

John 14:23-29
May 1, 2016

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

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.” (John 14:27)

This is a beautiful verse. It’s been used and will continue to be used in a variety of circumstances in which the people of God find themselves in – situations that are accompanied by stress, fear, and angst. Perhaps, you have heard it proclaimed at a funeral service or maybe inscribed on a card you received at some point in your life when things were looking a bit gloomy. Such was the situation when Jesus spoke these words to His disciples. Their future may have appeared quite dim. Fear of the unknown certainly engulfed them like a cloud of thick fog. Here it was, the night before Jesus’ crucifixion and while they may not fully have understood exactly what was about to happen certainly they had some inkling things were about to change for Jesus had been speaking to them for some time now that He would soon depart this earth to go be with His Father. He has spoken on more than one occasion about His impending death and eventual resurrection. He had said things such as, “The light (Jesus) is with you for a little longer.” (John 12:35) Or, as we heard in our gospel passage last week, “Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’” (John 13:33) Or, these

words from the very beginning of chapter 14 (vv. 1-3), “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.”

Along the way, we have witnessed the disciples seeking clarification. Asking questions, such as Thomas did, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” (14:5) Peter asked the same question a chapter earlier (13:36), “Lord, where are you going?” Or, as Judas (not Iscariot) said to him in verse 22 immediately prior to our gospel passage this morning, “Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?” And Jesus has repeatedly tried to respond to their fears and anxieties and bring peace into the midst of their unrest through words such as those found in our passage this morning or those shortly before in which Jesus again promised the gift and presence of the Holy Spirit: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.” (John 14:15-19)

The peace the disciples and many others anticipated the long awaited Messiah would bring was that through the same means of peace so often used in the world today. In Jesus' day the Roman government under Emperor Augustus established what was called the "Pax Romana" or "Roman peace." It was indeed a peace that was eventually had only as the result of Rome invading territories and ruling those territories with might. It was peace kept through the use of force and fear. It was peace built on Rome's terms. Many were expecting a Messiah to come and bring about similar peace – through power and might. Peace by retaliation. Peace through battle and warfare. Peace through utter destruction of the enemy. Yet, the peace Jesus offers is quite the opposite.

The peace Jesus speaks about and offers is one not found by carrying a handgun. It is one not found by putting up another wall. It is one found not by shouting insults at a rival. It is one found not by invading another country. It is one found not by having more money, fame, a bigger house, better job, or even locking our doors and retreating into the safe confines of our house. The peace Jesus talks about and assures the disciples of is the continued and everlasting relationship with Himself and the one He refers to as Father; that is God. The peace Jesus speaks of is what He proclaims in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." It is the peace introduced in the very first chapter in which we hear, "And the Word became flesh and lived among

us.” (John 1:14) It’s the peace of the image John has been describing in Revelations in which the faithful will stand face-to-face with God. It’s a peace that comes not through anything we can accomplish on our own but a peace that is given solely through the grace of God.

So many people in the world are searching for peace. So many people are seeking comfort, companionship, and an end to all that goes on in the world: violence, hatred, terrorism, one more shooting of an innocent life, one more woman assaulted or abused, one more racist slur tossed out that does irreversible damage upon its victim, one more individual suffering from a mental illness in which society simply can’t grasp the living hell of an often invisible disease. So many people searching for peace; longing for rest; seeking an escape; desperately in need of something to hold onto for strength, support, and hope. I have to think this is exactly what those disciples were longing for and Jesus gives it; although, in a way that is so completely different that the world often defines peace.

The peace Jesus gives is found through the love He offers. It is that love that was revealed when He knelt at the feet of His disciples, took the role of servant, and washed their dirty, smelly feet. That love was revealed as He hung from the cross and uttered these words, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34). It is that peace Martin Luther so desperately sought and tormented him all those years – the peace found only in a loving God and not a God who is angry,

vengeful, and tormenting. A God who in Christ opens the way to salvation. Solely through Jesus Christ and not by any works of our own. A peace that frees us to respond to God's grace through service and love to our neighbor. It is a peace that comes through a relationship with the God who created us and the Redeemer who rescued us. It is a peace that comes from a God who chooses to make God's home within us. It is a peace the Holy Spirit is constantly at work reminding us of, giving us eyes to see, hearts to feel it, minds to believe it, and ears to hear it. It is a peace rooted in God's love for the world. A love that led God's Son to the cross. This peace is revealed in love and is experienced each and every time the church responds as Jesus did: with compassion, love, humility, service, and forgiveness. We are indeed vessels of this peace.

In closing, so many of us may find unrest in a broken relationship. In the pain someone has caused us or perhaps the pain we have caused another. You each have a sticky note in your bulletin. Perhaps, this week we write the name of one individual where a relationship has been strained and we simply pray for them. We seek healing and wholeness. We seek peace. May the peace of Christ, which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus! Amen.