

John 14:25 "All this I have spoken while still with you. 26 But the Counselor, 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. 27 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.

Dear Friends in Christ,

FEELING STRESSED?

People have asked several times what surprised us when coming back to the US. One of the first things we noticed is the speed of life. A few months ago my wife and I stood in line at a sandwich shop at the lunch rush hour. Before us were dozens of choices: sandwich type, breads, cheeses and everything else. Even before coming in the door, everyone else had decided what they wanted. But not us. There we stood, "Ummm. What kind of bread do you have? Could you repeat that? What are the cheese choices? Oh, let me think..." A dozen sets of eyes bored into my back, all wondering how these guys just off the watermelon wagon got in the door. After ordering we quickly found a seat and just kept quiet.

What's different about America? We see a people bold and hard-working. People who are busy. That is unsettling to people who were used to the pace of life in the tropics. It is impressive. Yet something else we notice is that the bold and industrious people of America too, are flesh and blood. In a society where productivity and busy-ness are hailed as the highest virtues, there are casualties. Car crashes are more likely to happen at higher speeds. And so it is that in a world where the people move fast and work incessantly, things can fall apart.

Let me use this example. Let's say there is a bolt that has rusted to a piece of metal. So I need to get my little angle grinder out. Now I want to cut off that bolt, and I don't want to spend all the time of going out to the shed to my workbench. So I think, "I can hold the pipe with one hand and grind it with the other, can't I?" As the angle grinder at 8,000rpm touches the bolt, it kicks. I find I can't possibly hold that piece of steel steady, except at great risk to my thumb. I need to clamp that piece of metal to something stronger than myself. That is us in this world. We are just flesh and blood. We are not strong enough to hold up to the stresses of this world. Oh, most (though not all) of us survive. But while still living, a great many of us quietly carry the unintended consequences of that fast-paced life: depression, PTSD, anxiety attacks, stress-compromised health, fractured families.

The harder we work and the faster we move, the harder it is on us. Someone once reflected to me, "You can't be respected in America as a hard worker until you are working so hard you have health or family problems." Well then, let me off the merry-go-round!

And yet, I don't think these things are entirely new. Why do you think Jesus told his disciples, "***Do not let your heart be troubled and do not be afraid... Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you***" (27)? I think Jesus knew that while some societies may be more hectic than others, humans have yet to invent a society without stress and worry. He promised something the world does not usually give: he promised peace.

There are two ways that Jesus gives peace.

I. Jesus Gives Peace With God

The first peace is that peace which the angels sang about when Jesus came to earth. Do you remember that song? The angels out in the dark put on a concert for shepherds and sheep. The theme

of their praise was this, “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests*” (Luke 2:14). When Jesus entered the world, he was announced as the peace-bringer.

Grandpa and Grandma came at Christmas, or maybe your grandparents had to visit their other children on Christmas so they came a couple weeks earlier. You loved it. They came bearing gifts. They had put all that care and money into choosing just the right presents. Then they went home, without the gifts. What do you think they talked about driving home? Do you think they talked about how much those gifts cost? Did they say that next year they wouldn’t make that mistake again? I’m not a grandparent, but I know lots of grandparents. As they talked about the visit to the kids and grandkids, I’m pretty sure they even think about the cost.

Jesus came to earth bearing the gift called peace. Peace always sounds noble and good—and cheap. Peace is a gift whose price is always underestimated. Think of this day Memorial Day. Our nation’s peace is a gift with a cost. When people talk about their desire for world peace, they don’t usually think what that requires of some people. It comes at a great cost, and we ought to thank those and the families of those who paid it.

Likewise for Jesus, peace was not a cheap gift. He had to pay for it. He had to conform every moment of his life to the same divine law we are subject to. Then most horribly at the end, he had to give up his life to purchase that peace to pay a price tag none of us ever could for our sins. And so it was that Jesus in our reading, the night before he died for the sins of the world, that he could speak of peace to his disciples. That gift which was first seen in the wrapping-paper of a baby in a manger in Bethlehem, would finally be unwrapped and put in their hands in a few hours. And like many a grandparent, Jesus would soon go back to where he came from, but he would leave the precious gift behind. He would go back to heaven, having spent so very much of himself, yet regretting not a penny. “*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you*” (27). He has left it for you! Simply believe.

II. Jesus Gives A Peaceful Mind

Jesus has given peace between us on earth and God in heaven. As if that were not enough, Jesus leaves another kind of peace. Jesus says, “*Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid*” (27).

A story is told—this is from a few years ago when elevators were a bit of a novelty—a story is told of an elderly woman carrying heavy bundles in both hands. She wearily entered an elevator to go up to her apartment on the 20th floor. As she stood there in the elevator, the kindly elevator operator felt obliged to speak, “Ma’am. You can put the bags down. The elevator will carry them,” and she put the bags down. Her shoulders loosened and the tension left her face. The elevator was strong enough (*My Hand in His*, 132).

What a picture of us! Worries in this life are many. We must do and think and prepare and plan many things. But Jesus tells us, “*Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*” Or as he said elsewhere, “*Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28).

Where is the line between planning and worry, between concern and fear? I don’t know for you, but I do know for me. I know how often I work and do all I can, and yet feel I have come up short. I am flesh and blood where only diesel and steel are strong enough to accomplish what I think needs to be done. Yet when I hand it off to Jesus my shoulders loosen, my mind becomes constructive, my face begins to smile. Instead of stressed out dreams, I begin to have dreams with laughter.

How does that happen? Sadly, there is no miracle cure. By that, I mean this: at least for the vast majority of Christians, it is not a change that once and permanently comes over you. It is a habit. We are junk collectors. We pick up the worries for our families, stress of responsibilities, anxiety about deadlines. Pretty soon our arms are full. We need to do the work God has given us with the strength

God gave us—and then put these things down. Trust that God has given us strength and abilities to work. And then we need to leave the results in his hands.

That takes effort. It requires us to step back and consciously leave those concerns in God's hands. One older man told me he has done this is by memorizing several verses of the Bible. At those times when he would feel anxiety increasing, he would slowly recite that word of God internally, over and over again. In that way he would turn over his cares to God.

Jesus most importantly came to give us peace with God. He came to redeem you from your sins. But Jesus' concern for you is for your entire person. He wants you to know peace within yourself. Take all your worries and concerns and lay them in Jesus' strong arms.

III. The Peace Comes Through the Holy Spirit's Work

Have you ever been given one of those gifts. You know the kind of gift where someone watches you open the gift, and they are sure that their gift is exactly the right gift. You open the package and you say, "Thank you so much!!! But... what is it?"

Sometimes our church holidays can be like that. This holiday of Pentecost celebrates the gift of God's Holy Spirit. But what does it do? How does it work?

Well, think about the peace that we just talked about. In Jesus, we have peace with God and an internal peace. How do we get it? "*The Counselor, 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*" (26).

Peace is the gift of Jesus, given by the Holy Spirit. In order to understand the Holy Spirit's work, we need to briefly examine Jesus' words.

First, he says, "*The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send...*" Someone commented on this passage: So many Christians think that they have go out there and catch the Spirit. But the Spirit isn't gotten, he isn't hunted down and caught, God sends him. The Spirit, like everything else from God, is His gift, not our achievement.

Then Jesus says, "*whom the Father will send in my name.*" The Holy Spirit is always given with the name of Jesus. The Spirit is not his own salesman, advertising his own goods, but he is always pointing us to Jesus' name. Jesus is the one who saves. And God the Father here says that he is pleased to always give the Spirit in Jesus' name. The Spirit is not the goal, Jesus is. The Spirit did not pay the price, Jesus did. Faith in the Spirit does not save, but faith in Jesus does. The Spirit works, but pointing us to Jesus.

Jesus also says, "*the Holy Spirit... [will] remind you of everything I have said.*" This is a very important thing to remember in the age of The Religion of Individual Adventure, when people personalize their religions to meet to their own ideas. Jesus said, "*the Holy Spirit... [will] remind you of everything I have said.*" Yes, there are new and different things in life that our forefathers knew nothing of. God's ancient wisdom has answers for those new things. Those answers are always anchored to the bedrock of God's word. God's Holy Spirit reminds us of God's will through the Bible. Our answers for changing times are always built on the unchanging truths of God's Word.

And so we reflect on the Holy Spirit's work and the gifts that God is pleased to give through him. We think one more time about the reading of our text: "*But the Counselor, 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... Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*" Amen.