

The peace and the presence * John 14:27

March 17, 2020 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

Hello everyone – so glad that you could be here today. COVID-19 has made a lot of things change, but there is one constant, and that’s our faithful God. So I’m going to do my best to keep pointing you to Him however I can.

We’re not going to be meeting for the next three weeks and so my first thought as to how to build your up was to just post a standard sermon on Sunday. But then I got to thinking – people often tell me at Bible study how much they enjoy getting filled up mid-week – and given that it’s on the internet, maybe a few shorter messages would be better.

So, my intention is to post messages for you Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays to carry you through the week and to encourage you as we walk this road together. And speaking of that, I’ll leave the comments open so that maybe we can have a bit of discussion down below.

Today, the passage that I want to look at with you is actually a sister passage to the one that we looked at on Sunday. On Sunday, we heard Jesus say “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me” (John 14:1 NIV). That’s John 14:1.

Now here in John 14:27, Jesus says to His troubled disciples:

27 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 14:27 NIV).

You can hear the echo there, can’t you?

These disciples are in a very difficult time. Everything’s up in the air – things constantly changing – and they’re in very real danger. (Sounds familiar, doesn’t it?)

And Jesus says to them – “Don’t be overwhelmed by your circumstances, but instead, embrace the peace that I give.”

Remind yourself that the God who clothes the lilies and feeds the sparrows will do the same for you and that you’re even more precious to Him than they are.

Renew your faith in the One who heals the sick and raises the dead and gives sight to the blind and calms the storm.

Root yourself in the reality that there is an eternal home waiting for you, built and secured by Jesus Himself... and let that form a protective barrier around your heart.

As Colossians 3:15 says – *Allow* the peace of Christ to rule in your hearts. You gotta let it.

Jesus gives it to us; we need to let it rule in our hearts.

And notice what else Jesus says about this peace –

27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.

Now you're going to think I'm a big nerd for knowing this, but I got thinking about Jesus' time period and remembered something that one of His contemporaries said.

There was a Roman historian named Tacitus who once described the Roman empire like this:
"They make a desert and they call it peace."

Rome was famous for the 'Pax romana' – that is, a great period of peace in the world – but it's only because they went out and eliminated every threat. It was only peace because there was no danger.

And I think that that's the kind of peace that the world gives.

Peace to some is the absence of danger, when everything is good, when you're sitting by the beach with a margarita in your hand and a big straw hat on your head.

But then what happens when things go wrong? When the clouds come in?

That's where Jesus' peace comes in. The peace that Jesus gives is not the absence of trouble but the presence of God.

The verse immediately before this one – v. 26 – says that God is with us in thru the Holy Spirit in the midst of trouble to remind us of the power and promises of God – and that should really give us a deep sense of peace, even the storm is whirling around us.

We can have peace in our hearts in the midst of this chaos because the sovereign God of the universe, who makes worlds with a word and who raises the dead, is with us.

It's been interesting the last few days, watching the kids around the house. I'm doing my work wherever I can (and usually trying to get away from the noise they're making) and there's always this gradual drift where they sooner or later find themselves where I am. I'll work upstairs in my office. Fifteen minutes later, they're upstairs. I go downstairs to work in the kitchen, twenty minutes later, they're back down stairs. They want to be where I am. And I think it's because they subconsciously feel safer when their Father is around.

And that's how this passage works too. Our Father is with us, every moment of the day, to give us peace and strength to carry on. We need to LET that peace RULE in our hearts. We need to take what we know about God's power and faithfulness and apply that to all that concerns us and let that give us confident assurance in our everyday.

The peace that Jesus gives does not mean the absence of trouble, but it does mean the presence of God. Trouble is inevitable, whether it's SARS or H1N1 or COVID-19; but the God who loves us so much that He gave His only Son to reconcile us to Him is with us every step of the way.

So, as Jesus says - Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid [for the God of peace is with us].

Stay well. Trust God. And remember – prayer and precaution, not panic.