

SERMON EIGHT SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST/ FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: PEACE
"The Gift of Peace" based on Isaiah 55:8-13; John 14:15-27

Rev. Nehemia N.

"Is it possible to have peace?"

Have you ever asked yourself that question?

Maybe years ago when you were a new parent, and your children are crying, running around, making a mess, and filling the house with noise. You're exhausted, and you wonder, *"Will I ever have a moment of peace?"*

Or perhaps you're still asking this question because life feels overwhelming. You're carrying the pressures of life as senior while still caring for your family, trying to faithfully balance both. Maybe you're worn out by the constant noise and busyness that comes with caring for grandchildren, or navigating life with teenagers. Perhaps you're juggling ministry responsibilities along with everything else on your schedule. Or maybe your heart is heavy because of conflict, misunderstandings, or broken relationships that have stolen your sense of calm.

Whatever your situation may be, many of us know what it feels like to long for peace. Not just a quiet house. Not just a free afternoon. But a deep, lasting peace that remains even when life is noisy, uncertain, and chaotic.

Maybe we are coming to church this morning while we feel tired of worrying about the future, about our finances, about the news we read from the world around us. Perhaps, we wish that we had more time to relax, to sit back and have fun, to do the things we enjoy.

When it all gets to be too much we might ask, "Can I just have a little peace?"

Friends in Christ, the world where we are living right now can be a scary place. Watching or reading the news can make us feel like there isn't much good going on

out there. Never ending wars between some countries, act of violence, diseases and virus, natural disasters, severe weather, and death are all too common.

Perhaps it's too difficult to find peace in this broken world. And in the midst of all that is going on externally, we can also feel great internal turmoil - worried, afraid, and agitated. And all of this made us desperate for peace.

And when human feel desperate for peace, unfortunately, some people tend to look for it in the wrong places. As I also mention last week where people find joy through different and wrong substances. Some strive for wealth and power and possessions, thinking those will bring them peace. When things get to be too much, some may use alcohol or drugs to stop thinking and worrying, but those things only bring a temporary and false peace.

Those things are like Band-Aids that mask the symptoms but don't heal the cut.

Thankfully, sisters and brothers in Christ, as believers, we know someone who can bring True Peace within our hearts. We know that there is a Great Power that is bigger than any other powers that we're facing in this beautiful but broken world.

The Bible reminds us of this again and again. The book of Psalms, for example, is full of reminders of The One that can bring True Peace, reminder of a God that loves and cares for all creation. And, of course, we know that because of God's great love for us, God sends Jesus, God's one and only Son, the Prince of Peace to live with us, to experiences the joys and the anxieties of life, and to die on the cross to give us second chance to be able live in peace in eternity after we leave this earthly body.

And remember, Jesus not only saves us, but promises to give us peace. In the gospel that we just read today, Jesus says:

“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)

If we look at the original languages of our Bible, two words that are used which are translated as the English word “peace” are *shalom* (Heb.) and *eirene*. (Gr.)

The Hebrew word *shalom* is used in our reading from Isaiah and *eirene*, was used in the John reading.

In the classic Greek, the word *eirene* literally means a condition or state of tranquility or serenity. However, while it sometimes suggests peaceful action toward others, the New Testament’s use of *eirene* is more wholesome because it includes a broad vision of human flourishing with an emphasis on God’s saving work through Jesus Christ.

So, when the Bible speaks of “the peace of God,” especially in the epistles to the early church that Paul and Peter wrote to the churches in different places, “peace” here is much more than the absence of noise, busyness, or worries.

God’s peace here refers to assurance that all is right in our soul, even if we can’t resolve all the issues affecting us or predict how things will turn out. In other words, it is a peace that doesn’t depend on circumstances. It is there within us despite any chaos that may surround us.

This is wonderful news, isn’t it? It means that even when we get caught up in the busyness and the chaos that are a part of life, we can still find that peace within, a precious gift from our loving Saviour.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, there is one story I found on the internet about people who were looking for peace to illustrate how human really longing for peace and what possibly happened.

So there was a retired couple who was alarmed by the threat of nuclear war in the late seventies. They undertook a serious study of all the inhabited places on the globe. Their goal was to determine where in the world would be the place to be least likely affected by a nuclear war. A place of ultimate security where they could live peacefully.

They studied and traveled, travel and studied. Finally, they found the place. They then prepared themselves to move and not long after that, they started live there. And on Christmas, 1981, they sent their pastor a card from their new home to tell him they had finally found the perfect peaceful place—in the Falkland Islands. Sadly, Falkland Island, which was become their peaceful “paradise” for a while changed drastically not too long after they moved there. It was soon turned into a war zone by Great Britain and Argentina in April of 1982.

The place they thought was secure and peaceful suddenly became a place of war. And the war was lasted for 74 days that must have been terrifying to those who lived there including this couple who recently moved in thinking they made a very smart decision.

Friends in Christ, we all long for peace and peacefulness. And like the couple in this story, we tend to look for it in physical places where we might find some temporary peace, but it doesn't always last long.

Remember, the gift of peace that we received is not the absence of conflict. Rather it is the experience of rest and assurance through difficult times. We all know that we

cannot avoid conflict completely. We are social beings, and in every social relationship conflict is bound to happen.

John 14 that we read earlier shows that Jesus knows the disciples will be scared, but He promises them a thing that is very helpful. Even though He will leave them, He promises them peace, “Peace I leave with you.”

Jesus never promised that they would find no difficulties or conflict in life, but He promised that He would strengthen them, guide them, and be with them always—even when He is no longer in His human form.

Here is the good news for us—that through our difficult times, in moments of conflict and trouble, God is with us. The Spirit of God is indwelling in us, just like it was indwelling in each one of disciples.

Friends, Peace is something that we can't attain physically because the world is almost always going to be a rocky place. So, perhaps we're stressed. We're anxious about what people will think of us. We might worry about our safety or the safety of our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world who caught up in war. But trusting fully in God will bring us a peace beyond all human understanding. When we put our faith in God, we can get through terribly stressful situations without feeling their full weight and burden.

As Jesus says, “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 be afraid.” (John 14:27)

Think about the times you have been anxious, frustrated or living in chaos. The world may seem to be spinning around too fast and you just need a moment to sit and be still. The overwhelming peace that can comfort us during this time comes from the Holy Spirit within us, so, do not be afraid!

Remember prophet Isaiah said, *"You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst out into song before you, and all the tress of the fields will clap their hands."* (Isaiah 55:12)

What a beautiful picture that this verse from Isaiah gives us. As we go out in joy, we are led in peace; by holding onto joy, peace can guide us on our way.

Now, I know this is not easy. In times of stress, it is difficult to find joy or God's peace. That's why we need to take time and pause. Try to talk with God in our prayer. Because truly, stress takes our eyes off God.

When we try to carry the load all on our own, we often fail. We get overwhelmed and fall apart. But when we go to God and lift our burdens and cares to him in prayer, God lightens that load and makes it bearable.

When we put our faith in God, we can go through terribly stressful situations without feeling their full weight. We need God's power, God's love, and the peace that only God can give.

I began my message today with question, "Is it possible to have peace?" I hope deep down in our heart we can hear the voice that says, "Yes it is and it is actually a gift." So accept it! With a grateful heart.