

**Sermon:** Peace

**Preacher:** Rev. Judy Arnold

**Date:** 5/22/22

**Scripture:** John 14:23-29 & Psalm 67

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So, Jesus is still in the midst of the Farewell Dialogues preparing his disciples for his departure. Within all the reassurance for the future he also wants to make sure they understand who he is and what that means. He urges them to keep his word and makes it clear that his word comes from the father. He prepares them for the arrival of the Holy Spirit - I wonder if they remembered this conversation when the spirit descended on Pentecost.

All of this must have been confusing for them. Even with the perspective of hindsight, it still needs a lot of unpacking. But Jesus reassures them by giving them peace and making sure they understand that his Peace is not the peace of the world.

Peace - a word with much nuance. The peace of the world is certainly not given freely. The world's peace would not lead us to untroubled hearts and the absence of fear.

Peace was a much desired quantity in my house growing up. My older brother and I fought a lot - my best defense was screaming. I was good at it. Once when my parents were out to dinner, Terry was torturing me in some fashion and I was screaming and our next door neighbor called to see if everything was okay over there and we lived in an area of the New York suburbs where people's houses were pretty far apart. My mother was constantly calling for some 'peace and quiet'. She, too, had a pretty healthy bark - a deep Sophie Tucker/Bea Arthur voice and when she used it in anger - peace prevailed, at least for a while. This peace in no way

resembled Jesus' peace. Like the Peace in Iraq under the firm threatening hand of Saddam Hussein, it was a peace born of mutual fear of a greater power. It was completely opposite from Jesus' peace which he connected with the absence of fear.

It's a cliché that a Miss America contestant is asked what she hopes to do with her life, she always answers to work for world peace. Sincere or not, I don't think she means world peace - which amounts to a standoff between heavily armed nations.

That kind of peace is much on our minds these days as the concept of nuclear weapon use is being bandied about. I think we all know that any 'peace' that is negotiated; that is brought about by surrender to a greater military power is not a true peace, a lasting peace, not the peace that Jesus gave us.

Much of my preaching is about the reversal of expected and worldly roles - the rich being poor in spirit; the mighty being brought low by a boy; the ones who claim to know God's mind being shown how to love by a beggar or a Samaritan. As I've written and preached these sermons over the years, I know and believe the truth of what I'm writing, but I worry that I usually end up leaving you in what seems like a fantasyland - of universal love and permanent disarmament. And even as I lead us there, I'm aware we are left on the edge of a flat world where expected human behavior is behind us and a vast emptiness is before us.

But I am deeply convinced that Jesus gave us his peace; that it is different from the world's peace - so different in fact I think there should be another word for the world's peace. Earlier in John 14, Jesus promises not to leave us orphaned. Giving us his peace is part of that promise.

The first clue to experiencing and living Jesus' peace is that he is giving it to the disciples, giving it to us, his living disciples. The world's peace is not given - it is won or lost through hard fights - on battlefields and boardrooms. It is sure to be undermined when other powers emerge and decide to take or win something not yet theirs.

A passive peace, one that comes from accepting terms that are abhorrent to the 'loser' just to stop the conflict, a passive peace is not the life giving peace Jesus gives. The peace Jesus gives us is powerful in its source. Hardly passive, Jesus' peace is active internally and externally. There have been many examples of that peace being alive in Poland and other nations where individual people decide to drive to the Ukrainian border and help as many refugees as they can. Individuals carry Jesus' peace; so do huge corporations like McDonald's who are ceasing to do business in Russia, permanently.

Accepting and living in Jesus' peace does not leave us in a fantasy, it leads us to a reality of untroubled hearts. It leads us beyond fear to courage, it leads us to hope.

In many settings lately people have expressed their unwillingness to listen to or read the news; that it is too upsetting; that it seems beyond hope. The world again - Jesus' peace gives us the hope and belief and indeed the duty to learn what is going on in the world. Jesus' peace, a prayerful compassion for the suffering, the certainty that we carry within us the Peace of Christ, these are the words he asked us to keep.

The power in Jesus' peace is real. It is not a platitude, not words to make people feel good. It is serious - He is leaving his disciples. His peace is not to pacify them, or make up for leaving. It is for their

survival, the survival of his word, it is why we are here in His church over 2000 years later, worshiping him, seeking to understand and follow him. Yes, when we hear and believe his word how to effecting change in the world seems overwhelming and impossible. Jesus' peace, though, is what makes us try - and what makes us move toward the world rather than away. The White Privilege Course has been a concrete example - those who took it are changed; those who took it experienced and lived Jesus' peace.

And as I move toward retirement in June, I feel a special joy in having understood and felt Jesus' peace - its power and possibility and in having the privilege of sharing that peace with you and urging you to trust it. AMEN