

My Peace I Give You
John 14:23-31
May 15, 2016

Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus makes an offer of peace. He says: *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you* (Jn 14:27 ESV). That's a wonderful promise, but the concept of peace is as foreign as an unknown language and as elusive as that thought you can never quite bring back to memory. That being the case, today we will answer three questions about the peace that Jesus gives:

- 1) What is this Peace?
- 2) What does this peace look like?
- 3) How can I get this peace?

The peace of Jesus is something the world cannot give. The world can offer power, prestige, wealth, fame, and a host of other "goodies", but it cannot supply us with the peace of Christ.

If you've been around a while, you probably remember the TV commercials for Calgon. In the commercial, a woman, who was being bombarded by some life issue and would say, "Calgon, take me away." At that point, she was whisked away into a tub of bubbles and all her troubles were forgotten. If it were only that easy.

To have the peace the world offers, one must usually do one or more of these three things:

- 1) Go somewhere – the Bahamas, Cabo, or out to nature.
- 2) Buy something – new car, new house, more and bigger things.
- 3) Ingest something – prescription sedative, alcohol, illegal drugs.

However, the peace the world offers is always temporary, and it only works on the surface of our discontent. The peace of the world never goes deep enough to reach the heart of our longings.

The peace that Jesus offers is different. The peace we are looking for is found only in him. It's not some generic peace. Jesus calls it his own. He says: *My peace I give you* (Jn 14:27 ESV).

The peace of Jesus adds something to life. The peace the world offers usually subtracts something. Quite often, we think of peace in terms of getting conflict out of our lives, or reducing the stress in our lives, or freeing ourselves of worry. Just get this or that out of your life and everything will be peaceful.

Contrary to that way of thinking, the peace of Jesus is the Jewish concept of peace. Peace, or shalom, includes the absence of distress, but it also includes the presence of blessing. In this line of thinking, the absence of distress in your life is because of the presence of God's blessing. Jesus offers us a peace that brings well-being, security. It's a peace that extends to the deepest point of our discontent.

Now that we know what the peace of Jesus is, we can turn to what this peace looks like, because it doesn't look like the peace of the world.

The apostle Paul describes the peace Jesus gives with these words: *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ* (Ro 5:1 ESV).

When we are justified, we are pronounced "not guilty." We are declared innocent in God's eyes. Here we must answer the question, "Innocent of what?" We are declared to be innocent of not only the sins we have committed, but also the sin we were born with; the sin we inherited from our parents, all the way back to Adam and Eve.

How can such a miraculous decree be made? It is only possible because the debt of our sin was paid by Christ. As an act of undeserved grace, God has credited the righteousness of Jesus to us. Our faith receives the peace of Jesus and allows us to rest in him for our eternal hope and, therefore, we follow him in our daily life.

That explains the spiritual side of the peace of Jesus, but there is also a practical side. The peace which our Savior gives affects the way we feel about life and the way we approach life.

The peace of Jesus enables us to deal with our past. If there is one thing we all share in common, it's our sinfulness. We all have sinned and fall short of God's expectations for us. We have all rebelled. We have all cursed, hated, gossiped, lied, stolen, and cheated. You name it – we've done it. But through Jesus, we can put our past to rest. We can stop dwelling on our sins and start dwelling on our Savior.

The peace of Jesus enables us to overcome our failures. We all have had failures; failed marriage, failed parenthood, failed attempts to overcome some personal vice. Failure can be devastating to the human spirit. Failure can haunt you. Failure can not only leave scars, it can leave open wounds. But Jesus has conquered even our failures. In him, we are free to begin again.

The peace of Jesus gives us certainty about the future. The scariest thing in the world is tomorrow. It's scary because we don't know what tomorrow holds. Will we be healthy? Will our loved ones be okay? Will we even be alive? Tomorrow can be very scary. But our Lord is in every tomorrow long before we get there.

Jesus promises us: *God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life* (Jn 3:16 ESV). Paul tells us that God will be faithful in bringing each of our lives to a conclusion that fits his plan: *I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ* (Php 1:6 ESV). There is nothing about tomorrow that has not passed God's approval.

The peace of Jesus is peace in difficult circumstances. Jesus tells us he has overcome everything in the world. That's everything past, present, and future. There is nothing superior to Jesus. Listen: *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.* (Jn 16:33 ESV).

How big is your problem? How big is the evil giant in your world? How big is the temptation that keeps dragging you down? Jesus is bigger. As the VeggieTales put it: "God is bigger than the boogie man."

The world doesn't overcome Jesus – Jesus overcomes the world. Nothing happens that takes Jesus by surprise. He's not surprised by our conflicts. He's not surprised by our sin. His authority and power extend over every facet of our lives, both good things and bad things.

Scripture tells us that even our troubles and difficulties have a purpose in God's plan. Paul gives us these words of comfort: *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope* (Ro 5:1-4 ESV).

Saint Peter says: *In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ* (1 Pe 1:6-7 ESV).

Both of these passages tell us that there are no accidents in our lives. God is in control. Whether we understand or not – God is in control. All things, good and bad, have a purpose in our lives. Romans 8:28: *We know that for those who love God all things work*

together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Lastly, the peace of Jesus gives us peace with each other. The peace of God has the power to repair and restore broken relationships. Throughout the New Testament, we see barriers between people being broken down: Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, men and women.

Looking through the peace of Jesus, we can see that we are all in the same boat. We are powerless to save ourselves, powerless to overcome our circumstances. We are all in need of forgiveness, grace, and mercy.

Looking through the peace of Jesus, we can see that we are all one family. We are all brothers and sisters in the family of God. Things like race, age, gender, national origin, economic status, these are all barriers constructed by people against other people; barriers blocking one brother from another brother, one sister from another sister. If we all have one Father, then we are all one family.

We know what the peace of Jesus is, we know what it looks like, so how do we get it?

This peace isn't found in meditation. It isn't found in drugs. It isn't found in personal achievement. It isn't found in wealth or fame. The peace which passes all understanding is only to be found in Christ.

If you're looking for true and lasting peace, then you aren't looking for something, you're looking for someone. Only Jesus can put our troubled souls to rest. Only Jesus can give us strength for today and hope for tomorrow. And this peace is ours when we fully and confidently put ourselves in his loving hands.