

Pastor's Note

Hello

God gave us the gift of authentic peace. Authentic peace is not found in a gift under a tree. Authentic peace, himself, was put on a tree called the cross. After that God sent forth His Holy Spirit to do one thing for us; one beautiful, marvelous thing. To display to us just how awesome Jesus is. If you've walked with him for thirty years or if you're just exploring the possibilities of who he is, here is the Holy Spirit's desire for you: that He would meet you and that you would see Him for all that He is and that you would be overwhelmed by his grace and his mercy and his love. That's what the Holy Spirit wants for you. He want you to have peace; upward peace, inward peace, outward peace, authentic peace.

Upward Peace with God

Look at John 14:27 (NLT). Jesus is speaking to his disciples. He says this to them *"I am leaving you with a gift; peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give isn't like the peace the world gives. So don't be troubled or afraid."* Let's take a couple of steps back and let's look at the context of that. That was the night that Jesus was betrayed. He took bread and he broke it and he told his disciples, this is my body broken for you. Then he gives the wine and he says this is my blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. They were good Jewish boys who understood there was only one day a year that sins could be forgiven and that was through the sacrifice of an unblemished lamb. Jesus the Messiah is going, "I am that lamb. But don't be worried though. I'm going to be leaving, I'm going to be betrayed and I'm going to go make a place for you. But don't be worried, don't be afraid. You've left everything to follow me. I've told you I was the Messiah, the King, I'm going to die but don't be worried. Don't be uncertain about what's happening."

Then he drops this on them. He says "And it's good that I'm leaving because I'm going to send a Helper [which we know is God the Holy Spirit] and the helper is going to help you do greater works than me." In other words it's just one of me now but when the helper comes he's going to fill all of you and I'm going to fill all who follow me through what you teach. But don't be worried; I'm going to give you peace. I don't know about you but if I was in that upper room I would have been a little worried. I would not have had very much peace knowing that the one I was going to follow is going to brutally die and I've abandoned everything in life to follow this so called Messiah and he's going to die. But he says I'm going to give you a gift of

peace of mind and heart. So what we learn in this passage is this: Jesus gives us authentic peace with God.

One of the things that keeps people from coming to Jesus was is they have a wrong view of what Christianity is. They think things like; when I fix myself up then I'll come to Christ... when I do better I'll come to Christ... that's when I can get right with God. Little do they know that God says, "No, come as you are and by faith I will make you right." Through faith in Jesus everything that Jesus did right is accredited to us as a free gift. That just goes in the face of everything. Doesn't that sound like cheating? It's like somebody takes the ACT test for us, scores a perfect score and says, You can get into any college you want to because I took the test. Isn't that cheating?

God has a word for cheating. It's called grace. Matter of fact, somebody should write a song about it called Amazing Grace. Grace says we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross. On the cross our sin made Jesus an enemy of God because we were enemies because of our sin. But his love said, I'm going to make you friends. I'm going to bring you peace because all of my wrath is going to be poured out on Jesus. And all of my grace and peace is going to be poured out on you.

It's the exact opposite of the way we think. We think we have to get good to get God. Let me tell you, the statement "I'm a good person" is one of the most arrogant statements a human being can make. Because in order for us to define ourselves as good we have to look at other people and judge ourselves better than them. Good is a relative term. If we are good then someone else has to be bad. And the problem with comparing is there's always someone more good than we are. Which by default then, makes us bad. With Christianity, it is level at the foot of the cross and all of us are in need of forgiveness, grace, mercy, and love.

Do you want to be committed to Jesus? I do. Do you need to the Holy Spirit in your life? Can you feel it in your soul? Do you need to truly understand for the first time in your life that you are loved? To know that you are loved! Not because you can make money, not because of the way you look, not because you perform tasks well. You need to know you are loved in spite of the bad in your life. You need to know that. When Jesus was on the cross all of your shame, all of your guilt, all of your fear, all of your sin was completely known to him. And all that was beautiful about Jesus was nailed there as a gift of grace. You need to find that grace that Jesus has waiting for you.

And when you do Romans 5:1 (NLT) says this, *"Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us."* God is saying, run home! Run home to the one who designed and created you to be loved. Run home to the one who took on the bad so that you can know you are good. End of discussion. Period. Based on everything that Jesus has done. You need to be infected with the grace virus. And once the infection begins to spread in you the symptoms just keep getting better. So we looked at upward peace with God and the leads us to;

Inward peace with God and Ourselves

Did you know that Jesus gives us authentic peace in the midst of our circumstances? So therefore we are no longer slaves to our circumstances. We are set free, full of joy. Because Jesus says I am the resurrection and the life and he's still good and his promises are still true. Our circumstances do not determine our peace, our God does. Nelson Mandela said, *"Living with bitterness and resentment is like drinking poison and hoping your enemy dies."* How are you doing? Do you want upward and inward peace? Look at Philippians 4:4-7 (NLT) *"Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again; rejoice! Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."*

It's interesting. The Apostle Paul under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit uses this word "guard." It was a military term. Well trained soldiers guarding the fortress. So when we're intimate with Christ when we're clinging to him out of desperation there is this peace that transcends our circumstances. Philippians 4:11-13 (NLT) says this, *"Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength."*

If you're not yet a follower of Jesus I want to invite you to something. If you are a follower of Jesus I want to encourage you by faith to experience this. Please hear what I'm saying. According to God the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul and regardless of whatever you're going through, with Jesus Christ you can get through it. I don't know what you've been through. But I do know what our conquering King has done so you

and I can get through. That relationship issue is not the end of you. That addiction is not the end of you. That broken family of origin is not the end of you. Unemployment is not the end of you. That horrible thing that happened is not the end of you. You know why? Because in Christ you are more than a conqueror. The God who called the Milky Way Galaxy into existence is the God who lives in you. You are more than a conqueror. That's who you are in Christ. That's who we are in Christ. That's inward peace.

Outward Peace with People

Jesus gives us authentic peace with others. We have upward peace with God when we enter into his family, inward peace as we begin to grow when our circumstances no longer dictate our joy, now we can have outward peace with other people. I don't want to shock you but what I'm about to tell you is intense. This is really deep. People like me and you are dysfunctional and broken and we hurt each other. Do you need a moment to take that in? We are broken. That's why we need a savior to put us back together again. As a result our brokenness, we people collide with one another; we hurt each other. There's a great theologian. Perhaps you've heard of him. His name is Donkey from Shrek. Donkey was talking to Shrek and Shrek was mad and Donkey was like, *"But friends forgive each other."* "Do you need the forgiveness of a friend?"

You and I have been hurt by other people in our lifetimes. Why should we go and find them and try to find peace with them? I want you to hear this. Jesus came to find you. If you're a Christian, Jesus already found you, didn't he? He forgave you... so you could become a forgiver. He gave you peace to extend peace. The Bible is very clear; love your enemies. Can you imagine what the world would be like if that took place? But before we can love our enemies we have to understand that for a long time we too were an enemy of God. But God sent Jesus to say here's a peace offering. Now you go into the world and bring peace.

Let me ask you a question? Who do you need to forgive? Do you have a friend that needs your forgiveness? Holding a grudge is like being on a cruise ship and grabbing a thousand pound anchor and jumping off the ship and thinking you're going to float. Who do you need to send an email to? They might be sitting right next to you right now. When we forgive, somebody gets set free from prison and that somebody is you and me. The Apostle Paul says this in Romans 12:18(ESV) *"If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."*

I want you to recognize that peace is a one way street. I'm not in control nor dependent on how somebody else responds to me. That's a

sign of maturity and that's a sign of grace. Jesus didn't come to the cross and go, "I'm not going to do it if you guys don't believe in me. I'm not going to do it. I'm just going to cut my arm and let a little blood come out!" No. He said I'm going to risk it all. And whether you love me back or not, I'm going to love you. Wouldn't the world be different if that happened?

Authentic Peace with God

What I love about our Jesus, he doesn't hang out on Pluto going, "How you guys doing down there?" No. He put on human flesh. That's what Christmas is about. Christmas is about a God who says I too know what it feels like to hurt. I too know what it feels like to lose a son. On the cross he experienced all of our brokenness. It was a lonely and hard Friday. But guess what. Sunday's coming! And you know what happened on Sunday don't you? Sunday is coming. Hebrews 2:14-15 (NLT) *"Because God's children are human beings, made of flesh and blood, the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying."* Jesus gives us authentic peace in the face of death.

Here's the big idea this week. I want you to unwrap the gift of peace. I don't know what that looks like to you from a faith perspective. But unwrap the gift of peace. And when you open it up, you know what you're going to find? Not a little trinket. You're going to find the ruling king of the universe; Jesus. And he wants to give you authentic peace. He wants you to believe in him.

I want you to understand how we tend to believe. Here's an illustration: We believe that if we got on an airplane and there was a military grade parachute, we believe that we could put it on and jump out of the plane, pull the rip cord and poof! It would come down and we would land safely. We believe that. We've seen it on TV. However... for most of us people, we will never find out. Because we will not get on an airplane for the sole purpose of putting on a parachute to jump out. That's the way many of us believe in Jesus. We go, I believe that. Sure. I believe he's forgiving... but I'm not going to forgive. I believe he's merciful... but I'm not going to be merciful. I believe that he died and he loves me... but I still struggle with self-esteem. I believe those things about Jesus. But I don't act like I believe.

Jesus doesn't want us to believe about things, he doesn't want us to just believe in things about him. Jesus wants us to experience him, to know him. To know peace!

Blessings,

Scott

