

UNEDITED DRAFT

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today we are going to talk about have something everyone wants and everyone pursues, but few people enjoy... at least not for long. And that is: peace. We live in a troubling world filled with turmoil and it seems true peace is something we rarely achieve. Peace is difficult to achieve between the nations of the world. One famous historian calculated that in the past 3,500 years of human history, less than 300 of those years could the world be described as peaceful. That means well over 90 percent of the time, the world has not been a peaceful place.

Within our nation, peace is difficult to find. The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the developed world. Never before has there been such bitter disagreement between political parties... or even within political parties!

Family disintegration is pandemic. Broken families are the norm, not the exception. Divorce is commonplace. And marriages that stay together are marked by strife and disagreements. Children don't listen much to their parents any more.

And right down to our personal lives, peace is often elusive. We lack contentment. We're agitated. There is no calm about us. We run around in a hurried frenzy to this to that to the next thing. Most would not describe their daily lives as peaceful.

This in spite of the fact that we yearn for peace, we seek peace. We want to be free from conflict, stress, threats, fear, anxiety, depression, despair, conflict. We want to have a tranquil state of the soul, be at rest, be satisfied. Everybody seeks that. So how do we get it? Let's listen to Jesus who tells us how to have peace.

Now, last week I gave you a reading assignment: to read chapters 13-17 of John's Gospel. So I'm going to pass out a little quiz now to see who actually did read it. No, I won't do that. But if you weren't here last week, or didn't find time to read it during the past week, you really are missing out. Since our God is a God of 2nd chances (and more), we will be too. So for a second week, please find time to read those 5 chapters. And if you already did, great job! You know how important they are. Which is why I'll challenge you to read them again to review and better remember the content. Today we will look at another reading from that section of Scripture.

So the context is the same as last week. Thursday evening. Celebrating Passover. Judas had left to betray Jesus. And Jesus spoke many things to his disciples. It was a very stressful time in the life the apostles. They must have been filled with great anxiety at the impending departure of their leader, friend and teacher, Jesus. They didn't yet understand all that was about to take place but they knew it was bad. In fact, one thing they were certainly not experiencing was: peace. Yet peace is what Jesus offered to them. Peace is what Jesus offers to us. Let's read carefully.

John 14:23-29 23 Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24 Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

I'm not going to spend much time on those verses. For a more thorough discussion, go on our website and review last week's message. The gist of what Jesus is saying is this: "I have

loved you and I give my life for you to forgive you and make you friends again with the heavenly Father. If you believe this, you love me. And everyone who loves me, obeys me.” We recognize that as true, right? If you love someone and they ask you to do something, you do it. Not doing what they ask shows you don’t have much love and respect for them. Same is true in our relationship with Jesus. Jesus loved you, and if you respond in love to him, you will obey him, and in that loving, obedient relationship, the Father and the Son come close and make their home with you.

25 “All this I have spoken while still with you. [Again, Jesus is going away, but these words he is sharing with them he wants them to remember when he’s gone. So we need to listen carefully. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Advocate is a difficult word because it’s a word that covers a lot. Comforter is too narrow. Advocate implies only legal help. The word means one who is consoling, encouraging, mediating on behalf of someone. Perhaps we should leave it as general as “Helper.”

This passage reveals so much about the work of the Holy Spirit. The Father sends the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ name. And note what his most important work is: he teaches and reminds about the Good News of Jesus.

I don’t think we fully appreciate what the Holy Spirit has done and continues to do in our hearts. The Bible tells us that the sinful mind is hostile to God. It tells us that “no one understands.” We are dead, blind enemies of God by nature. We need some serious help! So God sends a serious Helper, Advocate, Comforter, Encourager who creates faith, gives understanding, and opens our eyes.

Imagine you have a well-resourced uncle who is also well-connected in the community, extremely intelligent, a great teacher and that relative loves you dearly and will do anything for you. Whatever kind of need you have, he’s right there by your side helping you out. That’s kind of like the Holy Spirit, except that he is so close that he actually lives inside of you. And the work he’s doing is far more important than that rich uncle could ever do. The Holy Spirit is connecting you to your God by faith.

And one more note: some Bible critics say the New Testament can’t be accurate because it didn’t start to be written down until about 20 years after Jesus ascended. This passage specifically addresses that concern. The Holy Spirit reminded the apostles of the words and teachings of Jesus so that they got it all perfectly.

So, in view of all of this

27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

28 “You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. 29 I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.

Jesus gives us his peace. What is peace?

So how do you get peace? It will only work if you have a top-down approach. Let me give you an example. Two nations are at war. But on the battle field, two enemy combatants meet. Somehow they agree not to kill each other and actually establish a friendship. That’s all fine and dandy, but does their peace establish peace between the two nations they are supposed to fight for? No. Could they both still die in battle because of the ongoing hostility? Yes. If there is not peace at the highest level, there will be not true or lasting peace in the various facets of our lives.

And the opposite is also true. Once you establish peace at the highest level, the peace trickles down into every area of life. So, let’s go straight to the top.

What is the root cause, big-picture reason for a lack of peace? What is the top-level relationship that needs to be fixed before all others? We must have peace with God. We must have a right relationship with the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And sin is reason that right relationship can't exist. To be at odds with God is the ultimate source of hostility, discontentment, anxiety, fear, bitterness, depression, hopelessness, discouragement, etc.

But our Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit loved you so much that he worked to establish peace where there was none. He is the offended party, and we are powerless to stop offending God. So it is up to him to establish peace and remove the offense. And what we find in these verses is how all three persons of the Trinity cooperated to bring about peace between us and God.

So sin is the problem. It's the big offense. The Father cannot just ignore it because he is just. So he had to find a way to *justly* forgive it. To do so would require a substitute... a sacrifice on behalf of sinful people. But what sacrifice would be sinful for the sins of the whole world? There could be only one... the sacrifice of God's own Son.

And so Jesus was conceived and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus willingly and eagerly took on the role of substitute and Savior. He desired our forgiveness just as much as the Father. He was on board for this plan which would mean horrific suffering, pain and death to atone for the sins of the world. But his love moved him to give everything for you... even death on the cross. And so the Father's sinless Son lived obediently to his Father. When the time came, the sinless Son followed the only plan that could restore peace between God and man. Jesus took on himself that which makes God and man enemies, namely, your sin and mine. Gathering the sin and guilt of the world upon himself, Jesus then had to endure the full wrath and punishment of the Father in your place. That's just what Jesus did. What does it look like to have the almighty God rightly angry at you? Just look at Jesus on the cross, in the dark, bleeding, dying, forsaken by his Father. Yet right where he wanted to be since that was the only way for you and me to have peace. Jesus died. The deed was done. The price was paid. And peace was established.

Do you always feel that peace? I bet you don't. When you sin, or recall your sins, I bet peace is elusive. You wonder how God could forgive you. Satan wants you to believe that maybe he hasn't. Maybe Jesus only covered some of those sins. Maybe your sin is too great. Maybe you can't be forgiven. When those doubts arise, robbing you of peace, cast your gaze back to the empty tomb. Also, watch Jesus ascend to the right hand of the Father (that's what we celebrate this Thursday.) At the empty tomb of Jesus and at his Ascension, you have the proof and guarantee that God accepted Jesus' sacrifice as the complete and total payment for sin. The wages of sin is death. Yet Jesus lives. What does that show? The payment was sufficient. Complete. Death could no longer hold him since he completed his work. Jesus ascended. What does that show? That the Father received him back into heavenly glory at his side, for the salvation plan was complete. The perfect life of God's own Son, the death of his Son on the cross, his resurrection on the third day, and his ascension into heaven: that's the real history you need to come back to again and again for the proof of the peace that exists between you and God.

But let's not forget the Holy Spirit's role in giving us this peace! He has create faith in you. He has given you understanding about this good news of Jesus. He comforts you with this good news. He encourages you in your faith. He consoles you when your conscience troubles you. He gives you spiritual gifts for your life with God in Christ's Church. He empowers you for godly living. If forgiveness of sins were an object, the Father decided it was needed and what it should look like. The Son manufactured it. And the Holy Spirit is the one who gifted it you and makes sure it stays with you. You have peace with God!

So let's go back where we started. Do you want peace? It has to start with God. And he has established that peace with you. As you live in God's peace, you will find that his peace starts to trickle down into other areas of your life too. Knowing your right relationship with God and what it cost him, you respond to his love by loving him as you love others. You obey God. You love others like God loved you. And your life conforms more and more to the kind of life God wants to see, you will find that peace begins to radiate into every area of your life.

Marriage: peace between you and your spouse grows. Peace with your kids. Peace with your neighbor. **Finances:** You find peace in your finances as you line up your spending habits and saving habits with the will of God. And you have confidence that the Lord will provide. **Beyond circumstances:** But what about when circumstances arise that rob you of peace? There is no such thing. No circumstance can rob you of peace when you are right with God. When his favor rests upon you in Christ Jesus, and since he has all power and controls all things... what circumstance is beyond his control? And if he is in control, what's is there to be concerned about? You know he's got this, just as he's got everything in your life.

Your Triune God has you. Go today in true peace, for your Triune God has established and given it to you...And the peace of God which surpasses all understand will guard and keep your hearts from all unrest and your minds from all worry... in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.