

“Seeking Peace with Whom?”

Sunday, May 21st, 2017

6th Sunday of Easter

#2 in series of 2: “Seeking Peace”



John 14:15-21, 27-31a (CEB)

I won’t leave you as orphans

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

I will ask the Father, and he will send another
Companion, who will be with you forever.

This Companion is the Spirit of Truth, whom the
world can’t receive because it neither sees him
nor recognizes him.

You know him, because he lives with you and will
be with you.

“I won’t leave you as orphans. I will come to you.

Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will
see me.

Because I live, you will live too.

On that day, you will know that I am in my Father,
you are in me, and I am in you.

Whoever has my commandments and keeps them loves me. Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

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“Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I give to you not as the world gives. Don’t be troubled or afraid.

You have heard me tell you, *‘I’m going away and returning to you.’*

If you loved me, you would be happy that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than me.

I have told you before it happens so that when it happens you will believe.

I won’t say much more to you because this world’s ruler is coming. He has no power over me.

Rather, he comes so that the world will know that I love the Father and do just as the Father has commanded me.

This is the Word of God for the people of God.

Thanks, be to God.

[2ND Service: Affirmation of Faith]

[MESSAGE]

Since last week's sermon, I have wrestled with whether or not I went too far.

No doubt, some of you think I did push the limit just a bit in terms of what's "*appropriate.*"

However, I also can't help but notice the number of folks who had positive comments to share after worship last Sunday.

We often walk a fine line between theological and ideological conversation; I must be careful.

As preachers, we also have opinions and passions that must inform our preaching.

John's gospel has always been my favorite because of the passion it shows for the things that Jesus stood for during his life.

I firmly believe that Jesus was neither liberal nor conservative; Democrat nor Republican.

I believe that Jesus stood for all persons who choose to live a life dominated by love, compassion, healing, and humility.

I believe that Jesus stood against those who failed to love and care for others; people who thought of their selfish wants before another's need.

I believe that this is what Jesus lived and died for and what He calls us to do as well.

As I selected the 14th chapter of John's gospel for these two messages, I was mindful that it includes this call to follow the "*Way*" that Jesus modeled AND it offered us the peace we need to accomplish the task, along with the guide we need.

"Do not be troubled or afraid," Jesus says; this is all the assurance we need.

Let us pray...Merciful God, we long to be at peace, with ourselves, with you and with the world. Show us ways to find peace and to make peace. Help us to understand what Jesus tries to teach his disciples. We pray in His name. **Amen.**

So, last week we talked about where we might be seeking peace.

We saw how Jesus' words, "*I am the Way, the truth, and the life,*" give us a roadmap for finding the place where peace is found.

We also realized that to find peace means that we must offer peace to others who seek God's love.

Today, we are going to consider with whom we seek peace.

In this passage, Jesus again offers us peace; again, he tells us not to be troubled.

"Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I give to you not as the world gives. Don't be troubled or afraid."

One thing we notice here is that Jesus promises us a "*companion*" for the journey.

The KJV calls this a "*comforter*"; NRSV says "*Advocate*".

The Contemporary English Version comes right out and says: *“Then I will ask the Father to send you the Holy Spirit who will help you and always be with you. The Spirit will show you what is true.”*

The question, then, is are we listening for the Spirit’s guidance to show us the Way?

It’s interesting that this scripture comes just two weeks before the Feast of Pentecost.

Many Bible versions headline this section with:

“The Promise of the Holy Spirit.”

It prepares us for the big reveal to come.

“Suddenly there was a noise from heaven like the sound of a mighty wind! Then they saw what looked like fiery tongues moving in all directions, and a tongue came and settled on each person there. The Holy Spirit took control of everyone, and they began speaking whatever languages the Spirit let them speak.” (Acts 2:2-4, Contemporary English Version)

It's a great story, filled with excitement and drama.

As the church, we love to celebrate **Pentecost** and we will on **Sunday, June 4th**.

There is a small problem with this story, I think:
It's a hard act to follow.

It's like the burning bush – once you've heard about God talking from a bush that's burning but will not consume itself – you want your own *“burning bush moment!”*

After you've heard about Moses and smoke on the mountain, you want a mountain-top experience.

After the Pentecost story, we all want our hair to be on fire! – *Not really, it's a metaphor!*

The point is, we are accustomed to the drama and spectacle of Bible stories and we can find it hard to relate our mundane, everyday experience to this epic drama.

That's OK...really...

There's nothing wrong with wanting a little Divine Drama in your life

Of course, we all know that's not the way our lives really work, don't we?

Our shrubs aren't burning, the only smoke on the mountain is air pollution, and if we feel like our hair is on fire, it's because our life is out of control.

All that drama seems to be missing the peace that Jesus offers us, the peace we are seeking.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled" is hard to do when you fell out of control.

Let's take a breath...

[FIRST SERVICE MUSIC REFERENCE:]

We just sang a song called, *"Even If"* this morning.

It's a beautiful new song that we just added to the playlist.

What's remarkable about this song is that it speaks to us about courageously turning over everything to God, simply because we trust that God's got this.

I KNOW YOU'RE ABLE AND I KNOW YOU CAN
SAVE THROUGH THE FIRE
WITH YOUR MIGHTY HAND
BUT EVEN IF YOU DON'T, MY HOPE IS YOU ALONE.
I KNOW THE SORROW, AND I KNOW THE HURT
WOULD ALL GO AWAY
IF YOU'D JUST SAY THE WORD
BUT EVEN IF YOU DON'T, MY HOPE IS YOU ALONE.
YOU'VE BEEN FAITHFUL, YOU'VE BEEN GOOD
ALL OF MY DAYS, JESUS, I WILL CLING TO YOU
COME WHAT MAY 'CAUSE I KNOW YOU'RE ABLE
I KNOW YOU CAN.
OH, GIVE ME THE STRENGTH TO BE ABLE TO SING:
IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL.

[SKIP TO “FOLLOW ON...”]

[SECOND SERVICE MUSIC REFERENCE:]

We just sang one of our favorite old hymns,
“Trust and Obey”.

One of the things about this song that makes it a
favorite hymn is that it speaks to us about how
our relationship with Jesus depends on **trust**.

It also reminds us that we need to **obey** Jesus,
whose commands to us were: “*Love God and
love others*”.

This kind of trust is the only way we can find
peace in the Lord.

THEN IN FELLOWSHIP SWEET
WE WILL SIT AT HIS FEET,
OR WE’LL WALK BY HIS SIDE IN THE WAY;
WHAT HE SAYS WE WILL DO,
WHERE HE SENDS WE WILL GO;
NEVER FEAR, ONLY TRUST AND OBEY.

TRUST AND OBEY,
FOR THERE’S NO OTHER WAY
TO BE HAPPY IN JESUS,
BUT TO TRUST AND OBEY.

["FOLLOW ON..."]

I think that a lot of us feel like life is out of control
because of what we see and hear around us.

We need to come back to the 14th chapter of John’s
gospel and realize that we are being deceived.

This world may, in fact, be out of control.

Our lives, however, are very much in God's control, **IF** we will trust and be at peace with letting God handle us.

*“Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you.
I give to you not as the world gives.
Don't be troubled or afraid.”*

If we are seeking peace from this world, **we will be disappointed.**

The images that Jesus uses to describe the Holy Spirit help us understand how seeking peace with the Spirit works.

The word “*advocate*” comes from a Latin word that means to come to one's aid.

“*Comforter*” is one who helps ease a person's feelings of grief or distress.

“*Companion*” is a person with whom one spends a great deal of time.

Each of these images conjures a sense of peace, not high drama.

God sends us this companion to be here forever.

When I came to this series, it was my hope that we could begin to find ways to breathe deeply and feel the peace of God within us.

I believe that the world in which we live surrounds us with chaos, conflict, and distress.

If we allow it, these things can overwhelm us and draw us into their destructive vortex.

God has other plans for us.

Take a deep breath...fill your lungs with fresh air.

Exhale completely and let go of what you don't need inside.

Take a breath and feel the Holy Spirit rushing into you, *“like the sound of a mighty wind!”*

Allow the Spirit to push out the feelings you don't need or want.

Practice this whenever you long for a burning bush, or when you feel like your hair is on fire.

Soon, you will find the peace that passes all understanding, peace like a river, and the peace of Christ.

Who knows...if we do this enough and help others find similar peace, we may even find that “*world peace*” is possible.

It could happen!

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**