

John 14:18-29

Peace I Leave With You

These past couple of weeks I have been trying to figure out when to take some vacation time, how much to take, and where to go. I realize that I am tired. It is not that I don't have the joy, desire, and energy to do the work that I am called to do, but more a recognition that rest is needed so I can continue to love and look forward to this work.

It has been a heavy time, coming through a pandemic, adapting to the challenges of ministry in the world the last couple of years, and recently having a major surgery, where the lingering effects of the anesthesia have made my mind a place where thoughts just go off never to return.

I have also had the privilege of being with numerous families over the last few months that are grieving the loss of someone dear to them, and many of them dear to me as well, so my own loss and grief are also present. There is also the excitement and energy of learning new things, planning and leading worship, being part of teams that are leading us to new futures, and the joy of just spending time with people of this congregation, and many others God brings into my life.

What I know I am looking for in a vacation is rest and peace for my body, mind, and spirit. Whenever I take time away, I find a fire pit, with water close by, brings a soothing peace to my mind and soul. I am not an outdoorsy kind of person, but there is something about even having three days of this, of fire and water, can sustain me for months. As I reflect on this, I think it is because in fire and water I feel and experience the power and presence of God. Reminders of this presence throughout the year come in a morning shower, a swim, a candle lit. In the church it is the Christ candle or other candles lit at various services, it is the water of baptism, and at times it has been as we have washed our hands in a service as a way to remember how Christ washed the feet of the disciples at that Last Supper together, and a way to remind everyone that we are to serve and care for others.

We all need times of rest and renewal, many are tired, whether working or retired, parents and children, unemployed or facing illness. Whether grieving or rejoicing, rest and renewal are important as they help us to feel whole, healed, and at peace.

That word *peace* is a big part of the conversation that Jesus has with his disciples in this passage from John 14 and in all the gospels. We often think of peace as lack of conflict, a cessation of war and warring. In a world that sadly is filled with conflict, nation against nation, families pitted against each other, mass shootings, and programming on our most enjoyed devices and streaming services feeding on conflict between friends and

competitors, peace feels like an elusive goal. But what if peace was something that is a gift that each of us can experience regardless of circumstances?

Also, it is something to point out that as Jesus speaks these words about and of peace he has been dining with his followers. Judas Iscariot has already walked away and is headed off to betray Jesus, Peter's denial about knowing Jesus has been predicted, and Jesus is well aware that the next hours and days will be filled with feelings of despair, abandonment, pain, and ultimately death. And yet, Jesus speaks words of peace. "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." (v27)

Pastor and teacher David Lose writes about the peace that Christ offers, For Christians, this peace "testifies to a sense of wholeness, even rightness, of and in one's very being. It's a sense of harmony with those persons and things around us. Peace connotes a sense of contentment, but even more fulfillment, a sense that in this moment one is basking in God's pleasure."¹

In this scripture Jesus also speaks about the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in Jesus' name. This Advocate will teach the disciples everything, and remind them of all that Jesus had said to them. It is the Holy Spirit that worked in and through the disciples to give us the stories in scripture to teach and guide us. It is the Advocate that continues to work in and through every follower of Christ to continue that teaching and through the scriptures remind us of what Jesus said and taught.

It was also the Holy Spirit, the Advocate that brought the peace of Christ, the peace of God to those same followers in the days after Jesus' resurrection and ascension. That peace continues on in us.

We are given the gift of peace, the peace of God that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7). It is a peace that can enter a hospital room when all hope seems lost. It is peace when bombs are raining down. It is peace when families are torn apart. It is peace that does not exist in the absence of conflict, but is present despite the struggles, troubles, and challenges we face. It is not that we let the world go by without doing our part to heal the world, but this peace is present despite the realities.

As Christians when peace is present in us, by our very presence we can be the peace of Christ for others. They may not even realize what it is, but your presence, your love for God and for them, can bring a peace that is beyond understanding in the midst of grief, trials, pain, and undeniable suffering. It means taking the circumstances and the people and placing them in God's hands, doing what we can to alleviate suffering, but

¹ Lose, David. [Easter 6 C: Peace the World Cannot Give | ...In the Meantime \(davidlose.net\)](https://davidlose.net/easter-6-c-peace-the-world-cannot-give-in-the-meantime). Accessed May 20, 2022

knowing that there are limits to our ability to fix situations, and trusting God to be present always and anyway.

So again I say to you the words Jesus had for you, for your loved ones, and for the world, as I say them may they penetrate deep into your mind, your heart, your very being. Hear the words as a promise from the God of love. "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." (v27)

Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid. What ever you face today, in the days to come, as you bring a child into the world and as you face the end of life, each moment of your life and that of those you love, as we watch the unfolding horror of war in the Ukraine, are angered by yet another shooting of innocents, walk past the homeless on our streets, or deal with the strife in our homes, work places, families, do what you can to alleviate the pain and suffering, take on your responsibilities, but trust that at the end of the day, in every moment of the day, you are not alone, the Holy Spirit, the Advocate is with you, and the peace of Christ is present in and through it all. Amen.