

Title: "My Peace"
Text: John 14:27

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Today, I would like to talk about one of the most important gifts Jesus gives us: **peace**. Let me begin with a story about a Japanese American ceramic artist named Akira Satake. He mainly makes Japanese tea bowls, teapots, sake vessels, and other ceramic pieces. Like most ceramic artists, he begins by shaping his work from clay. Then he places the pieces inside a kiln and closes the door with a click. Once that door is closed, something important changes. Everything that happens inside the kiln is now beyond his control. There is nothing more he can do to shape the pottery with his hands.

There are different kinds of kilns, depending on the fuel they use. Some use coal, some use gas, and others use electricity. In some places, including among the Hopi people, even cow dung is used as fuel.

Akira uses a wood-fired kiln, which requires constant attention. He adds firewood to the firebox about every fifteen minutes, and the firing usually takes around nine hours. He sits in front of the kiln for three hours, while his assistant takes over for another six hours. Together, they keep the fire going throughout the process. And that is all they can do.

Once the kiln door is closed, they cannot look inside to see what is happening. They cannot hear what is happening to the pottery, either. They can only continue feeding the fire and wait. Akira is not a religious person, but he says that once the kiln is closed, there is nothing more he can do except leave the result in the hands of some higher power.

Dear friends, isn't our life sometimes like that? We prepare carefully, work hard, pray, and do everything we know to do. Yet there comes a point when the situation is no longer in our hands. We have reached the limit of what we can control. The door is closed, the fire is burning, and all we can do is wait and trust.

Of course, we should do our best. That goes without saying. But after we have done everything we can, there is still a part of life that belongs to God alone. We cannot always control what happens next. At that point, we have to let go and leave the rest in God's hands.

The same is true of the pieces of pottery inside the kiln. They may come out just as the artist shaped them, or they may not. They may become twisted, cracked, or even ruined. After nine hours, when the artist finally opens the kiln, the result

may be very different from what he expected. Once the kiln door is closed, the artist has to wait. In that sense, what comes out of the kiln is a gift. It is something the artist must receive.

Our lives are much the same. We experience joy and sorrow, happiness and sadness, success and failure. We cannot always choose what comes next. But we can receive what comes with trust, knowing that our lives are still held in God's grace. Even when something is beyond our control, it is never beyond God's care. So we can wait with peace, calmness, gratitude, and trust, knowing that our lives are safely in God's hands.

I once watched a Netflix documentary about five places around the world where people live unusually long lives. One of those places was Okinawa, Japan. The interviewer spoke with a woman who was more than one hundred years old and asked her, "What is the secret to your long life?" Her answer was very simple: **"Always think positively and never hate anyone."** She lived closely with the people in her community and did not carry hatred in her heart. She continued to live with love and a positive attitude, and she even continued working in her own garden after she turned one hundred. What a beautiful way to live.

Dear friends, don't we all want a healthy life—not only a healthy body, but also a healthy heart and mind? I believe that peace of heart, a positive attitude, genuine love and service, gratitude, and joy can contribute to the health of both our spirit and our body.

But as Christians, we need to go one step deeper. **Where does this peace ultimately come from?**

It comes from the Lord. In the Gospel of John, Jesus speaks directly about peace. John 14:27 says: **"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."** Notice those two words: **"My peace."** Jesus does not simply tell us to find peace somewhere within ourselves. He says, **"My peace I give to you."** True peace comes from the Lord. It belongs to Christ, and Christ gives it to us.

Sometimes people use the word **"mindfulness"** to describe a sense of calmness and quietness in the mind. That kind of calmness can certainly be helpful. But the peace Jesus is talking about goes deeper than simply becoming calm. Jesus calls it **"my peace."** This is the peace of the One who carried our sins on the cross, died for us, and rose again. The risen Christ comes to us and says, **"My peace I**

give to you.” We do not manufacture this peace by ourselves. It is a gift from Christ.

One of your favorite Bible passages is Philippians 4:6–7. It says: **“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”**

What guards our hearts and minds? **The peace of God.** Notice that Paul does not say that God will remove every problem from our lives. Instead, he says that God's peace will **guard** us in the middle of those problems. That is an important difference. Faith does not mean that we will never face trouble. It means that trouble does not have to control our hearts.

Some spiritual traditions teach that meditation or other practices can help us reach a certain level of inner peace. Such practices may indeed bring a measure of calmness. But the Bible points us to something deeper. Our peace does not ultimately come from our ability to calm ourselves. It comes from God, who meets us in the middle of our anxiety and gives us a peace that is greater than we can understand.

And this peace is not only personal. It is also something we are called to share with one another as the church. Ephesians 4 speaks about unity and peace in the Christian community. In verse 3, Paul says:

“Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” I love those words: **“making every effort.”**

Peace does not mean that we never disagree. It does not mean that everyone in the church thinks exactly the same way. We are different people, with different experiences, different opinions, and different personalities. Christian peace means something deeper. Even when we are different, we remain connected through the Holy Spirit. We choose not to let our differences destroy our relationships. We make every effort to protect the unity God has given us. That is why peace is not merely a feeling. It is also a way of living with one another.

Let me finish by sharing a story about a Korean high school student. In Korean society, the college entrance exam is an extremely important moment in a young person's life. For many students, it can feel as though one examination will determine their entire future. It was the same when I entered college, and I think

the pressure is even greater today. In some ways, Korea's strong emphasis on education has helped make the country strong economically, culturally, and even militarily. At the same time, there is a downside. Korean society has become extremely competitive, and that competition can create visible and invisible divisions between winners and losers.

In Korea, students take the college entrance exam only once a year. In the United States, students can take the SAT several times, right? But in Korea, there is one very important day, usually in November.

Students and their families have prepared for that one day for many years. So, for a high school senior and the entire family, the exam can feel almost life-changing.

One day, a student preparing for the college entrance exam received what was commonly called a **"lucky letter."** The letter said something like this: "If you send twenty-eight copies of this same letter to twenty-eight people within three days, good luck will come to you. But if you do not, you will be cursed." Think about that for a moment. This student was already preparing for the most important exam of his life. He could not afford to waste even a minute. Now someone was telling him that he had to write and mail twenty-eight letters within three days—or something terrible would happen. That was not a lucky letter at all. It was a very nasty letter!

The mother and her son simply threw it into the trash. But even after the letter was gone, the mother could not get rid of the anxiety it had created. She began to think, "What if something bad happens to my son? What if he does poorly on the college entrance exam?" Her anxiety became so strong that she could not sleep. Then, suddenly, one verse from the Bible came to her mind. John 8:32 says: **"You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."**

The moment she remembered those words of Jesus, something changed inside her. The anxiety that had been weighing her down began to disappear, and she found peace. She remembered that her son's future was not controlled by a piece of paper. His future was in God's hands. After she regained her peace, she began to wonder whether her son might still be worried about the letter. So she quietly opened the door to his room. And what did she see? Her son was sitting there, reading the Bible. Can you imagine how peaceful he must have looked?

While the world was saying, **"Be afraid. Something bad may happen,"** he was listening to the Word of God. He was trusting God, and he was at peace. Of course,

we cannot say that being peaceful guaranteed that he would receive a high score on the exam. Faith does not give us a guarantee that every outcome will be exactly what we want. But we can say this: **His future was not controlled by fear. His heart was held by God.**

Dear friends, this is the peace that Jesus gives us. The peace of Christ does not mean that we will never have problems. It does not mean that everything will always go the way we want. Instead, it means that even when the future is uncertain, we can trust that God is with us. The world can give us many things. It can give us success, money, security, and comfort. But it cannot give us the peace that Jesus gives. Why? Because true peace is not simply the absence of trouble. **True peace is the presence of Christ.**

So whatever you may be facing today, do not let fear take control of your heart. Bring your worries to Jesus. Stay close to God's Word. Trust the One who holds your future, even when the circumstances are beyond your control. And when you have done all that you can do, remember the closed door of the kiln. There comes a time when we must stop trying to control the outcome and place our lives in God's hands. Then we can wait—not with fear, but with faith; not with anxiety, but with trust; not knowing exactly what will happen, but knowing who is with us.

Let me close by reading again the words of our Lord: **"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."**