

**SERMON**  
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**Spiritual Practices: Experiencing Peace (Lent 1)**

**February 18, 2018**

***John 14:25-27***

We have entered the Season of Lent. It is the beginning of a journey. We know that the end of the journey is not really at the Crucifixion of Jesus; we know that the journey is really one that ends in hope – the hope that comes with the resurrection. And yet, the Christian Church traditionally calls us during Lent to walk with Jesus to the Cross. It is often seen as a call of Lament. A call to sacrifice things that we particularly enjoy. A call to journey into the areas of our lives that perhaps we don't often look at. A call of journeying towards transformation.

And, if we choose to accept this call. If we choose to truly accept the invitation for self examination and reflection – then Lent can indeed be a difficult time for some. It might not be an easy journey.

But Jesus knew this too. In the hours before the final Passover, when Jesus knew that the time was close for him to leave the world, he knew that the disciples would face a difficult journey, and he comforts them with these words that we read in John 14: 25-27:

*<sup>25</sup> "All this I have spoken while still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Advocate, 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. <sup>27</sup> 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."* (John 14:25-27)

My peace I give to you. What did Jesus mean when he said those words. Jesus talked about peace as if it is a gift. It is His peace, that he gives us. And, it is a peace that is different from the world.

We all need peace, particularly as we are still in shock from the recent tragic school shooting in the US. But what do we really understand as peace?

Is peace just the opposite from war or violence?

Is peace just an absence of any trouble or problem?

Is peace just an atmosphere of quietness or serenity?

That's what the world seems to define as Peace. But when we look at what Jesus says to his disciples in his final days, this is not what true peace is all about. Jesus makes it clear that only in Jesus can we find true peace.

He says, “peace **I leave** with you...” – meaning, He is the SOURCE of peace.

He says, “**my** peace I give you...” – meaning, He is the GIVER of peace.

He says, “I do not give to you as the world gives..” – meaning only in Jesus can we find true peace – it is something that the world does not have to give. It has nothing to do with the physical noise of our surroundings or what is happening in our world today.

It is no wonder that Paul’s letter to the Philippians describes this Peace as

*“far beyond human understanding” (Philippians 4:7)*

Jesus’ disciples really needed to know about Jesus’ peace. They were about to face the greatest shock of their lives – Jesus would soon be arrested and crucified. They would be left on their own, for the first time... without a teacher, a guide, someone whom they have depended upon for 3 years. They needed to understand – just as we need to understand today – that God’s presence and Peace is always with us through the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, the Helper. It doesn’t matter what the disciples would have to face in the days ahead, it doesn’t matter what this world may throw at us – we need not be afraid.

*“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Do not be afraid.”*

We need to learn to LET GO and LET GOD. Peace is not a product of the circumstances; it is a product of God! It is a GIFT.

Peace is not something we can earn through our hard work and good deeds. It is not something that we earn by making sacrifices during Lent. Peace is only something that we can experience when we truly learn to LET GO and LET GOD into our lives. In our society today, we try to control every situation. We try to manage the problems ourselves. But the growing statistics of stress, depression, anxiety, and mental illness are enormous.

There is this interesting poem about two boxes by Arielle Perkins

*I have in my hands two boxes, which God gave me to hold  
He said, "Put all your sorrows in the black, and all your joys in the gold."  
I heeded his words, and in the two boxes, both my joys and sorrows I store  
But though the gold became heavier each day, the black was as light as before.  
With curiosity, I opened the black box. I wanted to find out why  
And I saw, in the base of the box, a hole which my sorrows had fallen out by.*

*I showed the hole to God, and mused aloud, "I wonder where my sorrows could be."  
God smiled a gentle smile at me. "My child, they're all here with me."  
I asked, "God, why give me the boxes, Why the gold, and the black with the hole?"  
"My child, the gold is for you to count your blessings, the black is for you to let go."*

We can only really experience the peace that Jesus promised, when we learn to let go, and we begin to accept God's divine love and grace for us. It is not a promise to change the situation, or a promise that there will be no more difficulties. But it is a promise that we may experience unconditional love and peace that transcends all understanding. It is a promise that we do not need to be afraid.

As you enter this season of Lent, I encourage you to seek out Divine Peace. In a moment, we will have a time of liturgical silence – an intentional provision of space within which we can experience the Spirit of God. In that time, I encourage you to meditate on Jesus' promise of Peace. If you're worried about some things, anxious or disturbed, and you need peace in your heart – take this time to accept God's unconditional love, and God's gift of peace. If you know that you are holding onto anything that is standing in the way of experiencing the Peace, then you may want to let it go by coming forward to light a candle as a symbol of Letting go and Letting God. There are candle stations at the front and two at the back. Nate will quietly play, and the words are on the screen if you want to join quietly in the singing. Take your time.

MV#95: How deep the peace, the confidence of those whose wrongs are forgiven  
How deep the peace, the confidence of those whose hearts are healed.

### **Passing the Peace of Christ**

Psalm 29:11:

"The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace."

Today, as we pass the peace to each other, let us do so not as a greeting, but as an intentional blessing.

We will pass the peace in liturgical silence.

I encourage you to use gestures as you complete this ancient ritual: to hold the hand, or hands, of a brother or sister in our church family. To make eye contact. And if you feel comfortable, when you let go of hands, place your hand on your own heart. Feel free to move around the sanctuary to bless different member of your church family with peace – there will be words on the screen to join in singing as we pass our blessing of peace to each other.

Jesus said: “My peace I give you!” (John 14:27)