

OPENING REFLECTION

When strolling the streets of Istanbul, Turkey, there is no sight more majestic than the Hagia Sophia. Its central dome, standing 105 feet tall and surrounded by four pencil-shaped minarets stretching more than 200 feet into the heavens, can be spotted from miles away. The dome often serves as a “north star” for lost tourists.

In AD 532, Emperor Justinian I made the Hagia Sophia what it is today. It served as a Christian cathedral for more than a millennium, until AD 1453. That year, the Ottoman Empire took over Constantinople (modern day Istanbul) and declared the Hagia Sophia to be a mosque. Today, it is a museum.

When I (Jenna) stepped into the Hagia Sophia, I could immediately see the layers of history within its walls. Much restoration and repair have peeled back the yellow paint the Ottomans used to cover up Christian symbols and mosaics. One particular mosaic that caught my attention stood over the Imperial Door, which was used only by the emperors.

The mosaic depicts Jesus sitting on a throne of jewels. Some people are around him, but I didn't pay much attention to them. My focus was drawn to his hands. Jesus is holding what looks like an open scroll or book. I couldn't read the words, but after doing a little research I learned they say, “Peace be with you. I am the light of the world.”

Peace be with you.

Written high over the twenty-three-foot-tall oak doors are the words, “Peace be with you.” Written above the doors that more than three million tourists walk through a year are the words, “Peace be with you.” Written above the doors that welcomed emperors who worshiped themselves and sultans who prayed to a different god are the words, “Peace be with you.”

I wonder how many people over the centuries have actually looked at those words and received the invitation. Peace. Not just any peace. God's peace. A peace that surpasses all understanding. And just as this peace frames the doorway of the Hagia Sophia, so it frames our hearts if we will allow it. It's a peace that guards our hearts and minds in Christ.

This peace is a constant invitation in our lives as we walk through the doors of decisions, of relationships, of daily tasks. But how many times do we stop to accept it?

“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7). Today, let's look up and say yes to the invitation of this beautiful promise.

Lucado, Max. *Anxious for Nothing Study Guide* (pp. 76-77). Thomas Nelson.