

**+ John 14:23-29 + “Jesus Lives” Means Peace + 6th Sunday of Easter + 5 May 2013 +**

Everyone wants it, but nobody has it. At least, that's what it seems. There's just no peace anywhere. No peace in our homes—phone ringing off the hook, text messages flying back and forth, schedules filled to overflowing, bills to pay, stress and tension, and barely enough time to eat and sleep and maybe see each other in passing. No peace in our jobs—downsizing and budget cuts, increasing workloads and diminishing pay, tasks and responsibilities you really don't want. No peace in our world—wars and rumors of wars that seem to never end, natural disasters, economic uncertainty, political uncertainty, the breakdown of the family, the general acceptance of immorality of every kind, the rejection of God's Word and will, increasing attacks against those who hold Biblical views of morality and life and marriage, and increasing difficulty to be a confessional Christian.

You'd almost think Christians would lack peace more than anyone else. How can you be a Christian today and not feel at least some pressure on your faith in Christ and his Word? How can you as a Christian have peace when life can get so difficult? How can you as a Christian have peace when so much tries to grab your attention and take away your focus?

This morning Jesus comes to you and me, and he gives us peace. He's going to show us where we can find it and how we can get it. Then we'll see what kind of peace it is and what it's not. I pray that when you leave church today and head back out into our peaceless world that you'll go out with these words—**“JESUS LIVES” MEANS PEACE.**

Since Easter Sunday we've spent considerable time pondering the endless beauty of those two simple words—“Jesus lives”. Like turning a diamond in the light, we've seen the bright array of beautiful blessings that come to us and impact our lives because “Jesus lives”. Yet those same words put us and every other human being at a fork in this road of life. Do you follow the living Jesus or do you not? Do you follow the road that leads to peace or the road to destruction?

Jesus explains that fork in the road. **“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching...He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.”** Sounds rather simple, doesn't it? Either you follow the living Jesus or you don't. There is no middle ground. There is no compromise, no sitting on the fence. Either you love Jesus or you don't, but what does loving Jesus have to do with finding peace in this peaceless world?

Jesus attaches a promise of peace for those who love him and who remain faithful to his teaching. **“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”** Imagine that! Jesus promises the love of his heavenly Father to those who hear and believe his Word. This is not an angry God demanding obedience or death, but a loving, living God who promises to dwell in those who remain faithful to his Word, even as they live their lives and faithfully proclaim that Word out in this hostile world. That's a promise of peace based on the love of Christ our living Savior, peace that lasts for eternity.

The alternative has no such promise and therefore no such peace. **“He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.”** Sadly that's what each and every one of us is by nature. By nature, every single one of us from the youngest infant to the oldest adult is naturally inclined to take the other route at that fork in the road. By nature, you and I do not love Jesus and do not want to obey his teaching. That's the sinful nature inside you that wants to ruin your eternity and shatter your peace in Jesus. That sinful nature inside of you constantly works against you to turn your attention away from the living Christ and his Word. Your sinful nature wants you to hide your light from shining and to quietly tuck away that teaching of God's Word that just might offend your friend, your co-worker, your neighbor, your relative. Why not save it for a more convenient time, and instead go along with whatever blind temptation is exciting at the moment?

Your sinful nature has an ally in its attempts to rob you of real, lasting peace. You live in a sinful world where the very idea of absolute truth is seen as old-fashioned and irrelevant, if it even exists, where being a confessional Christian is not only out-of-touch, but unpopular and deserving of intolerance and ridicule. You live in a sinful world that hates the true message of a living Jesus and therefore all who stand on the Word of God. In the end, it wants you to cave in. Just go along with everyone else or face more pressure.

Now Jesus promises peace to you and me, but for us to actually get there, to actually find peace, we're going to need some help. With a sinful nature attacking from within and the sinful world attacking from without, we're going to need some heaven-sent help. If you and I don't have that kind of help, there's no way we're going to have real peace now or ever.

***“But the Helper, 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.”*** Help is on the way. It was on the way for Jesus’ troubled disciples when he first spoke these words, and help is on the way for embattled 21st century Christians. What kind of help is coming?

In Greek, the word literally means “the One who is always going to be by your side”. Our English translations have a tough time saying that with one word, because it has the idea of an advocate, a mediator, a counselor, an encourager, and a comforter. In fact, one language in Central Africa translates the word as “the one who falls down beside you”, that if he found you hurt on the side of a road, he wouldn’t hesitate to kneel down in the mud to help and care for you.

Yet it’s that kind of Helper that Jesus sends from heaven to bring you peace. The Holy Spirit doesn’t come through a dream or a thunderstorm or indigestion. Jesus sends that Helper to you through his holy Word, the same Good News he proclaimed so long ago. He sends you that Helper to kneel down in the mud and the muck with the healing balm of the living Jesus to help you when you’re battered and bloodied and feeling broken.

Through that Word, the Holy Spirit teaches you all things and helps you to remember what Jesus taught and what he did. Through that Word, the Holy Spirit gives you a firm foundation that not even Satan and all his hellish allies can destroy. Through that Word, the Holy Spirit helps you to grow in knowledge so you can give a reason for the hope that you have, so you can give an answer that faithfully shares God’s Word and gives him glory. Through that Word, the Holy Spirit strengthens your faith and gives you confidence in the living Jesus so you can hold on to that peace in Jesus.

Through that Word, the Holy Spirit helps you to remember how Jesus fulfilled every one of his promises and continues to fulfill them even today—forgiveness for the guilt of all your sin, even for those times when you’ve caved in to temptation or peer pressure, confidence in the reality of eternal life in heaven, purpose for your life as a beloved child of God, certainty that the almighty and gracious God is in control of all things no matter what.

That heaven-sent Helper also helps you find real peace through the Word of God as you read this promise of Jesus. ***“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.”***

These clear words seem almost too simple, too easy to dismiss, but think about when Jesus was speaking them to his disciples. The next day would be the most violent in Jesus’ earthly life and the most heart-wrenching for his disciples. Jesus would suffer excruciating pain being nailed to a cross and enduring the rejection of both those for whom he came to die and his own heavenly Father. The disciples would go into fearful hiding behind locked doors, but Jesus still promised them his peace, peace he would give them after his resurrection.

Jesus’ peace is unlike any other peace in the world. It doesn’t depend on treaties or agreements or fragile relations between warring countries or tense tempers. His peace isn’t the kind that’s given if you give something back in return. His peace isn’t based off of some twisted view of “tolerance” that pressures people into getting along. No, Jesus gives his peace away freely, willingly, almost recklessly. With that peace, Jesus calms our hearts. This peace comes from the nail-pierced hands of a living, loving Savior who has already endured all our temptations and the opposition of our world.

***“Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*** This peace that Jesus promises is lasting peace guaranteed with his blood on a cross and with the emptiness of his own tomb. We need that kind of peace because there are times when it seems like Jesus isn’t there or it’s hard to see him through all the pain and difficulty and opposition. It was the same way for the disciples who saw their Lord ascend into heaven and disappear from sight. For us, it’s hard to see Jesus when we’re beneath the cross that comes with following our living Savior. It’s too easy to focus on the mud and the pain and the pressure, but Jesus’ peace transcends all that.

You see, Jesus promises, ***“I am going away and I am coming back to you.”*** That peace strengthens our hearts and lifts our eyes heavenward longing for the day when Christ will return. That peace calms our lives in our busy homes. That peace calms our minds at our stressful jobs. That peace calms and strengthens our troubled hearts for the difficult journey through this hostile world, but it’s peace that lasts, peace that’s real,

peace we will enjoy with our living Jesus in our heavenly home someday. That peace we're going to find anywhere else, yet it's peace we have because Jesus lives. Amen.