

## **Week 4 – PEACE**

### **Sunday, December 18<sup>th</sup>, Day 22 – Josh Tracy**

**Welcome** – Hello, and welcome to Vespers for the Advent season. My name is Josh Tracy, and today is the fourth and final Sunday of Advent, December 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Centering** – As we begin our time of reflection and devotion, let's take a moment to center ourselves.

Make sure other distractions are quieted for the next few minutes.

If possible, bring your body to complete rest.

As you become aware of the stillness around you, focus on your breathing as we inhale and exhale slowly together.

Breathe in, exhale.

Breathe in, exhale.

Breathe in, exhale.

**Responsive Prayer** – As we continue in prayer together, speak the words of this responsive prayer.

LEADER – God of love

RESPONSE – May this season remind us of your steadfastness

LEADER – Christ of hope

RESPONSE – May this season remind us of your promises

LEADER – Spirit of peace

RESPONSE – May this season remind us of your comfort

LEADER – As it was from the beginning,

RESPONSE – So now, may the joy of this season burn in our hearts

TOGETHER – Amen

### **Reading – John 14:18-21, 23-27**

18 “I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you.

19 In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.

20 On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

21 They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me, and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

23 “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words, and the word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me.

25 “I have said these things to you while I am still with you.

26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you.

27 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

### **Theme Exposition –**

I’m struck by the last verse of that reading. Jesus tells us that he leaves his peace with us as a gift—the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then he tells us that he does not give to us as the world gives. Jesus understood and understands that the world cannot and will not offer us peace. Only he can do that. When it comes to peace, only Jesus can provide it. And that peace that he provides gives us comfort, inviting us to not be afraid.

It’s a beautiful, especially in a world that offers us peace through so many different ways. We can have peace if we just have enough money, if we get the right job, if we have the right house, drive the right car, have the right body type...the list is seemingly endless. But peace cannot come from our things, from the way we look, from anything that the earth provides. It comes from Jesus, who gives to us freely and generously.

Jesus tells us too that to see him is to see the father. God looks like Jesus, Jesus looks like God. And in that way, we see the generosity of God in his gift of Jesus to the world, Emmanuel, God with us.

This is the last week of Advent. After weeks of hope, love, and joy, we end with peace, an infinite peace that came in the form of a person. As we end this season of Advent, let us take the peace of Christ with us into the weeks and months ahead. Let it be the thing that keeps us afloat when the storms rage, that reminds us of God’s faithfulness when everything seems out of control.

Amen, and Amen.

**Candle Lighting** – As we light the fourth candle, we reflect on the peace of Christ, the grace extended from on high that reminds us of God’s love and faithfulness. May the soft glow of the flame remind you of a peace quiets your restless heart and reminds you to not be afraid.

**Benediction** – Thank you for spending time with us today. As you continue this week, may the PEACE of the Advent resound in every part of your life. If you will, speak these words with me as we conclude:

ALL – Lord of hosts,  
                    Who breathed the words of creation and  
                    spoke the Word of the Incarnation  
Ignite our imaginations  
Fill us with awe and wonder  
Prepare the way, within and without  
For unto us, a Child is born  
Unto us, Emmanuel is given  
Bring us Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace  
As we receive, once again, Your greatest gift to the world  
Amen, and amen

Josh – Join us every day of Advent for a time of reflection and devotion.  
May God go with you through this season of HOPE.  
Blessings, dearly beloved.