



As I experience the Christmas season this year—I'm anxious, are you?

I cannot think of a time when I needed the peace of Christ more desperately than now.

As I navigate the challenges of our "COVID World" I am faced with intense feelings of uncertainty. I feel uncertain about what the future holds globally, nationally, locally, and more personally, what does the future hold for me and the ones that I love? I face a sense of loss. I mourn the loss of time together as a community and as an extended family, I mourn the loss of a sense of productivity and accomplishment in my work, and I mourn with others who have experienced the loss of financial stability, and some who have lost the life of a loved one.

This Christmas, more than ever, I need to know the peace that the angels proclaimed on the night of Christ's birth, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!'" (Luke 2:12–14)

Right now we know that peace is not confined to a time or a place, but is a person--the person of Jesus Christ.

His words say it all, "...Trusting me, you will be Unshakable and Assured, deeply at Peace. In this godless world you will continue to experience difficulties. But take heart! I've conquered the world." (John 16:33, The Message)

I want to experience that "deep peace" that Jesus offers this Christmas. I want to know His presence through his Holy Spirit, as I face each day's challenges. In our trials we experience the true meaning of Christ's coming as a baby—He is "Emmanuel", God with us! Jesus knows our suffering because he came to suffer for our sake. In spite of our imposed isolation due to COVID, in spite of our fears about the future, we are never alone. God, the creator of all things, and the lover of our souls is with us. He will never leave us.

As Tim Keller says in Hidden Christmas, "He has come not to bring judgment but to bear it, to pay the penalty for our sins, to take away the barrier between humanity and God, so we can be together."

In this difficult time, let us cling to the reassurance that Jesus is God with us and his presence is our peace.

As the Pepperdine community, we all long to be together again and to step into this season with confidence and calm. My prayer is that each one of us will find our peace in the ultimate Christmas gift, Emmanuel, God with us. And through His presence, come together in unity.

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