

Sermon preached by Pastor Ben Kuerth on John 14:25-27 on May 24, 2015 at Victory of the Lamb.

**Series: Words With Friends**  
**Today's Focus: My Peace I Leave You**

**"Got Peace?"**

Dear Savior Jesus, as we turn our attention to your word, there's a lot going in our lives so help us focus and let the Holy Spirit illumine our minds and hearts. Teach us, comfort us, and do not leave us today without the kind of true and lasting peace that only you can give. In your holy name we pray. Amen.

Friends, you got stress in your life? Any of you experience stress this week? This past week at another training session for foster parents, our instructor started off the class by asking us that question. She then had an easel pad up front as everybody in the class mentioned the things that cause them stress. Work. Lack of sleep. Health. Money troubles. School issues. Moving and housing challenges. Court. Visitations. Traffic. Unsupportive family. Sports schedules. Drama.

Pretty quickly an entire easel pad sheet was filled up with things that caused us stress and we hadn't even gotten to some of the things I would've added to the list—like going through a building project trying to meet deadlines and budget while communicating with lots of different people, more meetings with city staff, preparing for a funeral in the middle of the week, counseling people, groundbreaking planning, worship service preparation, unexpected phone calls, and a sermon to prepare for today all while trying to be a devoted father, a loving husband, and a good friend. I'm not complaining about it but would you believe it that pastors experience stress too!

Well actually Jesus' own disciples were feeling stress in their lives also when Jesus spoke the words that we're going to hear today. I'm sure they could relate to many of the things we experience but at this time one thing really stressed them out. They knew Jesus would be leaving them soon. He had just told them, "I'm going back to the Father. I'm going there to prepare a place for you. But I'll be sure and come back for you later." Remember last week we celebrated Jesus' ascension into heaven where he actually did leave to go be with his Father. But at this time, before it all happened, the disciples hadn't quite put it all together just what exactly this would entail.

They didn't quite realize that for Jesus to be able to go and prepare a place for them in heaven they would first have to watch him go and die on the cross for their sins. And then there was just the simple fact that Jesus leaving meant things were going to change. Change is always hard, isn't it? Harder for some people than others but for the disciples it meant that Jesus wouldn't be physically, visibly with them much longer. What would they do without him? That was a scary thought. Because even though they had spent 3 years learning from Jesus, listening to his words, they felt kind of scared when they thought about the future. How would they deal with problems in the future like the next time they were out in a boat on the lake and it started to sink and Jesus wasn't

just right there sleeping in the stern? What would they do the next time they were asked a challenging question or their enemies confronted them? When doubts arose in their minds? When they couldn't remember what Jesus had taught them?

Oh friends, it's easy to stress out, isn't it? Especially when we lose track of Jesus' words like his disciples. That's when we miss out on having peace. Instead we experience stress. We look to the future and we start to feel afraid. We look to the past and we start to feel regret. We wake up in the middle of the night and our minds start to race. That ever happen to you?

And sometimes if we're honest there are things we've done in life that turn on a voice in our head that never seems to stop talking, right? Sometimes that voice is like a scream, sometimes like a whisper, but it's rarely if ever silent. You've heard it. It's a voice that has no mercy. When it speaks, it always has the tone of accusation. It won't let your mistakes die. It shoves them in your face. Again and again. This voice says, "God won't forgive you. He will punish you. He will always be angry with you." There are some voices too loud and too persistent for us to silence ourselves. Guilt can be one of them. When you're torn apart on the inside, you can't do surgery on yourself to repair the damage. You need someone else to do that. You need someone else to make the voice go away. Well that someone, friends, is the Holy Spirit of God whom Jesus promised to send. Got peace? Listen and take to heart these words that Jesus first spoke to his timid and troubled disciples—his friends:

<sup>25</sup> *"All this I have spoken while still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

<sup>27</sup> *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.*

Peace. Did you hear this? This is what Jesus leaves us. His peace. What is this peace? It's the knowledge that you and I are first and foremost at peace with God—with the Maker of heaven and earth! That means it's a peace to calm your troubled conscience. It says "Zip it" to that accusatory voice. It's a peace to give composure to your troubled soul. It's a peace that you can have as your possession because the guilt of your sins has been removed as far as the east is from the west. It's a peace that means your heart can sing in unison with the song of God's love for you—the very same love that God has for his Son Jesus who earned this peace through his perfect obedience to the Father. American soldiers have bled and died in many wars to secure our earthly freedom, a temporary peace that I pray we never take for granted this Memorial Day weekend. But our Savior Jesus Christ bled and died to secure our eternal freedom through the forgiveness of our sins, a permanent peace which no bullies, tyrants, terrorists, demons, or the devil himself can ever take away from us.

And do you want to know something else? It's a peace that's real whether you feel it or not. When Jesus spoke these words to his disciples they didn't feel like they had much peace. In fact their hearts were troubled. The future did not seem certain at all. Nevertheless this peace from Jesus was there despite their feelings. Jesus spoke in the present tense. Did you catch that? *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.* Despite their feelings, this was the fact. They had peace.

Friends, here's the truth: if you believe in Jesus as your Savior...so do you. You have peace. Maybe your feelings need to catch up to this fact but it's true. You have peace. How do I know this? Because the Holy Spirit whom Jesus promised his friends is still is at work today giving what Jesus promises!

You know today, friends, we celebrate Pentecost. Pentecost is one of the oldest festivals of the Christian church. It took place fifty days after Jesus rose from the dead on Easter, 10 days after Jesus ascended into heaven. It was the day when the ascended Lord Jesus poured out on his church the Holy Spirit whom he promised to send here in John chapter 14. And so it was the day when Jesus' timid disciples found fresh, new courage. It had taken some time for them to feel this way. But when the Spirit came upon them, they realized that Jesus hadn't left them in a world of hurt and pain all by themselves. They had the peace that Jesus promised through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who made his home in their hearts. They became empowered to convict and comfort other troubled sinners with the message of repentance and the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ.

And so the results of Pentecost are ongoing. That's why we still celebrate Pentecost today. It's a time when we focus on the person and work of the Holy Spirit—the 3<sup>rd</sup> member of the Trinity. He still comes to us to work alongside us and with us and in us. Not with the sound of a rushing wind or with tongues of fire or some other mysterious ways, but he comes to us through God's Word just as the Bible says that *"faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ"* (Romans 10:17). Whenever God's Word is preached on Sunday mornings, the Holy Spirit works. Whenever we have Bible Class, the Holy Spirit works. Whenever your kids learn a Bible story in Bible Quest, the Holy Spirit works. Whenever our teens have a confirmation class lesson, the Holy Spirit works. Whenever you read your Bibles at home, the Holy Spirit works. Whenever you discuss the sermon in your small group and read the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit works. Whenever you read a Bible story to your kids at night, the Holy Spirit works. Whenever the sacraments of baptism and holy communion are distributed and applied in accordance with the institution of Christ, the Holy Spirit works. And what does he work? Peace! We treasure Bible classes, Bible based sermons, and the sacraments of Jesus here at Victory of the Lamb because they're not just empty words or mere symbols. They are powerful and efficacious means of grace which actually give what Jesus promises. God's Word and sacraments—they release you from guilt. They remove doubt. They replace fear with faith. They give forgiveness, life, and peace. That's why Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the Advocate which can also be translated as the Counselor or the Encourager.

I mean like Jesus' timid, fearful friends we all need this encouragement—in life and in death. This past Wednesday evening I had the privilege of preaching for the funeral of Eugene Hering who died in Florida but whose funeral was back up here in WI. But a couple weeks ago before he died, his son John, a former member of our church who moved to FL a couple years ago, he called me to tell me about his father. His dad's body was shutting down. He didn't always know what to say. Have you ever found yourself in that situation? When you're sitting at the bedside of someone you love who's dying? Or when it feels like you're all alone and you don't know what to do? Friends, there's no substitute kind of peace that the world has to offer in times of trouble in place of the peace which the words of Jesus bring.

So before we finished talking on the phone I said, "Let's read John chapter 14 together." So I got out my Bible and we walked through the words of Jesus—and you could do this too—words that are custom designed by the One who loves so much for times like this. And together as I read we heard Jesus say, *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going"* (John 14:1-4) ...<sup>25</sup> *"All this I have spoken while still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. <sup>27</sup> 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 14:25-27).

And you know what? These words worked peace. They brought peace not only to my friend John but also peace to his dying father as John then, after he got off the phone with me, read them to his dad and told him what we talked about over the phone—that Jesus was preparing a place for him in heaven and that he didn't have to be afraid because Jesus has given us peace with God through forgiveness of all our sins. He could die at peace because he was at peace with God who made him and redeemed by His Son. Jesus was going to take him home to heaven.

Friends, got peace? In our world today there are more things than ever that the devil wants to use to distract you or rob you from having peace. And in some ways what the world offers in exchange is the exact opposite of peace. To follow Jesus and hold onto his words more and more means that the world's going to try and give you its hatred, its persecution, its trouble. I think it's safe to say that the trouble that we're going to face as Christians here on this earth has only just begun. "Get with our program or we won't let you have peace", is what the world preaches. But in the face of all this, we believe and hold fast instead to these words which will not let us down because these are the words of our Savior God who has overcome the world. He says, *"<sup>27</sup> 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).