

Gospel: John 14:23-29

As Jesus talks of returning to the Father, he promises to send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who will teach Jesus' followers and remind them of all that Jesus taught. Even more, those in whom God makes a home will experience a peace that overcomes fear.

²³Jesus answered [Judas (not Iscariot),] "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, **and we will come to them and make our home with them.** ²⁴Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

²⁵"I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶**But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.** ²⁷**Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.** ²⁸You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. ²⁹And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe."

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

Resurrection means peace. Easter brings with it a peace the world can't give. Dearest friends, you will search in vain in the world for the kind of peace only the Holy Spirit brings when Jesus is raised and breaks the bonds of death.

When this same Spirit of Jesus takes *you* by the hand and raises you from your grave, you will most certainly know the peace that passes all understanding. Yet even now, in the present moment, this peace is granted to you. Take hold of its promise . . . and its challenge.

Peace does not mean here the absence of noise and turmoil. The Holy Spirit's resurrection peace prevails even when all is chaos in the world around us.

When we were tearing the house apart, my father used to plead with us to "keep it down to a dull roar". He also might accuse us of being what he called "The Big Noise from Winnetka," which is a suburb of Chicago near Lake Michigan where the wind blusters off the lake every day. [It was a big band song from 1938 by Bob Crosby and the Bobcats. In you like jazz, it's worth a listen on YouTube.]

No, the peace that the risen Jesus gives is beyond a temporary outward calm. It is not simply a cease fire from the "big noise" of life. Jesus' shalom is about making life whole again, putting our broken pieces back together. It is an all-embracing peace that floods our very existence making all things new.

Here in John 14, Jesus is giving what amounts to his last will and testament after the Last Supper and before his arrest. He promises that though he will go away, he will still be with them in the power of his Spirit. He calls the Spirit the Advocate, which means

literally someone called to your side to stand by you. (You know, "Stand by me.") This advocate is not only a companion but a teacher that reminds us of Jesus' promises.

So, Jesus' gift of peace is about companionship . . . a companionship that cannot be broken even by death. Can we agree that one of life's most precious gifts is companionship? Is there a treasure any greater than our friends?

In the words of a popular Prince song, "Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to get through this thing called life." Later in the song he adds, "If u don't like the world you're living in, Take a look around u, At least u got friends."

That's one reason for companionship. Getting through life is no small task. And true companionship is the kind of blessing that helps us live with an Easter perspective, the perspective that someone has come to our side.

I have no doubt that many of us come to church today longing for companionship, true companionship. How many times I have been untrue to my friends or insensitive to their struggles makes me ashamed. And so I pray, "Lord, make me a better friend and companion."

But that is the greatest thing about resurrection peace, Jesus' shalom, because in the end it is about sins forgiven. For just as surely as the bonds of death are broken at Easter, so too does forgiveness and reconciliation become our new, and challenging, way of life in the world.

Resurrection means God coming to us and making God's home with us.

AMEN

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