

Read Philippians 4:6-9 - Pray

Intro - Open to John 14:27

Don't raise your hand, but how many of you enjoy watching and reading the news? I know there is good news out there but boy is it hard to digest. Social media, news media and entertainment media all tug at us to give it the highest priority. It seems to me that it is harder today to be at peace than maybe ever before. Statistics are showing ever increasing percentages of people are depressed and anxious. Some to the point where no amount of unplugging from the news will do. The body can begin to have physical anxious reactions which require deeper interventions like therapy and medication.

In many parts of the world the problems aren't internal but external. People with guns and violence are the norm. When I went on a mission trip to Guatemala, in the capital Guatemala City, we went to a burger place when we flew in. It was in a little strip mall with a fence around it all, with gates which would close at night and at least two private security guards with Uzis, small machine guns hung around their shoulders. So just to eat a burger in the middle of the day we needed armed men there. The fact that many Americans don't need a gun or weapon on their person at all times to feel safe is an incredible reality. The lack of peace that we feel within ourselves is a response to the lack of peace in our world. The world is groaning in frustration, anger, violence and death.

Jesus' day was no less dangerous. In 1st century Judea, the Roman Empire had conquered and established what is called the Pax Romana. The Roman Peace. A generally peaceful era where all around the known world, Roman rule brought stability, a common coin, language and roads. But this peace was brought by economic and military subjugation. The presence of occupying troops and foreign installed governors was reality. It was a peace that came by coercion either through power or war.

Jesus' disciples lived in the Roman peace but were facing life without Jesus and the dangerous world which would threaten and ultimately consume them. So how could they face this new reality? Jesus has promised he will prepare heaven and that his Holy Spirit will come dwell with them. What will all this amount to? Peace.

We have just one verse this morning, but I want to paint a picture of the breadth and depth of the peace offered to us. Jesus will leave, but he is

leaving his Spirit and now we see, his peace. **The peace Jesus gives us is established, reigning and blessed.** It is a reality in God's plan for redemption that has past, future and current benefits. Let's read.

Context

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

The Hebrew word, Shalom, which means peace, is the common greeting and goodbye of their day. Even today, shalom is a common greeting among Jewish peoples. So to offer peace as a farewell is a common cultural practice. The Greek word here that replaces Shalom is Eirene. A similar blessing of peace, which Jesus uses here to say goodbye and uses it again after the resurrection in John 20:19 to say hello again.

Far from just a greeting, in the context of the Holy Spirit's arrival and Jesus' departure it is a promise of how they will experience him after he is gone. They will have his peace. Now this is contrasted with the world's version of peace. The world's idea of peace can really only be summarized as the absence of trouble or conflict. It's peaceful only in the temporary absence of evil. The Pax Romana came with centurions on the street corners. With taxes to pay. It came with conquest and bloodshed.

Jesus wants to assure his disciples that what he started, he will finish. Do not let your hearts be troubled. And he adds, do not let it be fearful, the action that comes naturally from a troubled heart. Fear is the rational or irrational response to the lack of confidence in the current peace.

In contrast to this worldly peace, Christ leaves and brings peace by service, humility and yes, bloodshed. But not the blood of the weak for the peace of the powerful. But his own blood, the blood of the powerful God, for the salvation of the weak. With Jesus leaving, with his peace staying behind, let us look at the biblical qualities of Jesus' peace. **The peace Jesus gives us is established, reigning and blessed.**

One – Established Peace

With Christ's death on the cross peace with God is established.

Colossians 1:20

through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

This is the most important aspect of Jesus' gift of peace to you. The biblical narrative is clear from beginning to end that we are sinners and as such there is no peace with God. Adam and Eve had peace with God until their disobedience. They were then banished from the Garden, a perfect place of peace and even their peace with the ground and within their family crumbled with sin. It got so bad as the population of the earth grew that at Noah's day, it says in Genesis 6:5,

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Every intent. Not a little bit, but even their thoughts before they became actions, was only evil continually. God's judgement, in a flood, comes upon the earth. Demonstrating grace to Noah to save him and his family, but even to start over shows the depth of our human rebellion. This cycle continues through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Even in their mercy from God, being declared righteous by faith. They still claimed multiple wives, lied, were cowards and cheats. Even the chosen ones cannot make peace with God.

The nation of Israel born out of slavery, with no home is rescued by God but they do the same thing. They reject peace with God to have peace with pagan nations. Trusting in their military might and power trying to establish earthly peace rather than the peace of the God of the Exodus.

Then the nation is punished for their rebellion, if they don't want peace with God, God will use Assyria and Babylon to take away the nation, the wealth and the military that brought them what they thought was peace.

Even after they return to the land and build a new temple, they would create extra laws upon laws to try to make peace with God. Not realizing that in doing so, they were heaping burdens on themselves that could not even bring the peace they promised. Then, 400 years of silence from God.

Out of this silence God brings peace to the world. He makes peace with us by sending the prince of peace, to establish the way of peace permanently. No more military is needed, no more wealth, no more laws, just peace with God in Christ. It is an established occupation in a spiritual sense. No angels in the streets but the occupation of God's indwelling spirit of peace in his people. No force or coercion required, just transformed souls.

The longing we have in our hearts for peace: For all the screaming in our house to stop, for the chaos of children or job insecurity or the whiplash of politics from one inept politician to the other. That longing for peace, stability and tranquility is there because God has written on your heart that peace is truly established. It is found because Christ has come and died for your peace.

But this is not all. The second aspect of God's peace is it is a reigning peace.

Two – Reigning Peace

It is reigning because Christ reigns for all eternity with God the Father. Their nature is peace and their kingdom will be marked by peace. There will be no war or death or tears in heaven. As we consider heaven, this is a great place to discuss the frailty of worldly peace. Worldly peace is not something you can have; it is only the absence of evil or trouble. Worldly peace is really only peace in ignorance. In the world, you cannot have peace with God so you will be ignorant of three truths.

First if you are of the world, you must ignore the eternal hell which awaits you. You may reject outright the concept of hell, but I challenge you to see that if you truly saw the horror of hell, you would be overcome with fear. So you, if you are of the world, must ignore it all together.

Second, worldly peace is ignorant of the reality of evil. You can only experience peace in this life if you ignore the parts that aren't so peaceful. It's only peaceful in a city when a proper amount of evil is kept out. It's not as if evil has disappeared, it has been relocated. So you can have peace but only at the expense of chaos and violence happening somewhere else. You can only have peace in your heart if you are ignorant of its true condition. You love sin, you love to hate, and you love to indulge in evil. To have peace in your heart without Christ is to ignore that reality.

Lastly, worldly peace is ignorant of its temporary nature. Peace on earth is fleeting. Just ask any mom with a toddler. They will lock themselves in the bathroom for just a moment alone and see tiny fingers poking under the door saying Mom I need a snack or a train or a book. Peace even here in America is an incredible blessing but no matter how strong our military is, no matter if we have all the best and brightest, the peace cannot last. The world is too sinful and destructive to put it off forever.

The Peace of God carries with it none of these flaws in eternity in heaven. It will be a peace that means no more war or corruption or coercion. It will reign in the glorified Christians who are remade into perfection. The new heavens and the new earth will be of the most sublime reality that we cannot even comprehend its full beauty. We only see our world as it is, full of death and decay and limited resources.

Peace is not just established and reigning but it brings tangible, incredible blessed peace to us here on earth.

Three – Blessed Peace

If I ordered these aspects of peace chronologically, I would have put reigning peace last. Instead, we are backtracking because this blessed peace is dependent on peace having been established in Christ's death and knowing it reigns forever in Christ's return. All of the benefits I am about to describe are **nothing** if not rooted in God's character of peace, his work of peace on the cross of Christ and his reign in peace at the end of all time.

The Christian life is one empowered by the Spirit. The Spirit who, as we said last week, helps us remember and be transformed by all Jesus has said and done. Jesus' life serves as the example of what his peace will do in us.

He modeled this peace in the storm of Mark 4. Remember, the disciples and Jesus were crossing the sea and Jesus gets a nap in. The storm blows in the disciples start despairing and woke Jesus up. Then they proceed to claim that Jesus' slumber meant that he didn't care if we drown. Jesus calmed the storm and rebuked their fear and lack of faith.

He modeled peace in the face of death. At the very beginning of his ministry in Luke 4, he reads the scroll of Isaiah and claims to be the messiah so the people drove him out of town and led him up to a cliff to throw him off. Then in says in verse 30 "But Jesus passed through the crowd and went on His way". Or in prayer on his last night as he faced his death, he agonized over the wrath of God he would endure, but he had such a calm demeanor at his arrest that he left with the soldiers and didn't fight.

He modeled peace when he experienced torture and false charges. He was willing to be exchanged for the murder Barabbas and hung on a tree. The only innocent man to die a criminal's death. Others have been innocent of the crimes alleged, but none were blameless of all sin like Christ.

Peter reminds us of our call to imitate Christ in this exact way, 1 Peter 2:23

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, HE DID NOT REVILE IN RETURN; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;

He had peace with God and through this he did not need to be anything less than peaceful in his response to no less than torture and death.

I would sum up Christ's peace which he modeled and gives to us, is based on a confidence in God. Christ didn't worry about dying by the storm or by the angry crowd because he was confident that he was living perfectly in God's will. So he would die exactly as he and the Father planned in eternity past. We can live with this same peace. Living in the knowledge that God's sovereign plan and will for our life cannot be thwarted.

Missionaries John and Margaret Paton landed on New Hebrides island of Aniwa in November 1866. Their goal: to bring the gospel to the native cannibals. But just a few months after landing, Paton's wife and child died. He wrote in his autobiography, "Feeling immovably assured that my God and Father was too wise and loving to err in anything that he does or permits, I looked up to the Lord for help, and struggled on in His work". How do you have peace after you wife and child die? On a foreign hostile island, literally full of cannibals who wanted to eat their remains and you! He wrote later, "My peace came back to me like a wave from God. I realized that I was immortal till my Master's work with me was done."

Immortal till my Master's work with me was done."

Does hearing that not give you hope that God would give a wave of peace to you? I read that this week and I just couldn't help but long to trust Christ that much. To have peace knowing I will be immortal till my Masters work with me was done. That is not a peace based on circumstances like the world gives. It is not temporary or a distraction from the troubles of the world either. It is a peace in the midst of trouble and fear because God has accomplished and will reign in peace.

We experience the blessed peace today because God has and will bring peace through Christ. God's peace is a gift he gives to you. It doesn't come from inside you, it is a reality poured into you from Christ, applied as a gift, a fruit if you will, from the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

If you are not a Christian, you do not have peace with God. He has not given you peace. It is precisely in your unrest, anxiety, worry and lack of peace that he desires to be your peace. Do not think that the peace the world offers is enough. Come to the prince of peace. Confess your sin, believe that Christ is your king, and give him your life. Then his Holy Spirit will begin to apply to you all his benefits.

But I do believe there are Christians that are not experiencing His peace. I am not here to heap condemnation on you. Or put you down. Far from it. *There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.* But God does use every part of your life, even the worst trials and droughts to bring you to himself. Your lack of peace, as child of God, is God's divine purpose and affliction for a time to bring you back into his arms. God never wastes anything he wills. And he holds everything in the universe according to his will.

Now I want to dig a bit for you to ask the Holy Spirit why you are not experiencing the peace of Jesus. So here are a few suggestions for what could be robbing you of receiving the gift of peace:

First: unbelief. You don't believe God will bring you peace. You have either never surrendered your life to Christ or you may have head knowledge about Christ, but you are not resting in Christ. If you are a Christian, you were humble enough to confess you did not believe once. When profess faith you are telling God, "I cannot save myself, I did not believe, but I believe now that I need a savior". So be humble enough to confess you don't believe again. Ask like the man in Mark 9:24. Jesus, "I believe, help my unbelief". Ask the Holy Spirit, "Am I sinning in unbelief? Will you help me believe that Christ is my source of peace?"

Second: pride. This is me. You are prideful and you do not receive the peace of God because you think you can make it for yourself. You are seeking to manufacture peace through sheer might like the world does. You are not receiving God's peace. You are trying to control every aspect of your life but even with all your effort, you are not sure it's enough. Peace in your own works will never work. Ask the Holy Spirit, "Am I too proud to receive your peace? Will you break my pride?"

Third: clinical needs. This is the reality that some people need clinical help for their afflictions. Too many pastors have burdened congregations as if they are disembodied spirits without fallen bodies. What I mean is, you are not just a soul. You are a body and soul together. Our soul needs saving. So believe on Jesus. But our body needs redemption, which will be realized through salvation in Christ in our resurrected bodies. Until the day you are resurrected you must care for your body and mind. This means physical, emotional and mental health are important and can affect you mightily. If you are struggling with thoughts and physical ramifications which are not going away, God has given the gift of clinical help. It is a gift of grace that our world is ordered, can be studied and we can heal our bodies with responsible medicine. Let the Spirit of God who dwells within you, guide you to the appropriate treatment. That doesn't mean every treatment is wise. It doesn't mean that if a treatment is available, it is right for you. But you can receive good help through wise doctors and counselors.

Is the Holy Spirit helping you see what is true of your heart? This list can't be exhaustive but I pray the Holy Spirit will show you what is needed. But what is certain is that His peace is freely given. It is not manufactured, it is received.

The peace Jesus gives us is established, reigning and blessed.

Jesus Christ is the only true source of peace. It is not centurions in the streets it is the Holy Spirit in our hearts. The Pax Christi reigns throughout the whole world, today and most perfectly on the Last Day. This is not a peace like the world gives by a mere absence of trouble. It is the positive, Christ-like confidence in God applied by the Spirit. A peace, you will have when trouble comes. That is peace.