That moment of surrender. But often it feels like a subtly alarming dissociation, but the overwhelm that got us into that state overrides it and we are just thankful for that relief.

If you appreciate that space and you acknowledge that space then the space is fulfilled. You have a chance to reset and new things can come into that space. But if you reject or deny the gift when it is given, you both don't get the medicine and also do not get relief or reset as a result of the experience.

Instead of using the space to reset, you squander it through anxiety and instead of being anxious about how many things you have to get done, you instead are anxious about the fact that nothing is there to support you. When really you asked for space and relief in the first place. All you need to do is take advantage of it and appreciate it so that you can move on forward in your story.

Now, there is of course a flip side to this all. What if you are taking *too much* space? I know, so many of you just asked me *what that is* because it's such a foreign concept. But too much space is laziness and procrastination, lethargy and even depression. Allowing too much space between stimulation, or between taking up invitations in life, sets us on the opposite but equal path to anxiety. We, humans, have this sweet spot between being anxious with not enough space and anxious with too much space. For everyone where that is is different.

When you are on a hairpin trigger and you're looking for an excuse to give up, people will give you ammo. We are social beings who love to be supported and so we seek one

another out when we are in those moments of overwhelm or weakness. We love to console and unfortunately, that often takes the form of commiseration rather than co-creativity towards a resolution.

But the friend you have in Christ is primed and ready to hold space for you to rest and lay down your anxiety-laden burdens. Like the little lamb, all soft and comforting, he is at the ready to receive your weary head.

Peace is about more than just relief and rest. It is the polar opposite of that anxiety. It's the state of surrender. Selah is that state of being when you are taken beyond your human capacity into that state of suspension where everything is hyper-real and simultaneously not real at all. It's not a state of overwhelm but it is the state in which all is experienced. A state of being.

There are a lot of common responses to experiencing that selah state. It can be bliss, it can be frightening, it can be nothing... And nothing is a very triggering thing to those who are used to a lot of pressure and distractions.

The angels declared peace on Earth as a proclamation to the Shepherds when Jesus was born. This is not just because he would one day conquer death, but it was also an invitation. That message could have been delivered to anyone, but the announcement of The Lamb was spoken in an open field to a group of shepherds and their sheep. Now, this may be the herder in me talking, but I know well the peace that an animal companion can bring. They have got it figured out, well some of them anyways.

For a few years, I lived in a yurt out in a field with my small herd of alpacas. There was a different pace to life. Alberta farmers have a saying: 'hurry up and wait', and that about sums it up. Anything in farming is all about divine timing... scratch that... anything in LIFE is all about divine timing. When we rest into the confidence of Christ, then we can rest our weary nerves. As a result, when there is less stimulation your sense actually expands reaching outwards for an interaction. When there is less to respond to your senses heighten.

We experience this naturally without thinking about it. Ever need to reach something that is a little too far behind a piece of furniture? You reach your arm in, but your head doesn't fit, you can't reach and see at the same time. So what do you do? Most

people turn their heads away and close their eyes. They 'see' with their fingertips. Ever have trouble hearing something? Most will either close their eyes or stare blankly unfocused. We shut our vision off to use our other senses.

That's why peekaboo is so funny to a child. When they can't see, everything else heightens, for a child that means sensation and emotion. It's also why we humans have an innate instinct to cover our eyes when we are scared. It's not that the threat doesn't exist if we can't see it. It is that vision is generally the least reliable or strong sense for people, so we rely on our other senses, which are sharper... and even sharper if we take vision out of the equations. Warriors train blindfolded to exercise intuition and overstimulated people with PTSD are instructed to sit in a dark room to reset.

For those who have trouble calming the storm, maybe you should try to find rest in R.E.S.T. That is Reduced/Restrictive Environmental Stimuli Therapy or Floatation Therapy. In a float, you surrender into a controlled environment. Temperature matches the body so there is no contrast for the perspective of touch, buoyancy is perfect so you feel no gravity, the room is dark so there is no sight, and silent so there is no hearing and no smells. When you reduce environmental stimulation it gives the psyche, neurology, and physiology a chance to reset and recalibrate to a more natural balance. The therapeutic practice is used to address a lot of prevalent and complex psychological and physiological conditions because it allows the two aspects of a person to reconnect and communicate without interference.

The first time or two, that isolation may be shocking. Instead of resting the senses expand and expand looking for something to bounce off of to experience. The mind presents every bit of fodder it can produce, and the inner monologue runs amok until eventually exhausting itself. Eventually, when nothing is found... all goes quiet.

It is in this suspension that a no-thing becomes nothingness. When you get used to it, there is a pleasure in that nothing. A peace in being still. And, if you can stay in that long enough, *selah* is to be experienced. In that state of *selah*, we can be receptive to revelations, from the subconscious and beyond.

Floating is a wonderful and usually accessible way to enter in and train yourself. But we each have our method. For some it is meditation or music, others exercise, some dance, some drawing, or writing, or working... whatever allows you to be entranced can allow you to

experience a separation between body and mind. When that happens the space between becomes a playground. This is different than dissociation. You get so present into your body you can experience a space within it, you almost leave it behind while experiencing it more subtly than ever before. The sensations that have always been there occupying your mind rather than distracting it. Your present reality becomes your entire reality.

To enter deep into the experience we need to make space for the awareness, the consciousness beneath the surface, or for the Spirit to join. It is the meeting place for you, your soul, and the Holy Spirit. Stillness, rest, respite - they are the gateways into peace. But once through the door, there is a whole world of comfort and challenge and presence to step into, to be initiated by - to be transformed, transmuted, and transfigured within.

From our physical perspective peace is so elusive. But from the other side, the Holy Spirit's domain peace is only the beginning of a whole world you are being invited into. Jesus said he was the gateway. Well, he is the gateway to an ecstatic mystic experience. But, we interpret that as being exciting.

What if, rather than stimulating, it is overwhelming, and therefore like R.E.S.T., reorganizes your senses and brings you deeper into yourself. Allowing you to connect, or reconnect, with that speck of light, spark of life, the flicker of the divine at the core of your being. You are made in God's image, inspired by His Breathe of Life breathed into your lungs. That means that beneath all that humanness there is the tincture and imprint of the divine within you.

Jesus taught us how to be present, accountable, and responsible with ourselves so as not to distract from the purpose of the path. He was teaching us how to hone ourselves to be receptive to the inspiration of that divine Breathe of Life. At the core of stillness, there is a peace that surpasses all understanding, and in that experience there is no-thing. Which is the very beauty of sharing space with God.

The more we pursue it, the busier we are, the less qualified we are to enter in behind that veil to commune with God. There is a peace that is the result of patience and practice. And there is a peace that is the result of divine intervention. The difference is sustainability. If you experience that as a result of wonder and awe, you can glimpse it but

will lose that connection. It was a beautiful gift, but only that. Men have driven themselves insane pursuing less than that.

However, if the experience is the result of a cultivation, a practice, then you realize that what was being cultivated was not the practice itself, but yourself by the practice. That cultivation, like a field planted with seeds, is changing you and getting you ready and qualified to enter into that experience of the presence of Peace.

For some of us, the nostalgia of this holiday is what brings us a sense of belonging and connection with the romantic story of the heralded birth of our King and Saviour. For others, it was always reconnecting with family, having everyone together and expressing care or consideration for one another in the gift-giving. For others, the stress of the whole thing is anxiety-inducing or depressing.

Whatever your relationship with the holidays, don't forget to keep vigil of the Holy-Days within it. Take space, take time, to create an opportunity to be receptive to the experience of that peace which is the first step on the path towards Presence with the Almighty, the comfort of angels who've wished you peace, and communing with the Lamb in the manger.

Ask any mother, the pathway to holding your child is chaotic and frightening, but the moment you share their presence you forget the trauma and pain and are overwhelmed with love and become present in time in the presencing of the present gift wrapped in swaddling cloths. The simplicity of the whole complex ordeal orients you into the world within their eyes and your heartbeat.

So just start there. Find your own reflection to find that child-like wonder within your eyes, stare deep within your own eyes, steady your focus on your heartbeat, and share breathe with your Self. In that moment, you will feel God. Whether you do that in sensory deprivation or with a mirror... there is only you there... and the One who gave you that breath to share.

Soli Deo Gloria,  
Rev. Rynn Parraw