

Reading: John 14v22-31

Theme: The Saviour's Peace

What a chapter John 14 is - full of comfort and encouragement - initially to the 11 disciples, but also to Christians in all ages. I wonder how many of us have found great comfort in the words and truths in this section of John's Gospel. If we have, I encourage you to share those with each other. We are looking at the final area of comfort and encouragement of this passage in v27:

7. Believers have the legacy of the Saviour's peace even in His absence.

This is a precious area of comfort and encouragement as it speaks of Jesus' peace. I'll look at it using the word PEACE as an acrostic to draw out some of the sweetness and preciousness of our Saviour's promise here in v27.

Persons involved in this peace.

Jesus is a few short hours away from His awful sufferings - His betrayal, trial and death. He knew all the horrors He would suffer as He would die bearing our sin and punishment. He was also aware of the troubled hearts and minds of the 11 disciples and He addresses these words to them. Many people in times of trouble, fear and grief have been told glibly "*Don't worry, don't be afraid, it will be all right in the end...*" Often such words can sound hollow!

Jesus' words here are not hollow, empty, meaningless words. They are addressed to His disciples alone and not addressed to all and sundry in Jerusalem, but only to those who loved and followed Him. These words are full of meaning and were said as Jesus was on the threshold of unimaginable suffering. Yet all He has done and said that evening has been to show His love

and care for these pathetic mortals! I use seemingly harsh words because the disciples were worried, concerned, were argumentative, were going to deny and leave Him alone. Yet He would leave and give them His peace.

The word “*leaves*” can be translated “*bequeaths*”. Here Jesus gives His last will and testament, - His peace is left to them, but He also gives it to them as a precious treasure. They are His parting words of blessing to them. Incidentally they were His greeting words after His resurrection – John 20:21 “*Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you!”*”

They are given peace from a man ready to die! What sort of comfort is that? This peace is His peace and He is not a mere man, but God the Son who took a real human body to Himself. He is the promised Messiah spoken of in OT and looked for by the Jews. His reign would be one of peace and prosperity. One of His titles is “*the Prince of peace*” and as a royal sovereign, out of the abundance of His wealth, He gives His peace. This is no false peace, no vain words, but the real thing, the genuine article given by the only source of true peace; given to people like His disciples and also to you and me by the King of heaven. This is something of the persons involved in this peace. Now see:

Extent of this peace.

Peace in the Bible is not merely a ceasing of hostility, but is an active enjoyment of prosperity in that peace, even with one’s former enemies. This peace Jesus speaks of is unchangingly given and is realised, enjoyed to different degrees at different times by us. Consider the world and society around us, in the midst of this coronavirus crisis, yet we still know of wars, hatred, bitterness, between nations, within nations and between

individuals. Yes, people are fearful and anxious in this coronavirus time and it touches even us as believers. This may lead to depressions, anxieties and affect people's general health, well-being and abilities - within themselves and with others as they look for inner peace. Sadly, we know from history of tensions, divisions occurring within churches, between churches and Christians.

Many people are looking for inner peace in many ways, trying to find rest and satisfaction of heart and mind. We are to realise all these things spring from a spoiled relationship with God and that by nature we are enemies of God. Sin has broken mankind's relationship with Him and made us His enemy and He ours. In His sight, no matter how moral we are, we are sinners, fall short of His glory and there is no peace for the wicked says the Lord. Sin spoils relationships, breaks our peace in our own lives, between man and God, God and man, person-to-person and even people with their own selves.

The peace which Jesus gives us is effective on 3 levels - Godward, inward to self and outward to others. When we trust the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, we are justified - our sin is removed and our guilt pardoned and we have, not can or may have, but the moment we believe, **we have peace with God** through faith in Jesus alone. This is an everlasting peace and it is as certain and secure as God's throne. This everlasting peace with God is ours the moment we believe. We may not always recognise it, nor delight in it and sometimes we will wonder if we are even a Christian, for we will have ups and downs, doubts and fears. Yet our peace with God it is a legal declaration in heaven and stands for ever. It doesn't depend on our feelings one little bit, but on God's promise and work. We may not fully enjoy or realise the wonder of our relationship, but it is forever

in place e.g. child and parents - child is always their child, even when on the naughty step and they don't feel loved.

On a personal level we can know **the peace of God**. Often this peace with God, spills over into our lives and we know we are God's child, loved, cared for and know He will never leave or forsake us. We can know this even as things happen which we cannot understand - God knows and works all things together for good and even in our most troubled times we can go to Him in prayer and our hearts can know the peace of God that passes understanding.

Because the Lord has accepted us, we are to accept ourselves and try to be like Jesus. We may still have worries and problems, but are to remember who we are and note Paul's advice in Philippians 4:6-7 "*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*" The peace of God can be known and enjoyed as God's children.

This **peace affects our relationship to others**. We are forgiven, given peace with God (*not because of what we have or haven't done*) and are brought into His family. We are to realise there are others belonging to the same Father and the same family. Yes, we are different, diverse and distinct, but there is to be harmony in our differences, a unity in our diversity and oneness in our distinctness. We are now God's children, who are to love one another as Christ loves us. This peace is to be shown to other believers and now we are no longer boasting, separate isolationists, but belong to Christ's body. In a body there are many differences in its members, but all are one and all are

needed. So, we view each other as such in Christ and pursue peace and unity in a church on the basis of what our Saviour has done for and in us.

This peace is to affect our everyday relationships inside and outside the church, even toward those who dismiss Christianity and us as Christians. Within us there should be a desire to live at peace, to promote peace, to present to them the Prince of peace - by our lives and words, so that they can know this same peace with God. It is not peace at any price, for the truth of God's word is to be maintained and held up - it is not compromise, but the evidence of peace, the peace of truth showing in and through our lives. Primary, gospel truth is more important than peace. No peace is possible with falsehood, deceit or compromise. Let's move on quickly.

Accomplishment of this peace.

Incredibly, that which troubled and grieved the disciples, was going to be that which accomplished this peace. Jesus was going away, going to die, going to glorify His Father in His death. In doing so He would accomplish the way of peace, this very precious peace for them and us. Without Jesus there is no way this peace would be available - Ephesians 2:14 "*For He Himself is our peace*". Our peace with God, our peace of God, our peace with others, our peace within a hostile society were all accomplished by Jesus on the cross. He took our sins, their guilt and their punishment on Himself, to bring us to God, to make us acceptable to God, to turn away God's wrath from us.

Jesus took the enmity, the hatred between man and man away - no distinctives of nationality, skin colour, religious background or class are to be in place as barriers, as reasons for hostility. If we are in Christ, we are all needed, are all one and all saved by

His grace. That grace is to be presented to even those who would oppose Him and His people and so we go on in ways of peace and are to be true peacemakers - pointing people to the Prince of Peace. For He is our peace. There on the cross, God's people see the justly angry God was reconciled, was brought to be at one with them and so they can rejoice in a pardoning God and we may question with the hymn writer "*Who is a pardoning God like Thee, or who has grace so rich and free?*"

Look, marvel and wonder at Calvary! See Jesus smitten, stricken, wounded and punished. What reason was found in Him for this to be happen? None whatsoever! It was done to Him because of us - He is our peace maker; peace was secured for us. On the cross our eternal peace and safety were secured. We are to boast and glory in the crucified Jesus being made our peace.

Contrast of this peace.

This peace is Jesus' peace - safe, secure, real, freely bequeathed and given to all His followers (*as are His love and joy too and 15:9-11*). This peace Jesus gives to us is not as the world gives "*peace*". Many proclaim "*Peace*" when there is no true peace, no hope of peace, no solid ground of peace, or is not theirs to give. Often, they cannot guarantee it. Sometimes a peace occurs, but it is begrudged, it is insincere or false. Sometimes people wish us peace, but it is empty, powerless words. It is good wishes, maybe a true desire, but they have little with which to further or secure this peace.

Jesus' peace is a real peace that is ours even in storms and difficulties. It is a peace that can surround our hearts, flood our hearts even as we go into death. It is a real blessing, a true blessing and not some formal word or wish or parting words.

The peace of Jesus is of such a nature that the world's smiles cannot add to it, nor the world's frowns take away from it.

Many offer peace in this life - through this or that, through various experiences, drugs, possessions or relationships. Yet all are dependent on life and are for time. Jesus' peace is an eternal peace which enriches the true us in both time and eternity. This peace is infinitely more valuable than any peace this world can give. It is given by the Prince of Peace only to His children, it is carried by His grace, it is known and grown in our lives and ends in enjoyment of the fullness of this everlasting peace in heaven. We cannot compare the best peace the world gives to the peace Christ gives, as there is an infinite and glorious difference between them. There is to be:

Experience of this peace.

We have all too briefly looked at this wonderful truth, but don't leave it on the page of your Bible or in your heads. As important as it is to know of this truth, it is much more precious and sweeter to know the truth of this peace worked out, applied in our own lives. Jesus emphasises this. He tells His disciples straightaway after making this promise "*Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid*". We can easily own that these are wonderful truths, but then go and miss the joy, the enjoyment of such truth being worked out in our own lives and experience. Not just feelings only, but a grasping, an understanding and applying of Scripture truths to our lives.

It is so easy to say that such things are fine for sunny days, happy days, but then in our lives we have so many doubts, fears and worries. We are not to let our fears and doubts dominate or dishearten us and diminish our Lord's promises. We are to remember who we are as a Christian and cast all our cares on

Him for He cares for us, He will sustain us. We are not to remain troubled and afraid. This word “*afraid*” is only used here in NT and it carries meaning of “*cowardly, timid, fearful*”.

It is not a false peace, a psychological peace, mind over matter = if I don't mind, it won't matter! Nor is it to be a false religious peace - nice words or thoughts and we say “*There, there*” by using them. This peace begins, becomes possible to know and delight in, only when we have peace with God through the Lord Jesus. It is the peace that can say “*It is well with my soul*” because all our sins have been nailed to His cross and we bear them no more.

Realise that any peace not based on Jesus as our own Saviour (*as He alone is our peace*) is a false peace. This true peace begins when we come as a sinner to Jesus, it spreads through our life as we know sins forgiven and peace with God and it goes on to something of the eternal peace of heaven being known and experienced in all the changing scenes of life. As I close, I want to ask you if you know this peace which Jesus gives? You can do if you love such a Saviour, this glorious Saviour who would comfort and encourage us all to know and experience His peace that He has left and given to us, so that our hearts will know His peace and not be overly troubled nor afraid even in the face of the Coronavirus pandemic and anything else that comes our way.

My prayer is that we would all know the peace that only Jesus can give and it would not only be known, but shown in and through our lives and govern our hearts and all we go through whether good or bad times.