

## Transcript

all right so uh this past week on Monday night uh my family went to dinner with some friends and on the way home it was about 7:30 almost 8:00 we were trying to get home it's only about 5 minutes away but we were trying to get home before my son Landon who's about 6month old fell asleep and if you ever been in that stage of parenting where you just like you got to get them home before they fall asleep in the car because otherwise it resets the whole thing and they won't sleep for the next like two or three

hours so we're trying to keep him awake as we're driving home and um and he's like hiding it he really wants to go to a sleep and so we're keeping him awake and then he starts crying because he's mad cause we won't let him sleep and then we pull up to a stoplight and I have better access because I'm driving so I turn around and I I try to like just kind of play with him a little bit comfort him to keep him going uh and stay awake and while I'm doing that suddenly I just hear this like and it's the car behind me and

they're not doing just like a little like beep beep or like a hey like light change you need to go I mean they just lay on the horn and they stay on it they do not let up and I'm like oh my goodness what is so it just turned green like I promise you I hadn't been just sitting there for like five minutes trying to help my crying baby it just turned green she's laying on the horn and I start to pull out it's a single like Lane turning uh space and she whips around me laying on the

horn the entire time as I'm already moving forward I'm already going lays on it swerves around me Cuts me off and keeps going and makes like face at me and she goes by and I like I get mad okay like I was mad I don't respond well in those kind of situations and uh I don't like when people do that kind of thing I'm trying to help my crying baby and it just felt like so excessive to just I mean it was like 30 seconds she was just laying on the horn and uh and as this is happening my daughter in the

back seat who's five she goes Daddy what is happening like why is that person beeping at us and I respond and I say well I don't know sweetheart she's just a rude person and I'm going to be really honest with you I was so proud of myself in that moment like I was like I am I'm doing so good right now I didn't make a scene I didn't like make a face at this woman I didn't say something that I shouldn't have said in front of my daughter I didn't like swerve my truck into her to try to run her off the road

like I wouldn't actually do that but maybe you know like you don't never know in those moments so I was feeling so good I literally had this thought I thought wow the fruit of the spirit Series this renewal series is really working in my life like I'm becoming a more loving person I'm like responding in a better way the fruit of the spirit is just like permeating my being right now and then I turn over with kind of this like dumb grin on my face and I see my wife and she's got that look on her face and it's the look that says you

shouldn't have said that and I I'll be honest with you I'm familiar with that look 'cause I get it a lot there's a lot of times I get this look that's like you shouldn't have said that in front of the kids like that's not appropriate but in this moment I'm like why in the world was that not appropriate that was totally like said she was a rude person like she's just being rude like it's not a big deal I could have said a lot of other things believe me so I'm very confused in this moment I'm like I just

look at her I'm like wait what am I missing like what did I say something and she's like you should not be labeling people like that in front of our children now is she right yeah probably okay like yeah we want to treat every we we're trying to teach our kids that like no matter what happens we want to treat people with like the inherent worth that they have because they're created in the image of God and blah blah blah I get it okay but in that moment that is not what I wanted to hear

I did not want to hear from my wife that I shouldn't I was like I did a good job there like don't tell me that I shouldn't have called this person a rude person so this person who's been like just transformed by the sermon series we're in proceeds to get into an argument with my wife about what I said about this person who honked at us which kind of just defeats the whole purpose to begin with right like I'm arguing with her about no like that wasn't the wrong thing to say and we get into an argument it Spirals and then she's like

nope you just shouldn't have done it like that's true like that was just not a kind thing to say you know and I just like get angry and we're fighting about it which kind of really just defeated the whole like premise that I had that I was really being transformed right so how's this the fruit of the spirit Series going for you like that's about what it's been like in

my life and I was feeling pretty good until the Holy Spirit through the voice of my wife convicted me and said no you

still have a little bit further to go uh and then truthfully that is part of the identity of this series renewal uh transformation does not happen overnight it's not simply that we you know start talking about the fruit of the spirit and suddenly we become more loving joyful like peaceful people it takes time to cultivate fruit in our lives and transformation takes time and as we're trying to be cultivated and molded into the person of Jesus that takes a lot of time in fact I would argue that that this series is not just

simply like Hey by the end of it you'll have all of this figured out in many ways it's just it's the start of a lifelong process and many of you have been on that Journey so you know yeah it takes time to cultivate these things so I just I kind of give that story a little tongue and cheek to just say if you feel like yeah you know I've been fasting I've been doing I don't really feel that's okay to and Jesus is still at work in our lives right um and so we'll keep going today and uh what I want to talk with you today about is the

fruit of the spirit peace in a culture of anxiety and how we can cultivate peace in our lives in a culture of anxiety and so just to start out I want to ask you when was the last time that you truly felt at peace in your life when was the last moment you can think of where you're just like yeah just Everything feels kind of calm still and peaceful what has brought you the deepest sense of peace in your life what was it about that place or that person or that event then I want you to think for a moment what often

disrupts your peace what causes your peace to kind of fall apart and for you to feel more a little more chaos or anxiety in your life see I think for many of us peace is fairly Elusive and in fact when I look at our culture I see not a culture of Peace but a culture of anxiety I see a government that that's at war with itself and can't figure out how to get along I see people who really don't know how to agree to disagree and everybody has to fight about something I see a lot of people

who have a lot of hatred towards people who don't look like them or think like them or act like them right the other like they're not like us and so we don't have peace with them I see a lot of families with very full schedules and very empty lives see a lot of people who are pursuing something and just running as fast as they can to try to fill

something in their lives but they're not really even sure what it is that they're looking for I don't feel like when I look at our culture truthfully even if I examine my

own life that I would say it's characterized by peace in fact you know we I just kind of shared we have two kids one's five one's 6 months and there are not very many days where it feels like we have peace in our lives most of the time our lives feel very messy and noisy and a little bit chaotic and in fact I asked my daughter this week I was like hey if you had to think about our family would you would you say that we're more of like a a family of chaos or a family of peace and she kind I swear she's five and she just kind of

like sighed and she goes Oh Daddy we're a family of chaos I was like cool like why do you say that and she's like well we've got our messy girls and we've got our crazy boys and it's just like we're running around doing errands and I was like yeah fair enough like things are like from a 5-year-old it's a little chaotic and my question for you is as you examine your own life what is the missing piece in your life do you feel more chaos than peace and my guess is for you that that there's

something tied to this idea of chaos and that the moments in life that feel chaotic that leads to a place of anxiety that that anxiety is deeply tied to the chaos we feel in our lives in fact we did a sermon at the beginning of this year on anxiety but just to remind you of a few statistics it's believed that and not believed it's true that anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the entire world and in our country alone America spends 37 billion dollars annually trying to treat

anxiety disorders and it's affecting our young people the worst of all in fact what they're finding in research is that the average teenager the average high schooler today has more anxiety in their life than a psychiatric patient of the 1950s it's just plaguing our society our society is sick with anxiety we're desperate to experience peace and you may be sitting here and thinking you know actually Paul I feel like I've got some peace I don't feel super anxious about anything I don't I'm not

really a worrier and man like Bless you that's amazing and maybe show us the way but even if you were in that place my guess is that the people around you society around you is in desperate need of Peace maybe your kids are not experiencing peace or your boyfriend or your girlfriend or your neighbor I don't think the woman behind me who was

honky and had very much peace in her life right like people around us need peace and it often feels like peace is elusive we don't have peace within ourselves and we don't have peace in our

relationships with other people around us so the question is how can we experience peace and truthfully this is something I've wrestled with this week because if it's a fruit of the spirit then it means that that if you are a Believer and a follower in Jesus you have peace available to you have peace in your life available to you simply because you were a follower of Jesus and the Holy Spirit resides within you and the fruit of the spirit is a gift that he gives it's not something we just like

bear so if peace is so available to us why is it so elusive to us why is it so hard for us to experience peace Thomas meron I think gets at the heart of why many of us do not experience peace even though it's widely available to us he says this we are not at peace with others because we are not at peace with ourselves we are not at peace with ourselves because we are not at peace with God let me read that one more time we are not at peace with others because we are not at peace with ourselves and we are

not at peace with ourselves because we are not at peace with God be very honest with you I absolutely agree with his assessment that that what he is essentially saying is that if we go back to the source of peace it comes from the person of God and once we have peace with God there's something that happens within us that we can have peace within ourselves and once we are able to find peace within ourselves then it leads us to a place where we can have people with others and those around us

and so that's kind of the trajectory of where we're going today I want to backtrack this statement and start with what it looks like to have peace with God so that we can have peace with ourselves so that we can have peace with those around us because one of the things that's true about the fruit of the spirit and one thing I think we often miss is the fruit of the spirit is not just simply for you to feel better about yourself it's not simply for you to oh yeah I have inner peace and I feel so much better about my

life and everything's good the fruit of the spirit is actually meant to be experienced so that it can be exported we we're supposed to take the fruit of the spirit to the world around us so that they can see and witness that the Lord is good and that he has

transformed and changed our lives and so if we want to experience peace the culmination of that experience is actually cultivating peace in the world around us and for others around us and so it all starts though with how we experience peace with God and

whether or not we experience peace with God but first we have to get our parameters straight a little bit and we have to ask the question what is peace like when we're talking about peace what does it mean like you may think of just like some Cabin in the Woods you may think of some person that maybe like makes you feel at home and at ease you may think of no conflict in your life and all the people who are problems in your life just like poof in their gone and they disappeared and you're like

yeah that would be peace like what does peace actually look like peace in scripture is honestly one of the most important words in the entire Bible I would argue it's the word shalom in Hebrew and IR in Greek and at the core of it in the Bible peace is much more about wholeness and completeness in fact when rabbis or different people would try to explain what they mean by the word Shalom they would often use the image two images one is of a rock that's whole or complete has no cracks in it no

like um it's not breaking down at all it's complete and it's whole or a wall they would give the image of a wall that has everything coherent with it it's complete there's nothing breaking down no bricks are missing it it's whole and it's complete and at the heart of it this idea it carries an idea of Stillness and calm even in the midst of Chaos Shalom and peace at the heart of it carries it with it this idea that life is really complex and it is full of moving parts and relationships and

situations and when any one of those things gets out of alignment your Shalom begins to break down and crumble and at the heart of it means that Shalom needs to be restored have you ever seen a lake on a really still and calm day like no wind and it just it looks like glass and if you take a pebble and you throw it into that that Lake of glass that's completely calm what happens to it it'll cause ripples that kind of go out but if it's a calm enough day eventually that water will go back to

stillness and calmness now as opposed to think of a time you've been at a lake or some body of water on a windy day or a stormy day where the waves are crashing and the

wind's whipping around and it's absolute chaos isn't it and if you throw a stone into that chaotic body of water I mean you can't even tell where the thing landed it's so tumultuous and volatile and there's something in this idea of peace that that we can be people that are like a lake on a calm day that even when

chaos is thrown into our Waters we can return to a place of Harmony and peace and Stillness and calm doesn't that sound wonderful see it's this idea that when we are connected to God we can experience this deep peace that does not get disrupted even when life around us feels a little chaotic so the question is how do we get that peace how do we experience that peace meron suggests and I agree that it begins with our relationship with God that this idea of Shalom is actually Central to God's relationship with

humanity and if you look throughout scripture and if you try to find different places where the word peace pops up what you will find is that it is often connected to the work of Jesus on the cross and what he has done to bring peace between us and God for instance in Colossians verse uh chapter 1: 19 it says this for God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Him being Jesus and through Jesus to reconcile to himself all things whether things on earth or things in Heaven by making peace through his blood shed on

the cross see when it comes to this idea of Peace again and again in scripture what pops up is this idea of reconciliation that God is reconciling all things in the world to himself everything that's broken everything that's out of alignment everything that that is experiencing chaos God is working to bring that back into alignment with him in fact one of the images that scripture has for this is the image of the sea because in the ancient world the sea was one of the most chaotic bodies that that was known

to man it was full of unknown and mystery it was completely untamable the people who would you know go on Journeys they had no way of predicting or controlling the sea and so it was this symbol of absolute chaos in the ancient world do you know one of the beautiful pictures that scripture gives us at the end of scripture in Revelation it says that that God is making all things new and that the old Order of Things is passing away there will be a new heavens and a new Earth and then it

throws in this weird tagline and there will be no more sea it feels like such a weird thing to say like new Heavens new Earth New Creation God is reconciling all things to himself but there's not going to be any sea at the heart of it what it is saying is that heaven Ultimate Reality where we are reunited with Jesus we experience New Creation there will be no chaos that it will be a place of absolute and perfect peace because the Prince of Peace rules and Reigns in that land and one of the mysteries of

scripture is that we can experience that now that we can have that peace that we are aiming for and that we will one day experience in our lives now because what scripture contends again and again and again is that peace is not a feeling peace is a person when Jesus was born he was announced as the Prince of Peace the apostles went through the ancient world claiming that Jesus had made peace between messed up humans and a perfect holy God that when he rose from the dead he was restoring wholeness and completeness to our world

and restoring our relationship with our creator Jesus brought Shalom to the world and that it is in Jesus this person that that is our peace in fact different places in Scripture it explicitly says that Jesus is our peace he was the only whole and complete human that experienced perfect Shalom and so he has given that to us so a question for us is if peace is a person and if we believe in Jesus how can we experience that peace that wholeness that completeness in our lives and I'll be honest with you and

I've shared my story before I do I struggle with a lot of anxiety and what I'm beginning to realize is so much of my anxiety in the places that I worry or the places I have doubt it's tied to my relationship with God and what I believe about him see most of my anxiety manifests about things in the future things that that will happen or that could happen or ways that I maybe have lack of control in my life and I don't really know where things are going often times for me it looks like this in that like even if

life is really good and there's no reason to be worried I always believe that the rug is about to be pulled out from under me like yeah things are good now but tomorrow like what's going to happen like that's just how it manifests itself in my life but at the core of that at the heart of that belief is not just a fear of the future it's a lack of trust in God in my life what manifests in my relationship with God is that I don't actually always believe that God is for me I don't actually believe that God is good I'm

not sure that I can always trust his character and so if I cannot trust his character then I think something is always around the next bin that's going to disrupt and ruin my life now do bad things happen to people absolutely but what would it look like if I engaged in that space with a with a deeper Trust of God's character see Jesus even says that as we go through life we shouldn't worry about the future because that will have enough worry for itself but trust in the character of God that that he is a God who knows the

the number of hairs on our head who knows the days of Our Lives who takes care of The Sparrows and the flowers of the field in fact Peter says that that when you're anxious cast your cares upon God cast all of your anxieties upon God because he cares about you for you when it comes to anxiety when it comes to the places in your life where you're fearful or where you worry what is it that you believe about God see because the lack of peace in their lives is deeply tied to our relationship with our creator and what

we believe about him peace always begins with God and our relationship with him because peace is a person and so what would it look like to maybe be honest about some of the places in our life where we're feeling a lack of peace and to examine and explore what might be rooted in our relationship with God there because what scripture says is that that God has made peace with us through the blood of Christ that that peace is available to us because of the work of Jesus not because of anything you might do but

because of what Jesus has done at Great cost to himself God has made peace with you and once we've experienced this peace with God then it then it leads to a place where we can experience peace with ourselves one of the main ideas around peace is that when we experience Shalom and our relationship with God then it leads to a place where we can experience inner peace in our lives a peace that that surpasses understanding that does doesn't make logical sense that that we can have peace of mind even

in situations of chaos Philippians 4 6-7 says do not be anxious about anything not some things like not the big things not the little things don't be anxious about anything but in every situation by prayer and petition with Thanksgiving present your request to God and the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and

your minds in Christ Jesus see this this scripture says that that peace is something we can experience within ourselves when we take our cares and our worries to God that we

do not have to be characterized by anxiety or fear or worry because we simply bring those things to God and when we do that he will give us a piece that the world looks at and says that makes absolutely no sense like your world is crumbling and falling apart like your house is on fire your life is blowing up and you have peace that makes no sense but it's because it's not tied to our circumstances it's tied to a person when we experience peace within ourselves that doesn't make any sense then then we are a witness to what

God has done in our lives and what he is doing see because it's not just that peace as a person peace is actually a promise Jesus in in John 14 he says this peace I leave with you my peace I give you I do not give as the world gives so do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid see Jesus says that he leaves his peace with us that it's not just some random peace or some false empty promise he actually promises us that he leaves peace with us and so we can experience deep Shalom within our

lives and he assumes that we're going to encounter hardship he assumes that things are going to be hard but he says don't be worried Don't Be Afraid don't be troubled in those circumstances I have given you peace see I think the world at times tries to fill this promise for us often times when it comes to peace the world tries to find ways for us to find peace apart from God it's almost like the serpent in the garden that tries to seduce Eve by say just take this fruit and you'll have everything you want and

everything will be fine the world tries to tell us that you know if you just man you know you're really anxious about maybe being alone if you just download that dating app like our product will solve all of your anxiety and your fear around that situation I mean so much of our advertising plays on the anxiety and fears that we feel in life you worried that no one likes you are you worried that no one will want to be your friend and hang out with you by our be here right like that's the message we receive over and

over and over again that this world tries to offer false promises that if you just buy this thing or get this routine or do this thing you will find the peace that you're looking for but it is an empty promise because peace can only be found in the person of Jesus

because he is the only one who can back up the promise of Peace he is the one who can offer us true and Lasting security and it cannot be found apart from God is anyone excited for the movie coming out this summer called Twisters like plural anyone you guys know what

I'm talking about anybody remember the old movie Twister all right okay yeah we're an older church so some of you like yeah no I know that one you didn't even know there was a next one coming out all right you didn't even know I love it I think it's brilliant marketing that it's Twisters like plural not twister 2 just Twisters there going to be a lot of them that's what it's saying it's plural but anyway so the original twister movie if you remember the end of that movie right Bill and Joe

they they've been chasing This Tornado they've been trying to find tornado and then an F5 tornado shows up is this hu it's a mile long is this massive system that's just destroying everything in its path and it's headed straight for them and so that first they try to find Shelter From a barn in it but they realized that was a terrible idea because all the tools in the barn are getting thrown around like knives and it's dangerous and the Barn's getting ripped apart so they run out of the barn and then they find this old pumping

station and they find these leather straps and they strap themselves I'm spoiler alert but it's like a 20-year-old movie okay I'm going to give you the end so they strapped themselves to this this pumping station pipe that are that's anchored like 30t into the ground and they strap themselves with and they're hanging on and the tornado comes over and it rips the pumping station off and they are completely unharmed because they've anchored themselves to this piping system it is so ridiculous okay it's

like so absurd there is no way that like these leather straps are more powerful or like stronger than a an actual structure of a house okay it just doesn't make sense but it's fictional and there's a little bit of Truth in it in this it matters in life in the storms of life what you anchor yourself to and you see in this movie they find something that that's deeply rooted that's strong enough to withstand the storms of life and it matters what you tether yourself to because what Jesus says if

you tether yourself to anything other than him it will disappoint and fail you eventually it is only Jesus that is strong enough to withstand the storms of life and he wants to be an anchor for your soul in the storms of life that is the only place that you will find security because peace is a person and that person has promised that you can experience peace in your life and this takes us to a place where once we have experienced that peace that that peace within ourselves made possible through peace with God that

that Jesus calls us to take that peace to the world that is in desperate need of peace to take peace to a world that is so desperately longing for freedom from anxiety and worry and fear see Jesus says that we are called to bring peace to others God calls us to live at peace with others to work for peace among Christians and with the outer world since God has made peace with us at Great cost to himself he says now go and live at peace with others and show them peace show them peace there's so many different places

we could turn in Scripture that that carries this trajectory with it but just one Ephesians 2:14 says this it says for he himself is our peace notice again how peace is tied to a person for Jesus himself is our peace who has made the two groups one and destroyed the barrier the dividing wall of hostility by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations his purpose was to create in himself one new Humanity out of the two thus making peace and in one body to reconcile both

them to God Through The Cross by which he put to death their hostility he came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near for through him we have both access to the father by one Spirit see Paul is writing to a church that that has been divided in this case it was Jews versus Gentiles and people who could not be further apart and what he says is that because of what Jesus has done on the cross because of his blood he has not put himself to death but he has put to death the hostile

between these two groups he is calling them to be one People based on what Jesus Christ has done that the dividing wall of hostility has been broken down that the community of Believers is supposed to be a place that is United behind the person of Jesus and so we can withstand disagreements in different areas we can withstand disagreements of religion or politics or how we parent or what kind of schools we choose to send our kids to all of those things are completely and absolutely secondary maybe important but they are secondary

to what Christ is doing in the world he is making peace and breaking down the barriers and he is calling his church to be conduit of that peace to export that peace you see because peace is not just about something you feel inside peace is incredibly practical it is so practical it is about your relationships with other people it is about relationships with your spouse or your girlfriend or your boyfriend it's about relationships with your children peace infects relationships with your community members and your

teachers and the person who honks for a minute and a half behind you at the stoplight notice how it keeps getting longer every time I mention it too that's what we do isn't it right the grievance was so much worse you see peace is so practical it is deeply related and connected and rooted to our connections with one another and this kind of peace that Jesus calls us to does not come naturally to us it is so antithetical to our normal Tendencies for many of us I won't speak for everyone but I'll

tell you about how I often operate around peace in my fleshly Tendencies I often go to one of two places avoidance or aggression and when it comes to peace I there are many times in situations where I just want to avoid the conversation I just want to pretend like yeah you know this isn't really that big a deal like let's just sweep it under the rug let's pretend it's not there like let's just move on that's not peace that's not true Shalom because no restoration has happened in those spaces peace requires fighting and conflict and

engaging with the conversation and so sometimes I don't avoid and I go to the place well okay then I'm going to be aggressive like I'm going to come out of the gates hot I'm going to meet people and I'm going to make sure they know where and it is easy to make peace when you're louder and angrier and more like forthright than the other person it's easy to create peace around fear but that's not true peace either because again peace requires completeness and wholeness and restoration there's no Restoration in

that you see our world often says those are the two ways that you can make peace in your life just avoid the problem or just be aggressive enough that you scare everyone else away but what did Paul say how Jesus brought peace he said that he brought peace through the cross that it was in his death that he brought peace and made peace that that it wasn't through avoidance and skirting around the issue and it wasn't about

being aggressive and just conquering all of his enemies he laid down his life his preferences his will

his desires for the sake of the other see so much of the fruit of the spirit it's tied to this resonance about who Jesus is at the core of fruit of the spirit when we say we want to be renewed and we want to become like the fruit of the spirit and cultivate that in our lives what we're really saying is we want to be more like Jesus that we want his character his personality his way of interacting with the world to permeate our own so peace is deeply practical but it is so antithetical to our flesh we want

to avoid or we want to be aggressive but cultivating peace in the lives of people around us requires effort Paul actually says and even Hebrews says that that make every effort to live at peace with everyone now I don't know if Paul knew about your crazy uncle or the person who honks me at the car I'll keep bringing that one up but he says everyone we are supposed to live at peace with everyone and make every effort to cultivate peace with them that means sometimes having the conversation you don't want to have

that means sometimes hearing something you do not want to hear sometimes cultivating peace means leaning into a relationship that you would rather run away from sometimes that means lowering your G and instead of being defensive and angry and aggressive you become defenseless and hear what someone has to say sometimes it means staying in impossible situations and praying for a miracle that God will work peace in that relationship that's so foreign to how so many of us live our lives and here's the truth cultivating

any of the fruit of the spirit does not happen naturally there's not something that you can do to just like quick fix this in your life and suddenly become a more peaceful person it takes time it's slow and it's growth but one thing that it does mean is that we have to have complete dependence on the spirit we have to invite the spirit into our lives in those places and ask the spirit to cultivate those fruit within us if you are feeling anxious or a lack of peace in your life then the invitation for you

today is to invite the spirit into those fears and to begin to look for peace as a person and a promise and the practical ways you can live that out but it's so foreign to us in how we tend to live our lives because it goes against our flesh all of the fruit of the spirit

press against our flesh and our natural tendencies and our desires I came across something this week that I think is actually a perfect illustration for the Flesh in our lives and it's a plant a vine called the Kudzu Vine does anybody familiar

with Kudzu am I saying that right okay awesome great I said it wrong last night people like that's not it Kudzu this is a picture of kudzu anyone from the south who's probably seen this it is a vine that's invasive um to our country it came over from Japan in the 1800s for like cattle grazing and cows and goats could not eat it fast enough and so it just has begun to take over the like really the entire world if I'm honest with you okay like it is growing from the south in like Florida and Tennessee

it's all the way up to like British Columbia now this is a plant that grows over a foot a day in some cases I mean it just goes crazy you can't contain it and this is a picture of what used to be a forest but this plant has completely destroyed this Forest what it does is it grows over other plants and other trees and it suffocates them it literally chokes the life out of them because they shade it from the Sun and they can't experience the sun to photosynthesize and stay alive it kills everything that it touches and

it's hard to contain it's impossible to get rid of and literally as I was reading about it this week I was like I think this is how the world ends like I think this is what's going to like this is a horror movie this is what's going to take us out it's just going to keep going and going and going and eventually it'll be in Colorado and all our trees will be gone and it's just taking over everything but it is such an appropriate illustration for the Flesh in our lives and in the world and here's

why is because if you go to the South you think that this is natural it's everywhere and you think oh yeah this is just supposed to be here this is probably a plant that's like just native to the South it's not it is an invasive species that is not meant to be there similar too how you were not made or created to be ruled by your flesh you were created in the image of God and the flesh within you is an invasive species and the flesh within this similar to the kudu plant is taking over everything it's impossible

almost to contain we will never be rid of this plant and you this side of heaven will never be rid of the flesh it finds ways to continue to grow and pop up again and again and again in your life and the moment you think oh I'm becoming a more loving person you

realize oh I still have a little bit further to go this is a plant that kills everything it touches eventually and while it can look beautiful like the flesh it looks appealing it looks like there's something there of value and worth but

it only leads to a place of death and destruction you see as we talk about cultivating the spirit and the fruit of the spirit in our lives and growing in love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness this is what we are at war against and it is only by the power of the spirit something Supernatural that we invite into our lives to combat our natural tendencies so this week if you want to cultivate the fruit of peace in your life if you want to move Beyond

avoidance or aggression what will it take for you to invite the spirit to fight against the Flesh and to begin to cultivate something that has lasting value and beauty and worth what would it look like for you to step into your world this week and to cultivate peace within yourself and with those around you to close today I want to pray a prayer from Francis of Assisi about what it means to be an instrument of Peace would you pray with me and he says this Lord make me an instrument of thy

peace where there is hatred let me S love where there is injury pardon where there is doubt Faith where there is despair hope where there is Darkness light and where there is sadness Joy oh Divine Master grant that may not so much seek to be consoled as to console to be understood as to understand to be loved as to love for it is in giving that we receive and it is in pardoning that we are pardoned and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life amen