

Pastor T.C. Arnold
Pentecost
John 14:27
May 27th, 2012

Jesus said to His disciples, “*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.*” That perhaps begs the question... how does the world give you peace? Honestly, it doesn't. It can't. And that is the point that Jesus is making. The peace of the world cannot compare to the peace of Jesus.

The world's peace comes by way of cease fires during war or treaties between nations. The world's peace can give us a sense of security for our body or a particular feeling of safety. But this is not the peace that Jesus is talking about. The peace that Jesus speaks of is far greater.

Notice that Jesus speaks of how He “leaves” His peace to the disciples. It's a precious gift from the hand of God. And, of course, on this day of Pentecost, we celebrate the Word of God among those gathered there in Jerusalem with these strange tongues of fire falling on their heads – and words – The Word – is on their lips. This is God's peace. Notice how it is different than the world's peace.

Take notice of that day of Pentecost as described in Acts chapter 2. People were all gathered in one place (a noisy – not a peaceful place). And then came a sound like a mighty rushing wind and it filled the entire place they were all sitting (a noisy – not a peaceful place). They began to speak in different tongues – the Spirit gave the utterance (a noisy – not a peaceful place). There were those who were bewildered, those from many different nations listed in the text, those who were perplexed and asking, “What does this mean?” The enemies of the church were mocking those who were speaking in different languages and calling them drunkards.

Peter took the opportunity to speak, to stand before them and give a sermon – to speak the Word of God. The Word brought peace – true peace. Words that Peter quoted from the prophet Joel, for example, “*And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*”

Confirmation class of 2012, parents, family and friends, understand the peace of God. This peace is not the world's peace. The world's peace is predicated upon how you feel – the calmness that you experience. God's peace doesn't depend on how you feel. God's peace grants you blessing and assurance for your heart, your mind and your soul. What does that mean?

It means this... kids, you may be anxious about high school, activities, you may be stressed over summer plans or even the expectations your parents have for you. Parents, you may be unsure about many things that life has yet to throw at you – you know how things can get. Having God's peace does not mean that you will know an anxiety or stress-free life. I wish it did, but it doesn't. Having God's peace is having God's gift of assurance that the most important part of your life – your life eternal – is made sure by the washing and regeneration that came by Jesus' precious work on the cross.

Confirmation class, you are making the pledge of faith before your parents and your Lord that they made in your place at your Baptism. This is a day of fulfillment of God's peace for you. The words of faith you will confess in just a few moments were the same words your parents and sponsors spoke when the Holy Spirit came upon you in the water and the Word.

That's why your baptism (which you don't remember because you were too small) and your confirmation are "connected" together. Water and the Spirit years ago... and today, with each time you come to the table... the very body and blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins.

I have boasted about this class – a large class – to others before (not just because my firstborn is being confirmed today). I'm going to do it one more time. I'm proud of your commitment through these years of instruction. A lot was required of you – and you did it. You did it well. I'm proud. Parents, you should be proud too. I know you are. And parents, proudly bring your confirmand back to the table of the Lord. This is not the first and last time they are to receive the sacrament – but rather – the first of many. None of these kids can drive yet. You are going to have to bring them. Parents and sponsors, bring your children, your God-children to church. Make this time of receiving God's peace and life a habit.

The peace that Christ Jesus gives is security and assurance of heaven. The peace of mind, heart and soul comes in a blessed food that comes from the cross of Jesus right to the table you find yourself at today. The peace of God is "left" to you by Jesus – granted to you by the Holy Spirit – fed to you in life-giving bread and wine – His body and blood. You have the peace of God – in Christ – in "not so" peaceful times. It's not the world's peace – and our hearts may be anxious with all that this world has before us – but it is the Lord's peace that you have.

And yet there is more to the verse that serves as the sermon text for today. He then says, "*Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*" It's peace that God gives to our hearts – even in the midst of our fears. For the disciples that would be loneliness, because, before too long, Jesus would be crucified, rise to life, and then eventually ascend to heaven. But they have nothing to fear. The Lord is still with them. For this very reason Pentecost is important to the church. On this day we know our Lord remains with His church and never leaves her.

Confirmation class, when you graduate from high school or college one day, I want you to realize, your education in life does not end there. It's only getting started. This day is not graduation day. And it is not the end of your Christian education, your Christian life, and how Christ will continue to grow you as a person. The Holy Spirit will continually be at work on you. Grow in this place with our Lord and lean on Him. I promise you, class, you will need Him. I promise you, you will have struggles and failures. Life only gets harder. And there is no better time than now to grow in your faith and the peace that only Christ Jesus in His Word and Sacrament can give.

The world will never be a peaceful place – not as long as there is sin. The world's peace is fleeting. But God's peace endures forever. Which is the better peace? You got it, the Lord's. It's yours in Christ Jesus and He grants it to you. There is no greater gift. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.