

## “Peace”

**John 14:25-31**

**May 18, 2025**

The Biblical text for today comes from Jesus’ farewell speech to his disciples. Jesus is trying to explain to them what is going to happen next. He will leave them, yet they will not be abandoned. God the Father will send them the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will teach them and remind them of all Jesus has said. The Spirit will also be their advocate.

While today we have the gift of knowing what will come next in Jesus’ life, the disciples are probably confused and fearful. Recognizing that, Jesus seeks to give his peace to them. “Peace I leave with you,” he says, “my peace I give to you.” He doesn’t say it here, but we remember Paul’s words when he concludes Philippians about the peace “which passes all understanding.” This literally means the peace that has an overarching excellence and even surpasses knowledge. Paul also writes that this peace will guard their hearts and minds. As Preacher Lonnie Brooks<sup>1</sup> writes,

*“Guard” is a military term, implying that peace stands on duty to keep out anything that brings care and anxiety.*

Yet Jesus is clear he is **not** giving them peace as the world does, probably referring to the Pax Romana at the time, a peace established and enforced by military rule.

Jesus goes on to tell the disciples that they should rejoice with him, for he is ultimately returning to the Father. In the incarnation, Jesus emptied himself and

---

<sup>1</sup>Lonnie Brooke, “Peace.”

joined humanity in the world for his lifetime and his mission. It was only in that sense and for that time that the Father was greater than Jesus.

Jesus also tells his disciples that “the ruler of the world,” that is, the devil, is coming. The devil came to Judas, who will betray Jesus, and he is coming in those who will arrest Jesus, torture him, and kill him. Yet Jesus has no fear of the devil. He has chosen his course of action. He will obey his Father, yet he will also make his own choice.

God wants us to have this peace as well, this wholeness, this shalom. After Jesus’ death, God further wants us to have this peace because we are in right relationship with God through Jesus. We have God’s Spirit; we are to let it bloom and grow with love, joy, and now peace.

Given the way the world is, given perhaps what our personal and family lives are like, how can we have this peace?

It seems to me that we need to first accept this peace as a gift, not try to manufacture it in our lives. Preacher David Lose<sup>2</sup> writes,

*This peace is a gift of God, something we sense most keenly when we give over to God a certain amount of control of all the things that we worry about or normally pressure. Not that we surrender responsibility, but rather that we recognize there are limits to what we can affect or achieve on our own, and sensing those limits, we place ourselves, our loved ones, our fortunes, and our future in God’s hands. And God’s response is to give us peace, a peace that allows us to lift our gaze from the troubles that beset us and see those around us as gifts of God worthy of our love and attention.*

---

<sup>2</sup> David Lose, “Easter 6C; Peace the World Cannot Give.”

It also seems to me that we should live into the peace as a gift. Accept it, assume it, be peaceful. I have heard this peace also called “the serenity of faith,” and so I treat it. It is, and in it, God has “got me” through his Spirit.

I think, too, that accepting this gift and living into the peace helps us to see God at work in our lives and in the world. Preacher Elizabeth Johnson<sup>3</sup> writes,

*So often we do not understand what God is up to. We do not understand how certain events could have any meaning or result in anything good. It is only with time and prayer and the aid of the Holy Spirit that we begin to see how God might be working for good even in the midst of terrible and confusing events.*

*This is not to say that everything that happens is God’s will, for that would be to deny the reality of evil. The crucifixion of Jesus was clearly an act of human evil. But God is able to bring good even out of the worst evil. John’s Gospel sees the death of Jesus in the light of the resurrection, in the light of God’s triumph over evil and death. The incarnation, the ministry, the death and resurrection of Jesus, the sending of the Spirit—all of these events together demonstrate the depth of God’s love for the world.*

*Above all else, it is this profound love of God that Jesus has made known to his disciples and that the Holy Spirit continues to make known to us. The Spirit assures us that we are never abandoned, even in the midst of the loss, pain, and sorrow that are part of life in this broken world. The Word who became flesh and lived among us continues to make his home with us, even as he prepares our eternal dwelling with God.*

---

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Johnson, “Commentary on John 14:23-29.”

So what are the **obstacles** to peace in our lives? Preacher Ray Fowler<sup>4</sup>  
writes,

*There are three main obstacles to peace in our lives – worry, fear and conflict. Worry has to do with potential troubles. Fear has to do with present troubles. Conflict has to do with interpersonal troubles.*

Earlier in his ministry, Jesus has addressed the topic of **worry**. He said, in the Sermon on the Mount:

*Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the gentiles who seek all these things, and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God<sup>l</sup> and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.*

---

<sup>4</sup> Ray Fowler, “The Fruit of Peace.”

Jesus and others in the Bible have addressed **fear** as well. “Do not fear,” and “do not be afraid” are some of the most repeated words in scripture. John will write later,

*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.*

**Conflict**, another obstacle to peace for us, will be addressed by Paul later.  
Paul writes:

*If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.*

Fowler goes on to say that we who have peace can grow in it as well. We can trust in God; as Isaiah says, “You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.”

We can also rest in Christ. Jesus said in Matthew: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Further, we can love God’s word. The Psalmist writes, “Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.” Proverbs says “the ways of wisdom are pleasant. and all her paths are peace.”

Finally, we can pray and give thanks. As you drift from peace, then pray and be grateful. Make peace a matter of prayer.

There is a story about peace with which I want to leave you. The story is told by Barbara Brown Taylor.<sup>5</sup> She writes:

*I still remember my nephew Will’s first birthday party. He was as round and as bald as a Buddha at that point, still hovering on the verge of speech. Never out of*

---

<sup>5</sup> As quoted by Eugene Nelson, “Words of Comfort and Hope.”

*his parent's sight, he was used to being the center of attention, only he was not spoiled yet, because he had not yet learned how to manipulate love for his own ends. He just thought everyone was loved the way he was, and he gave it away as fast as he got it.*

*There were only a handful of us there that day – Will's parents, aunts, and grandparents, plus his godparents and their seven-year-old son, Jason. After the cake and the singing and the presents were all over, Will let us know how pleased he was by doing his new dance for us – a twirling in place that he had invented several days before with lots of fancy arm work.*

*We were all circled around him admiring his dance when Jason simply could not stand it anymore. He charged through the circle, put both hands on Will's chest and shoved. Will fell hard. His rear end hit first, then his head, with a crack. He looked utterly surprised. No one had ever hurt him before, and he did not know what to make of it. Then he opened his mouth and howled, but not for long. His mother hugged him and helped him to his feet.*

*The first thing Will did was totter over to Jason. He knew Jason was at the bottom of this thing, only since no one had ever been mean to him before he did not know what this thing was. So he did what he had always done. He put his arms around Jason and lay his head against the boy's body.*

*What Will did to Jason put an end to the meanness in that room. What I wanted to do to Jason would only have multiplied it. Yes, in my shock and anger, all my Christian convictions went right out the door. But according to Jesus, Will was right and I was wrong. For Jesus understood that the real enemy is not whoever pushes us down in the middle of our dance but whatever it is inside of us that wants to leap up and push back...When everyone has his or her hands in a fist...then the*

*enemy will have won. “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.” Could it be that a little one-year-old boy understood this peace of Jesus better than the adult world around him?*

And a little child shall lead them.

Amen.