

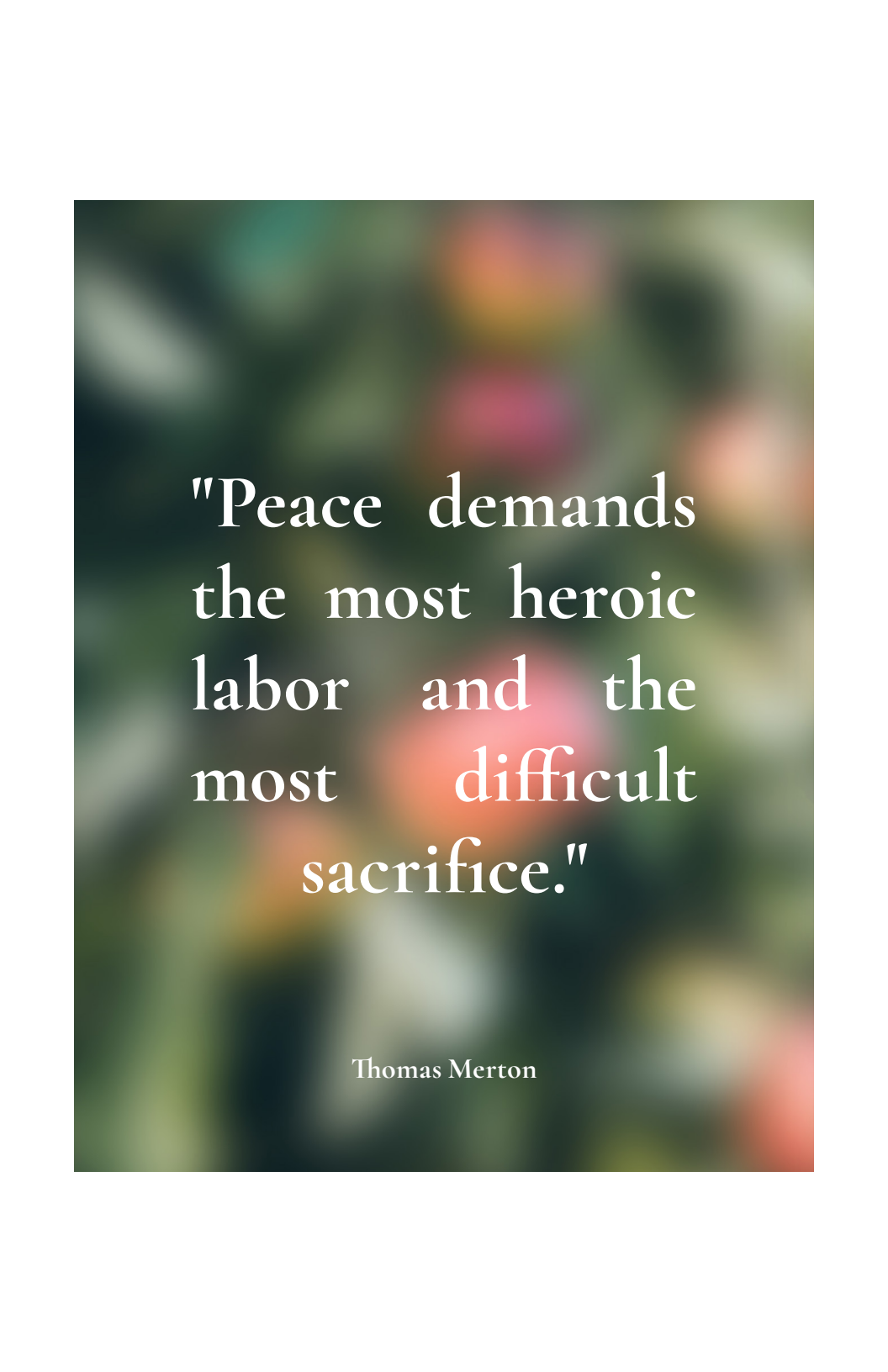


fruit

but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, **peace**, patience, kindness,
goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control



Peace



"Peace demands
the most heroic
labor and the
most difficult
sacrifice."

Thomas Merton



Garden

When scripture talks about peace, it is not talking about just an absence of conflict or war. It is a flourishing, a success, a growth. It is completion, wholeness.

The Garden of Eden is a picture of this kind of peace: where man and nature worked together in harmony, where man and God walked together and talked. It was a garden, things were growing and changing. Work was happening, trees bore fruit. It was prosperous.

Peace doesn't mean stillness, it means good action. The opposite of tearing down isn't standing still, it's creating something new. That doesn't mean there won't be conflict or difficult work. Just that when hardships do arrive, we are free to rest in the knowledge that we work for the one who is always in control.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May they prosper who love you. May peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces.

PSALM 122:6-7

- Have you ever witnessed a person or a community grow from chaos into peace?
- Is there a place you go to in order to find peace?
- What aspects of your life are “unnecessary,” but give you meaning and purpose?
- What relationships in your life are the healthiest?
- Is it possible to have peaceful conflict? How?
- What are you working to grow in your life right now?

"Peacemaking doesn't mean passivity. It is the act of interrupting injustice without mirroring injustice, the act of disarming evil without destroying the evildoer, the act of finding a third way that is neither fight nor flight but the careful, arduous pursuit of reconciliation and justice."

Shane Claiborne



Seas

The moment sin interrupted the peace in the Garden of Eden, a plan was in place to bring it back. Something had been broken, and on our own it was irreparable. But Jesus came, paid that debt, and delivered an open invitation to find peace again.

After delivering the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus and his disciples found themselves aboard a boat in the middle of a lake during a sudden storm. Waves swept over them, yet Jesus slept. When the disciples in their panic woke him, he calmed the winds and waves with a word. He spoke stillness to the chaos surrounding them.

God longs to transform our chaotic world into his Kingdom, and Jesus was willing to take the cost of this transformation upon himself. He became man, suffered and died, and rose again in order to bring heaven close to earth— he became the Prince of Peace.

You don't have to wait until you feel peace to know the Spirit to be

with you. Jesus meets us where we are, in the storm, and speaks stillness to the waves.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

COLOSSIANS 1:19-20

- What is the peace of Jesus like?
- Does his peace differ than the peace expressed by God the Father, or the Holy Spirit?
- Where is your personal peace with God broken?
- Does God value our peace?
- What is the price of peace?

*"There is unwavering peace
today when an uncertain
tomorrow is trusted to an
unchanging God."*

Ann Voskamp



Peacemaking

If Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and we are to be peacemakers, then we must follow his example. Jesus regularly made himself available to anyone in need, gave to those who asked, and did not shy away from answering difficult questions, even when they caused controversy. Jesus did not bring peace to us by refusing to engage in our messiness.

In order to bring about peace, we have to be willing to go where it is absent. When we insulate ourselves from our communities' problems, we may feel better personally, but we aren't doing anything to relieve the chaos in anyone else's life. Avoiding conflict and remaining uninvolved isn't fostering peace; it's playing pretend.

Jesus didn't come to make a few people feel better; he came to bring real restoration and peace to everyone. To follow him is to be willing to get your hands dirty and do work at the expense of our temporary comfort.

*"Blessed are the
peacemakers, for they shall
be called sons of God."*

MATTHEW 5:9

- Where do you see chaos in your community?
- What conflicts are you avoiding in order to maintain your inner peace?
- What action can you take today that would remove a burden from someone in your life?
- What excuses stop you from pursuing peacemaking?
- Are you avoiding certain neighborhoods in your city?
- What steps can you take to love those areas better?

"It is true that God may have called you to be exactly where you are. But, it is absolutely vital to grasp that he didn't call you there so you could settle in and live your life in comfort and superficial peace."

Francis Chan



Control

Despite the accessibility of a peace that passes all understanding, a peace that can only be from God, things from the world break in and disrupt our lives. Small things take up more space in our lives than they should and time for rest gets relegated to the sidelines. Not to mention the big things: poverty, mental illness, and family stress can completely take over and drown out all comforting words or thoughts.

We have to intentionally push out the noise and choose to quiet ourselves. It's really hard to do—not just because of all the external things vying for our attention, but also because we can find comfort in accomplishing things and working toward progress. We strive for a temporary peace by clinging to whatever fragment of control we can grasp.

The peace of God is bigger than our earthly circumstances. It is not a guarantee to remove our stressors, but a promise to be present in our hardships.

*And the peace of God, which
transcends all understanding, will
guard your hearts and your minds
in Christ Jesus.*

PHILIPPIANS 4:7

- How does someone pursue the peace of God?
- How do you experience a peace that surpasses understanding?
- What are the small things that take up too much of your mental space?
- What are the big things that make a consistent sense of peace seem impossible?
- What would it look like to give those over to God?

*"Peace is joy at rest.
Joy is peace on its
feet."*

Anne Lamott

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