

Deep Peace  
December 8, 2019

Later today we will be hosting a "Celebration of Life" memorial service for Nicole Bonanza's mother, Dawn.

There will be Scripture reading beginning the service, which you often hear at funerals. Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions;" (this is the term used in the original language). "if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?" (John 14:1,2)

Then, later in this very important chapter, Jesus says these words, "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, (or fear)." (John 14:27)

Peace is something humans have always wanted. Peace is something sought for throughout the centuries. Today, there are at least over 20 books available on Amazon regarding emotional peace.

Additional words which help describe peace include: harmony, calm, quiet, serenity, and tranquility. Just hearing those words invite us to take a deep breath and relax.

The opposite of peace includes words like: conflict, discord, dissidence, strife, trouble and turmoil. Those words make our blood pressure rise.

You know when you're at peace. You know when others around you are too. And you know when the opposite is true as well.

Peace is so important there are even prizes given internationally for it. The most famous, of course, is the Nobel Peace Prize.

The word peace is found throughout the Bible. It is also a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

The ancient Hebrew concept of peace, rooted in the word "shalom," meant wholeness, completeness, soundness, health, safety and prosperity, carrying with it the implication of permanence. ([jewsforjesus.org](http://jewsforjesus.org))

Peace! Peace! Peace! Everybody's for it. Nobody is against it. But what is that very elusive quality we call peace?

It means different things to different people.

Peace is what those who follow Eastern religions say comes only through the obliteration of the individual personality; becoming a part of the universe with no awareness of self. But they really mean serenity.

Peace is what the elderly neighbor wants when the teenager across the street is practicing on his drums. She really wants quiet.

Peace is what the shopkeeper wants when he's worried about paying his bills. He really means that he'd like his store to be busy and bustling with customers. Peace to him means prosperity.

The patient waiting anxiously in the doctor's office to be told the results of a battery of lab tests wants peace. He really means good health.

When we don't have what we think we should have, we say we need peace! Therefore, "peace" is oftentimes defined as "the condition of life that should be."

People often confuse the Roman definition of peace, which is the absence of conflict, with shalom.

Rabbi Robert I. Kahn of Houston, Texas, beautifully unpacks the difference for us between the two:

"One can dictate a peace; shalom is a mutual agreement.

"Peace is a temporary pact; shalom is a permanent agreement.

"One can make a peace treaty; shalom is the condition of peace.

"Peace can be negative, the absence of commotion. Shalom is positive, the presence of serenity.

"Peace can be partial; shalom is whole.

"Peace can be piecemeal; shalom is complete."

(Susan Perlman, [jewsforjesus.org](http://jewsforjesus.org))

When we say, "Shalom" to someone, it can be a greeting or a goodbye. The Hawaiian word "Aloha" or the Arabian word "Salaam" are similar in the same use of hello or goodbye.

Shalom, however, is much more than just a greeting or a goodbye. Deep peace, and the condition of a life of peace, is so much more.

In the truest sense of the original meaning of the word, to have shalom encompasses every aspect of our lives. It is wholeness. It is completeness. And it is with God.

When we live in relationship with Him, look to Him for guidance, and run to Him with our problems, joys and thanksgivings, we enjoy His blessings and His peace. His shalom.

This is no doubt that Jesus had this in mind when He was sharing His heart with His friends the night of their Last Supper.

Jesus was sharing the Passover holiday meal with his disciples. He had washed their feet. Then told Judas to go ahead and do what he had to do, and quickly. Judas left. Then Jesus predicated Peter's denial.

Not the best holiday meal.

But then, Jesus... dear, precious, full-of-grace-and-love Jesus, shares these peace-giving, hope-filled words with His crestfallen, close friends. Let's look, together, at John 14:1-7, 25-27.

Jesus had every reason to be angry, bitter, resentful or disappointed. Yet his words imply He was none of these.

He is the Prince of Peace, after all.

At the beginning of chapter 13, we're told He "knew that the hour had come for Him to leave the world and go to the Father."

So He had to be dealing with emotions related to that. His time on earth was coming to an end. And He was facing death. And He was dealing with the betrayal of Judas and the foretold denial of Peter. And with Peter, it wouldn't just be once, but three times.

His response?

"Do not let your hearts be troubled."

He offers them comfort.

Then He offers them spiritual guidance.

He says, "You believe in God; believe also in Me."

He unpacks that further by giving them, and us, a glimpse of Heaven.

There aren't a lot of verses in Scripture that do so. Here, He shares with them the marvelous picture of how His Father, our Heavenly Father, has a house "with many mansions."

As Dan taught us a few weeks, in the Jewish life, a mansion was actually apartments built onto the family home!

So guess what?! We've got some apartments of our own being built onto our Father's Home even now!

What's your apartment going to look like?

Mine will have lots of kids, flowers, and cats... probably lots of people coming and going... and good food which many of us will prepare together. There'll be plenty of books and music as well. There'll be dancing, too.

Go ahead. Dream a little. What are the things you love most that God already knows about that Jesus is already preparing for you?

Jesus tells His beloved apostles that He will eventually return and then take them, and us, to be with Him. He says so "that you also may be where I am."

Don't miss the "I am."

God said this was His name when asked by Moses in Exodus. And centuries later, Jesus described Himself in this way too.

The same author who recorded the important words in this chapter also recorded "the seven I Ams" of Jesus.

They are all found in John chapters 6-15. One of them is even in this chapter.

Do you know what they are?

They are: the “Bread of Life,” John 6:35; “Light of the world,” 8:12; “the Door,” (or Gate), 10:7; “the Good Shepherd,” 10:11; the “Resurrection and the Life,” 11:25; the “Way, the Truth and the Life,” (14:6); and the “True Vine.” (15:1)

These are important names of Jesus because they also inform our lives as His followers.

We need to turn to Christ for our daily, spiritual nourishment, or “bread.”

We certainly need His light to push back darkness and for so many other reasons. Then, we get to radiate His light to others.

He is the only way to God, hence, the door. He expands this more when He states that He is “the way, the truth and the life in this chapter 14.

This is one of the most basic and important passages in Scripture. How can we know the way to God? Only through Jesus.

Jesus is the way because only He was is both human and God.

By uniting our lives with His, we are united with God.

Jesus called Himself the “Good Shepherd” because the Old Testament says we are all like sheep. We are all in need of a shepherd. And He’s a good one. In fact, He’s the best. He’s like the shepherd David bragged on in the 23rd Psalm. He takes good care of us when we become part of His flock. He meets all of our needs. He protects us. And He’ll even come looking for us if we stray too far away.

And we don’t even have to fear death because He is “the Resurrection and the Life.” Jesus says, “The one who believes in Me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in Me will never die.” (John 11:25,26)

As we live this life without fear of death, we can do a lot for the Kingdom of God. As we heard last week, “we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works.” God has already prepared good work for us to do, which He’s even prepared already in advance! (Ephesians 2:10)

So we need to stay connect to Jesus, from whom all the good stuff flows. He’s “the Vine,” we’re the branches. (John 15:1) You know what branches that get cut off from a vine look like. Not a pretty sight. They dry up, wither away, and die.

So at the beginning of John 14, Jesus uses the “I am” when He tells them He’s going to prepare a place for them, and not to let their hearts be troubled. To have peace.

In verse 27 He actually spells it out for them: “Peace I leave with you...”

It’s interesting that the Greek word for peace actually means “to join together into a whole,” or “wholeness.” This is one of the definitions of shalom that was mentioned earlier. Jesus is telling them, and us, that, joined with Him, we can receive His peace!

Psalm 34:14 advises us to “seek peace and pursue it.”

We can’t just expect it to come along and bump into us! We have to actively work at it. “Seek” and “pursue” are verbs. Action words. We have to do our part to obtain it!

And I would suggest to you that we get peace, and walk in peace, and greatly enjoy peace, when we are in relationship with Christ.

And... not just saying we believe, then nothing changes, but letting God slowly shape and mold us into becoming more like Jesus all the days of our lives.

It is a slow process. It doesn't happen overnight.

It does happen as we get to know Him more and more, however. Better and better. Through worship. Through reading His Word, the Bible. Through practicing spiritual disciplines. Through prayer. (Which is one.) Through sharing in the Lord's Supper. Through sharing life together with other believers who pray with us and for us and encourage us and hold us accountable too when needed.

In John 16:33, Jesus finishes His "fireside chat" with His friends by saying, "I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

In knowing Christ, in living with, and for Christ, we may have peace.  
Without Him, we will not.

There was a bumper sticker out a few years ago which said this:  
"Know Christ. Know peace. No Christ. No peace."

Jesus summed up everything He told them that night with these words. He was telling them, and us, to take courage. To have peace.

Ephesians 2:14-15 tells us that "He Himself is our peace."

We will nighttime be celebrating the birth of our Savior on Christmas Eve, just 16 days from now. We will hear what is known as "the Christmas story" from Luke chapter two.

There is a scene where the shepherds are keeping watch over their sheep in some fields outside of Bethlehem.

It's nighttime. And angel of the Lord appears to them and "the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified." (Luke 2:9)

But the angel said "Don't be afraid," (2:10) and then proceeded to tell them about the birth of Jesus.

That wasn't all.

"Suddenly, a great company (or multitude) of the Heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest Heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests." Or, "and on earth peace among people with whom He is pleased." (2:13,14)

There it is again.. peace.

Peace from God. For us.

Notice the peace is specific. It isn't for everyone - only to those "on whom His favor rests," or "among people with whom He is pleased."

We want peace. And the Bible tells us how to get it: be someone who is in favor with God. Be someone who is pleasing to God.

This doesn't mean you have to earn His love. You don't. Never ever think you do. Unlike humans, He doesn't love conditionally.

"If you do this... then I'll do that. (Or if you don't...) Etc." When we quit loving people like that, we become more like Christ.

He loves us freely and extravagantly and without conditions. He simply wants to have a relationship with us. Like any good parent. And Jesus Christ came to make that happen. We just have to believe in Him and that He is God's only Son and overcame death and rose again and we are in! But that is just the beginning.

We choose to believe so we can know we will have life forever. Or eternal life. We'll see those loved ones again who have gone before us.

But the best part is we get to grow in a love relationship with the One who loves us most from that moment on, for the rest of our lives.

And the more we know Him, the more peace we have.

Psalm 37:4 has long been a favorite verse of mine. It says, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart."

That's something marvelous on which to meditate.

But later on in verse 37, it says, "a future awaits those who seek peace."

We have a future when we seek peace. We have it when we have relationship with Christ. So banish all anxiety and fear, the opposite of peace, from your life. The next time it rears its ugly head, just take some deep breaths, relax your body and say, "Fear, you are a liar. Leave me alone in Jesus name!" Then, choose peace.

As we get to know God better, we grow in having more peace more often.

Isaiah promises that to us in 26:3 "You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in You."

Amen. Let us pray...