

SLIDE 1 – BULLETIN PICTURE

Where We Find Peace
John 14:15-27
West Valley Presbyterian, May 5, 2024

We finished Jesus' resurrection appearances in the book of John last Sunday; and today, we're going to go backward in John, back to what's often called the Farewell Discourses. That's Chapters 14, 15, 16 and 17. Why should we go backwards? Well, here's why. John's gospel is different from the other three, because he emphasizes more of what Jesus said, and doesn't include as much of what Jesus did. And that's especially true of John's account of the Last Supper. Matthew, Mark and Luke each have one chapter about the Last Supper and Jesus' arrest. But John has 5 chapters devoted to just the Last Supper: 1 chapter of actions and conversation; 3 more chapters just of Jesus speaking; and a fifth chapter of Jesus' prayer for himself, his disciples, and for all who will come after them.

Most of what Jesus said in Chapters 14, 15 and 16 was difficult for the disciples to make sense of, because he's talking about the inner life of God. That is not something that the disciples were able to know much about. Of course not. The disciples were limited human beings, just as we are. They haven't yet seen the resurrected Jesus, so they don't quite get the full extent of who Jesus is. They don't see Jesus as fully God until after the resurrection. Pre-resurrection, they say things like, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" What Jesus says here about the inner nature of the Triune God is confusing to them. Understandably. How can limited humans know anything about the inner life of an infinite God without the aid of the Holy Spirit? who didn't come until after Jesus' resurrection?

We have the advantage of knowing that Jesus was raised from the dead, and that he is now and always has been fully God. Plus we also have the advantage of the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church. It's easier to understand now what Jesus says in Chapters 14-16, since we read them in the light of Easter. So that's why we're going to spend some time, after Easter, looking at these chapters. I hope we will learn more about who God is, who we are, and what we can become.

SLIDES 2- 13

Our text today is from John 14:15-27. Hear now the word of God as it comes to us from the gospel of John.

"If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."

Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"

Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

"All this I have spoken while still with you. 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. 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."

Here ends the reading of God's holy word. Join me in saying, Thanks be to God.

SLIDE 14

That last verse – 27 – is one of my most favorite verses: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid." I love this verse because I get rattled by things, so I need to keep it close within my soul. What about you? Like for instance, last Monday I went to Bellevue (near Seattle) to help with my dad's care, since my sister is out of town. She very kindly left me her car to drive – an almost-new Prius. The first night, I drove it to the grocery store. All was well. Until I tried to back out of the parking lot! I could NOT get that car to go into reverse! I was definitely rattled! So I prayed about it; and this verse came to mind. Just saying it to myself - "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your heart be troubled, and do not be afraid" - helped me to calm down. And once I had calmed down, it occurred to me that perhaps I could find a Google video on my phone on how to put a 2023 Prius into reverse. Sure enough, there was. The video showed me exactly how to tap the gearshift, and there was no further trouble.

Of course, that was a VERY trivial example of finding peace in an individual life. What about peace in the world? There is SO much need for that; and it seems like peace is less and less possible as all the fighting continues. Ukraine is still being attacked; Israel and Hamas are still fighting in densely populated Gaza; and those are just the wars we hear about. There are also wars going on in Syria, Morocco, Yemen, Cyprus, Western Sahara, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and many other countries. Is there ever going to be peace? We pray for peace in the Prayers of the People; and I'm guessing that most of us pray for peace in our personal prayers as well. And guess what, the world does not give us peace. Human sinfulness affects everyone, everywhere. So it's a really good thing that Jesus does not give us peace as the world gives – because the world can't give it.

Where does the peace come from that Jesus gives? The short answer is, Jesus' peace comes from the inner being of the triune God. That's what the point of verses 15-26 are about.

Okay, so what does the Trinity have to do with peace? Isn't the Trinity just some abstract theological concept that we don't have to worry about? Well, it's true that the Trinity is hard for us to

think about. We are limited creatures, living in one point in time, on one planet, in one solar system. How can we possibly understand the fullness of God's inner being, who created all things out of nothing, including Time itself? But Jesus wants us to understand what we can about God's inner nature, because it's only from God that peace can come.

SLIDES 15-16

Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as being an advocate, and as the Spirit of truth. In verse 16 he says, "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth." The Spirit lives with them now, and later on, will live in them, as Jesus says in v. 17: "But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." What does Jesus mean about the Spirit being an Advocate? Well, in legal language today, an advocate is like a defense attorney. An advocate will listen to you, speak for you, and defend you. Jesus did this for us when he was on earth with us; and once he's returned to God the Father, the Holy Spirit will be in us, representing God to us, and representing us to God.

SLIDE 17

In verse 25, for instance, Jesus says, "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." Jesus used legal language to help the disciples understand the inner nature of God, and how we are connected to him.

I'm not a lawyer; I was trained as a chemist. So personally, I find it easier to think of what Jesus is saying about Father, Son and Holy Spirit by using an analogy of the triple point of water. If you heat water, you get steam, right? And if you freeze water, you get ice, right? Well, there exists such a thing as a triple point of water. The triple point is a set temperature and pressure at which liquid water, ice, and steam all coexist at the same time, in a stable equilibrium. Ice and steam are different from liquid water; and yet chemically, they are all the same. That helps me understand Father, Son and Holy Spirit as different, and yet all the same - God.

Okay. But what does our very limited ability to understand anything about the inner being of God, have to do with peace? Well, we are talking about this because Jesus did. Jesus talked at length about how we are connected with God, before he ever mentioned the gift of peace.

There is peace within God's being of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore he is the source of peace. And because God is the source of peace, then that's where we go to find it. Peace comes from God's being of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you," as God the Son who will soon depart from them; "my peace I give you" as God the Holy Spirit, who will come to them after Jesus' resurrection.

So if God is the source and the giver of peace, then peace in the world comes from him. It can come through us, as God's servants, into whatever situation we find ourselves – IF we allow that to

happen. All too often we don't. All too often we would rather be right, than be peacemakers. All too often we want revenge, not peace. We are none of us perfect; we are all of us flawed. Right? Sometimes when I read the news of all the wars and violence, I despair. It just seems sometimes like there will never be peace on this earth as long as there are human beings on it.

But then I remember Jesus saying, "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."

Do you want peace? Then the best thing you can do is to pray for it. In our homes. In our church. In our communities. In our state. In our nation. In our world. When we pray for peace, we are drawing closer to the Source and the Giver of all peace. And then his peace enters into us – a little bit at first, and more and more as time goes on. And perhaps in time God will lead us to act and speak in the ways that do bring about peace. We have been praying for peace individually and also in the Prayers of the People. We should keep it up! The more we pray for peace, the more God's peace becomes our peace. And the more God's peace becomes our peace, the more we may find ourselves acting in peace, for peace. Our small acts of peace may indeed become God's work of peace in the world, wherever we might be. We can make a difference. And it all starts with God, the source and the giver of peace. Let's pray.

O most holy triune God, we are here. You have called us to yourself; and we have come. Help us to open our hearts to you now, we pray, that you may wash away any fear, or worry, or anger, or resentment, or impatience, that you find in us. Renew us with the peace you have given to us through Jesus' sacrificial death. Restore us with the peace that comes only from your inner being. Pour your peace into us as we interact with our families and with one another. And may your peace work through each one of us as we interact with our neighbors, and our leaders, and our governments, and yes, also with our enemies. May peace prevail – your peace. May your peace overcome every division and every hatred. Help us to fear nothing, and to trust in you for everything. For it is in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.