

041623 "Peace be with You" John 20: 19-26

1. The Gospels record His visits to many people after Jesus' resurrection, including to eleven disciples. There He spoke many words to them, including the phrase "Peace be with you." He repeated these words several times. It was a common greeting among the Hebrews at the time, but it also had significance when Jesus said it after His resurrection. This greeting captures the heart of the Easter message.

When Easter Sunday dawned, the apostles were not at their most peaceful. Not only did they see Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, but they also experienced their own weakness and lack of faith. Instead of holding on to the promise of the resurrection, they gave in to fear and doubt. Then they went into hiding, fearing the authorities would come after them. In every possible way they failed Jesus. But when Jesus appeared, He did not mention the painful and shameful events of the past few days. Instead, he wished them peace.

What do the words "Peace be with you" tell us? They say that no matter how many sins you commit or how great your faults are, God is ready to forgive you and release you from guilt. So that you might enjoy peace through reconciliation with him. As long as you are with him, his peace will stay with you.

Now, the peace that comes from Jesus is not like the peace of this world. The world's peace depends on favorable circumstances. We're on our way, things are going as expected, and there may be a few issues we can manage. It sounds plausible, but when things go wrong, this type of peace tends to wear off and leave us anxious and uptight.

In contrast, the peace that Jesus brings helps us to cope with difficult situations without letting anxiety, anger, or fear grip us. It brings a quiet assurance to the heart that guides us as we face difficult decisions. It is not

tied to the mood or situation of the day, but it's a peace that depends on the infinite love of God.

2.Verse 21 says, "Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Because they let Jesus breathe the Holy Spirit into them, their fear was replaced with something much, much better. The same thing is true for us today. Even when awful, scary, bad things happen to us, we don't need to be filled with fear of these events. Instead, we can remember today's story. We can remember that the breath we breathe is filled with the Holy Spirit and with every breath we take, we are inviting God into our lives and bodies. And, with every breath where we are inviting God into our lives, we are also pushing out the fear and worry that can sometimes fill us up.

Jesus said to his disciples and he says to us today: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (John 14:27).

If we look at the word 'peace' closely (shalom in Hebrew, εἰρήνη in Greek), the original meaning of the verb form of this word was "to unite." Unite with the wholeness. Unite with God. Because of sin, people live as if our relationship with God never existed, as if we have nothing to do with God – this is the sin that the Bible talks about. In the Bible, "sin" is called "hamartia" in Greek, which means "missing the target." In other words, sin means that it causes people to miss God as the purpose of their lives. The biblical perspective is clear on this point. People miss Yahweh God in their lives and instead make other things the purpose of their lives, such as money, fame, pleasure, and fun.

But peace unites us again, overcoming the brokenness to tie us with God again. Thomas Watson said, "If God be our God, He will give us peace in trouble. When there is a storm without, He will make peace within. The world can create trouble in peace, but God can create peace in trouble."

Verse 26 says, "A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.""

According to the gospel of John today, Christ's wounds were not erased by the resurrection. In fact, he invites Thomas and the other disciples to touch his wounds to bring the disciples back to faith. How might we in the church use our wounds to help others come to faith?

3. Horatio G. Spafford was a successful lawyer and businessman in Chicago with a lovely family – a wife, Anna, and five children. However, they were not strangers to tears and tragedy. Their young son died with pneumonia in 1871, and in that same year, much of their business was lost in the great Chicago fire. Yet, God in His mercy and kindness allowed the business to flourish once more.

On Nov. 21, 1873, a French ocean liner was crossing the Atlantic from the U.S. to Europe with 313 passengers on board. Among the passengers were Mrs. Spafford and their four daughters. Although Mr. Spafford had planned to go with his family, he found it necessary to stay in Chicago to help solve an unexpected business problem. He told his wife he would join her and their children in Europe a few days later. His plan was to take another ship.

About four days into the crossing of the Atlantic, the steamship collided with another ship. Suddenly, all of those on board were in grave danger. Anna hurriedly brought her four children to the deck. She knelt there with her four daughters and prayed that God would spare them if that could be His will, or to make them willing to endure whatever awaited them. The ship slipped beneath the dark waters of the Atlantic, carrying with it 226 of the passengers including the four Spafford children.

A sailor, rowing a small boat over the spot where the ship went down, spotted a woman floating on a piece of the wreckage. It was Anna, still alive. He pulled her into the boat and they were picked up by another large vessel which, nine days later, landed them in Cardiff, Wales. From there she wired her husband a message which began, "Saved alone, what shall I do?" Another of the ship's survivors, Pastor Weiss, later recalled Anna saying, "God gave me four daughters. Now they have been taken from me. Someday I will understand why."

Mr. Spafford booked passage on the next available ship and left to join his grieving wife. With the ship about four days out, the captain called Spafford to his cabin and told him they were over the place where his children went down. According to Bertha Spafford Vester, a daughter born after the tragedy, Spafford wrote "It Is Well With My Soul" while on this journey. By the way, this man is called the Job of the 19th century. The Spaffords were supporters and friends of evangelist Dwight L. Moody.

When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll,
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, I already knew this story, but I found and read it again to talk about "peace" in today's sermon, and I looked back on my life and became solemn. Peace be with you. Peace of Jesus be with you. Philippians 4:7 says, "And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, shall keep your hearts, your minds through Christ Jesus." Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, with your family, with your business, with your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.