

John 14:27-31 **Peace I Leave With You**

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro
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This week I got together with a group of Calvary Chapel pastors from around Northern Virginia – it was good time of fellowship and prayer for each other and for the churches, asking God to do a mighty work here in the area. One of the guys there was Chad Myrhe, the pastor of Calvary Chapel down in Charlottesville. I tell Chad all the time that I live vicariously through him on Facebook.

He posts pictures of his farm – he works five acres with another guy, and about how he's been learning how to grow mushrooms and hewn logs. He also raises bees, last year he got 25 pounds of honey. We got to talking about that and he said something I never knew, he said worker bees only live for about a month or so each summer because they work themselves to death. They spend so much time and effort flying around gathering pollen that they will literally fall from the sky and die as their bodies give out. Now think about that and how busy you feel.

And on top of your to-do list and inbox, there's a constant ticker running in the background of your mind about whether we're going to strike Syria and when and how and what will be the fallout from that. Then, on Thursday it rains and traffic slows to a snarl and your normal commute suddenly takes twice as long. Add that to the boss who doesn't like you, the landlord who is constantly on your back or won't fix what you need, and your mom who won't talk to you and you've got a mess.

How many of us could use some peace in our lives? How many of us need rest before we suddenly fall out of the sky and die from exhaustion? But where do we find peace in this crazy world - peace that will last, peace that we can afford, peace that we can actually have today? I can tell you with confidence – you can find it in Jesus. I'm not telling you I think you can, I'm not saying you might, I'm saying, with confidence, that you can find peace in Jesus – the one who said, come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

In John 14 we've been looking at Jesus' words to His disciples at the Last Supper just hours before He will die on the cross. He has told this group of men that have spent the past three years of their lives with Him that now He is going to leave them and they can't come. Naturally that freaked them out a little bit, so He has spent all of Chapter 14 explaining the what and why and how to them and now He is wrapping it up. So we start with just this morning with just one verse:

27 Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

If you've been with us for this chapter, or if you have read it recently, you might have noticed that He just repeated what He said in verse one - "Let not your heart be troubled." That command serves as a set of bookends on either end of the testimony about what Jesus is doing for us and in us – about how He is going to prepare a place for us in Heaven and how we are going to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Everything we read in this chapter was meant to comfort, to calm, and to encourage us. So when your heart is troubled, open up your Bible to chapters like this and remember what God has to say.

And what do we see Him saying here? Well, we find Jesus making an offer of peace. And He says right away, that it's not like the world gives. When the Bible says "the world" it often uses that term to refer to the natural world the way it is with no reference to God – just the material universe and the men and women who live in it. You can find peace in the world without Jesus, but it fragile, expensive, rare, and short-lived.

Think about some of the ways we try to find peace. One of the first things that comes to mind is getting out of here. We've probably all done it; we think we just need to get away. We'll go to West Virginia or North Carolina, or back home to visit family, somewhere, anywhere, just get me out of here.

Which is funny because you know the old saying that the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence – there are plenty of people in other places who try to get away from where they are by coming up to the city – maybe to do some shopping or just go walking around the National Mall, to find something to do because they say there's nothing to do where they are. They want in, and we want out. So you see, the peace we find by getting out of dodge is only temporary and for most of us, eventually we have to come back anyway, and then what? Another 300 emails came in while you were gone. We need a more durable peace.

Or, maybe you're don't want to get away from a location as much as you want to get out of here when it comes to the place you are in life. Maybe you think you need to get out of this job, or out of this illness, or out of this relationship. And you wish it were as easy as hopping in your car, filling up the tank and driving away, but it's not. It's complicated. You can't always escape to find peace; you need something that works right where you are.

You need a peace like the apostle Paul had. Paul lived a pretty rough life as a missionary. He lays out his ministry bio in 2 Corinthians 11 – he received lashings more than he cared to count, was in and out jail, five times he received the forty lashes minus one because they thought forty could kill you; he was beaten with rods three times, stoned and left for dead once, shipwrecked three times including the time he spent a night and a day drifting at sea until rescued, he was hungry and cold, he was hot and tired, he was always on his guard against robbers and thugs and people who wanted to persecute him, and on top of it all he had a "thorn in his flesh" – some kind of illness or injury that he prayed over and over asking God to remove, but He wouldn't.

And yet, five years later – AFTER he had already endured all of that, He wrote a letter to the church at Philippi – can you turn with me to Philippians, chapter four, and he told them:

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

You see, Paul knew, on the basis of his own life experiences, that the peace Jesus offers you isn't the peace that comes from getting away from it all because you can't always get away. Sometimes, when you want to get away most, other commitments keep you right where you are. Jesus on the other hand, offers you His peace, right there in the midst of it all. You don't have to go and find it; He brings it to you, and offers to change *you*, even if your circumstances stay the same.

Keep reading with me: Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of **peace** will be with you.

Again - you don't have to get away from anything to have peace, as long as you can get closer to Jesus instead. And you don't have to wonder; Paul says, "the God of peace WILL be with you."

Some people seek peace through improving their circumstances. They think if they buy such and such it will solve their problems and maybe that includes getting an education or getting the right job so you'll have the right opportunities, but the end goal is still the same – if I can get more stuff, or better stuff, then my life will be good, and I will have peace.

There's nothing wrong with trying to improve your position in life, there's nothing wrong with trying to get to the point of having a decent car or house or being able to buy your child nice shoes. And you know what? It's true, the more money you make, typically, the more peace you have – to a point. Because then you also have to worry about where all your money is going, how to keep as much of it as possible for later, and you have to take care of all that stuff you bought. Rich people still have problems – lots of them, and you can read about them all over the Internet and headlines.

On the other hand, Proverbs 15:17 says:

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, Than a fatted calf with hatred.

In other words – it's better to be eating ramen noodles with your honey than eating out at the best restaurants with someone you're just co-existing with. Money can buy you stuff, but it can't always buy you peace.

Ecclesiastes 4:6 makes a similar point: *Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.*

Take half as much stuff without the worry and stress and be content, since the Bible also reminds us in several places that you came into the world naked and empty handed and that's how you're going to leave. You can't take anything with you and the stuff you get can't give any you peace after you're dead. In fact, depending on how much you leave behind, you might be causing a whole lot of fussing and fighting over who gets what.

And while we're on the subject of fighting, let's talk about those who pursue peace through politics. We're seeing what a mess that can be right now as we watch everything unfold regarding Syria. No one wants to get involved in another war, and yet you can't deny that it's evil to unleash chemical weapons. So what do you do? There aren't any easy answers.

But the Bible tells us in 1 Timothy to pray for our leaders. Turn there with me.

1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and **peaceable** life in all godliness and reverence. 3 For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all...

Regardless of whatever other steps we take for political peace, the first step we should take is to pray. And as we do, we should reap a benefit – a quiet and peaceable life. We don't have a bunch of wars and fights going on because everyone is so busy treating one another like Jesus, do we? No, we have war because people are rejecting Jesus. Ultimately, war won't stop until everyone starts obeying the great commandment – to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. Until then, we'll have to find a way to find peace, and be peaceful in the middle of difficult times.

Jeremiah had similar instruction for the Jews who were being held captive in Babylon some five hundred years before Jesus came. He relayed God's message to them that they should "seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace." (Jer 29:7)

The message is the same as that found in Timothy – contribute to the peace of the government and you will have peace yourself, but first and foremost, pray.

That is true in our personal relationships as well – we should seek peace whenever possible in our daily life. Jesus taught on the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:9):

"Blessed *are* the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God."

And turn with me over to Romans 12

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live **peaceably** with all men. 19 Beloved, do not

avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, “*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*” says the Lord. 20 Therefore

*“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
If he is thirsty, give him a drink;
For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”*

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

God wants us to initiate peace, *even if others don't show any toward us*. Now, that doesn't go over so well in a world that is all obsessed with the tough guy or the professional woman. Being gentle and being forgiving, pursuing peace isn't often looked up to in our day and age. But look at the condition of the world around us – how is everything working out? Would you say we're experiencing much peace? Maybe a little humility, maybe a little forgiveness, maybe a few apologies would do a whole lot of good.

Maybe we really should receive this peace that Jesus offers and then show it to others.

One last verse I want to share with you before we move on is one of my favorites, a verse I have clung to and prayed for myself many times when I wasn't sure what was going on in life. It's Isaiah 26:3

*“You will keep him in perfect **peace**
Whose mind is stayed on You,
Because he trusts in You.”*

The Hebrew word for peace, as some of you know, is Shalom, and when Isaiah says “You will keep him in perfect peace” the literal rendering is shalom, shalom.

Now, I love Shalom because, for one, it's a fun word to say. Shalom is one of those concepts that the more you understand it, the more you appreciate it. When most people think of peace, they think of the absence of conflict, but there's more to shalom than that. Shalom is also the state of fullness, completeness – everything is as it was always meant to be. Shalom was the world in the Garden of Eden before the Fall. Shalom is what Jesus brings at the end of time when everything is made right. We have a chunk of it now, but it's only going to get better.

Think of it like a seed, when you come to Jesus He plants the seed of peace in you – you have it, it's in you, but it's going to keep growing and growing over time until it finally buds and produces fruit for all of eternity.

And remember Jesus said it's a gift – “My peace I *give* to you.” Jesus gives a lot of other stuff too, He speaks in other places of giving us His joy, He's already spoken of giving us the Holy Spirit – there is much to receive in Jesus – are you receiving it all? If you are a Christian, this is part of your basic issue – you have it whether you realize it or not.

The problem is, most of us forget about promises like this, we leave them lying around and they build up a good layer of dust on them. That's why it's so important to re-read the Scriptures often and be reminded of what you have in Him. If you lack peace in your life today, look no further than Jesus. Ask Him for your portion of the peace He has promised and ask Him to show you what to do about all the stuff that is stressing you out.

Now, just like paying off a big debt, or losing some weight – the process might take a little while. He might show you some things that have to change in your life – often times it's attitudes that need to be changed, and that takes time - to learn new ways to respond to situations, but if you keep following Him, learning from Him, yielding to Him, that peace that Paul talked about, the one that passes all understanding, can be yours as well.

Turn with me back to John 14 and we'll finish the chapter:

28 You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming *back* to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I.

29 "And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe. 30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. 31 But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here.

If you read the Bible from cover to cover, you notice this is something God does a lot – He tells you the end from the beginning – we also refer to it as prophecy. God tells us something is going to happen before it does so that when it does, we know it was Him. It's proof of His control and knowledge. Nothing takes God by surprise, He directs the flow of history and uses it for His purposes.

Jesus knows what is coming, He's going to be hung on a cross in about 12 hours, but it doesn't mean He's been defeated, it was all part of a very intentional plan, and He was telling the disciples in advance so they would know it wasn't a mistake. Actually, He was doing it all on purpose so that the world would know that He loved the Father.

He was doing it to purchase our peace – to stop the war between us and God. The question we need to ask this morning, is do we have that peace? It's freely offered – if you have never come to Jesus and asked for forgiveness, if you have never asked Him to let you switch sides, then do it now. The answer, if you ask, is yes, but you have to hear it from Him.

And if you have asked, if you would call yourself a Christian, have you forgotten where the most stable, dependable, endless peace can be found? Have you wandered off looking for it in other places, in other people, in other things? I'll give you a hint – if you feel like you might fall out of the sky any minute – you're probably guilty. So remember, if lasting peace could be found anywhere else – at the end of your to-do list, at the bottom of your inbox, in a spotless house, in your bank account, or at some beachfront resort, then Jesus wouldn't be offering you His – He'd be helping you find yours. Why not find your rest in Him today?