

Grace to you, and peace, from our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

SERMON THEME: "Jesus' Promise of Peace"

SERMON TEXT: John 14:25-27 (Read first)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The words we have just heard take us back to the Thursday evening preceding the day Jesus died. John's account of the closing hours of Christ's life is quite unlike that of Matthew, Mark and Luke. It is much more detailed, more heartfelt, and focuses not so much on the events of the evening, but on the words Jesus spoke. He was preparing His disciples for both the tragic hour of His death, and for a life of ministry following His glorious resurrection! Some of the most profound and memorable passages in all of Scripture are found in the immediate context, chapters 13-17. John here records the words Jesus spoke between the hours He entered the Upper Room, where they are now, and then His walk across the Kidron Valley to the Garden of Gethsemane where Judas betrayed his Lord with the kiss of death.

Our Lord knew His hour had come, the completion of His work on earth, His destiny as true man. Now He must leave the world and his life in the flesh, in which He had given His whole life as a living sacrifice! His work of redeeming souls lost to sin was about to be completed. His glorification would come through death, wonderfully revealed by an open tomb and the announcement by the angel, "He is not here; He is risen!"

But His disciples, despite the clear words of Jesus here and earlier, did not understand. They were troubled when Jesus told them that one of them would betray Him. They did not fully grasp what He meant when He said He was "going away". Earlier, of course, He had told them He would die and rise again on the third day, words that went right over their heads. Later, when Jesus is arrested in the Garden and led away, they become fearful—a fact proven by Peter's three-time denial of even knowing Jesus.

Then, of course, came the mock trial, the awful trek to

Golgotha, the nailing of Jesus to the cross, His six hours of agony and shame, and finally His last words, "It is finished." The disciples had lost their Leader. It surely seemed that all He had tried to accomplish was lost!

To say at this point that they were very troubled is no doubt an understatement. Now, also, another of their own is dead, Judas Iscariot, who had committed suicide. Little more is said of the Eleven until after the resurrection and Jesus' unexpected appearance to them, again in the Upper Room. We can almost see them there, cowering in fear, confused, hurting, feeling alone, and not knowing what to do next.

If only they had understood when Jesus had earlier tried to prepare them for His death! If only they had believed His loving words! "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." Jesus knew the horror that was coming the next day. And He knew the outcome. The Son of God would rise from the grave victorious! He would conquer death not just for Himself, but for all time for all who would believe! The destructive and damning power of evil would be forever overcome! Defeat would be turned into victory, turning the "wages of sin" into the reward of eternal life! And from that point forward everyone joined with Him in Holy Baptism would be raised to "walk in the newness of life"! All of this meant the true child of God could enjoy a heavenly peace even before the end of time!

"Jesus' Promise of Peace", had it been taken to heart before the crucifixion, should have filled the disciples with hope and joyful anticipation, with a foretaste of a future glory! Instead, because they didn't fully grasp what He was saying—didn't believe His plain words—they suffered the pain of loss, and feared for their own well-being!

To the present: nothing has changed! Through a living faith in this same Jesus who died and rose again for our justification *we are His disciples today*. For two thousand years now His promise, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you..." has been made to the faithful! And it will stand until the trumpet sounds! We have an advantage over the original Twelve. We

have seen the fulfillment of God's promise made to the devil in Genesis 3 that Jesus would crush him! We know the grave is quite temporary! And we know a better life awaits us!

We have the testimony of the "chief of sinners" and the God-breathed words of Scripture also promising, "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your hearts that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9, 10); saved from the consequences of sin, death and an everlasting hell! So "Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." The Spirit of the living Christ, through Paul, makes the promise of peace even more profound when He adds that no power in all creation "will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39)!

Is there one among us who is living in fear today? We are far removed from the first century A.D., yet unbelief, confusion, and fear abound all across the globe. Those who don't believe in the one, true God, and those who do, are alike caught up in the uncertainty of these latter days. For unbelievers it may be fear of war—even a nuclear holocaust—terrorism, political upheaval, financial ruin, hunger, disease, unemployment, old age, global warming, loss of power and fame, and certainly death itself—all of which can lead to a sense of utter hopelessness and despair. As Scripture tells us, "There is no peace...for the wicked" (Isaiah 48:22), that is, the one who refuses to put his trust in Christ!

We Christians face most of the same concerns, but we see something even more sinister and foreboding: the decline of morality in our own Country and the world. Murder, including abortion, the acceptance of homosexuality as a viable lifestyle, even by some calling themselves Christians, greed, ineptitude and corruption in government, and policies that favor the underserving at the expense of citizens who obey the laws. Throughout Christendom orthodox churches are in decline, in great part because our youth favor the way of the world or have gone to churches that satisfy the flesh rather than nurture the soul.

The red flag is up: watch out! The devil may be tempting us to ignore Jesus' comforting words, and worry, become confused, depressed, maybe even lose faith. *The last thing satan wants is for us to take to heart the precious words of our text, Jesus'*

**promise of peace! The devil does not want us to have peace!
Who are we going to listen to?**

We have heard repeatedly that because Jesus was raised from the dead, the power of the grave has been cancelled. Through faith in Him we too will come back to a life in glory after we die! That, for us, removes the greatest fear. But how does that help us face problems and worries today? We need to remember, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Our Lord is alive and no less a miracle worker than when He lived among men. "With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26)! It is when we believe that He will answer our prayers in time of trouble, that help will come. "Whatever you ask in My name, I will do it that the Father may be glorified in the Son," He promised (14:13). And when He keeps His promise, His gift of peace follows!

Now, let's go even deeper. We need to understand the nature of the peace Jesus promises. The word He uses, *eirana*, means out of danger; harmony, freedom from anxiety; a state of reconciliation; contentment. This is a deep, inner peace. In other words, peace with God! The world (v. 27) cannot give this kind of peace. Every problem faced by mankind has a common root cause: SIN. To escape the danger of hell or the fear of death, the sin must be removed! To be in harmony with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to be reconciled to Him, there cannot be any unconfessed sin. So no matter what may trouble you this morning, you CAN have peace, if you will, *from the heart*, repent of sin and put your trust for all matters of faith and life completely in Jesus! Love Him! Obey Him! And expect Him to make good on His promise of peace!

As you might have guessed, the ultimate way to peace comes to us through forgiveness! Jesus died and rose again so we could be forgiven our sins and have blessed peace! When our black hearts are made whiter than snow, when the scales of sin are removed from our eyes, when our first love is Almighty God, then we have the peace Jesus promises! All hell may break loose in our personal lives, or in this world, but if the living Christ is in us and our hearts are pure, we will have divine peace, and this peace will carry us through to the beginning of life in heaven! Remember, only one thing keeps us out of heaven: Sin.

When the sin is forgiven, washed away by the blood of the Lamb, already now we can have true, heavenly peace! This is the good news our heavenly Father has sent the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, to teach us in this sacred hour. At the heart of "Jesus' Promise of Peace" is God's steadfast love for each and every one of us; His amazing grace and abundant mercy!

**If you don't, right now, have the peace Jesus promises, ask Him to forgive you and come into your heart! Then, and only then, will you know what He meant when He said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you..." Let the peace of Christ overcome your troubles and fears, and you will have a little foretaste of the glory soon to come!
In Jesus' name, Amen.**

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding will keep your hearts and minds through a living faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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