

## **“PEACE THAT PASSES UNDERSTANDING.”**

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**First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA**

**May 28, 2017, 10:30AM**

**Text for the Sermon: Romans 5:1-2; 12:17-18; James 3:16-18**

**Prayer:** Holy Father, thank you for your true and eternal Word and that you have not left us in the dark. Cause your Word to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Honor your Word and edify your people according to our need. In Jesus name, Amen.

### **Introduction.**

**Galatians 5:22-23** The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control.

On this weekend our nation remembers those who gave their lives fighting for peace. Peace is a universal human desire. Evident no doubt by the billions of dollars spent each year in search of peace.

World leaders, diplomats and the UN fly around the world trying to secure peace. Our court system is filled with cases dealing with the breakdown in relationships. People go to counselors seeking inner peace or relational reconciliation.

The human heart is by nature unstable, like the wind and waves, easily set to churning. I am sympathetic with those who experience anxiety or panic attacks, who worry and fear for the future. I know what it is to lay awake for hours and not be able to sleep, or wake up at 4 in the morning and not go back to sleep because of concerns weighing heavy on my mind.

We are flesh and frail, life is filled with trials and troubles. We live in a broken sinful world that desperately wants peace. If peace is such a universal desire and if so many people are pursuing it, why is it so elusive? Because they seek it in all the wrong places.

### **Character of Peace.**

The God of the universe who is called the God of Peace sent God the Son who is the Prince of Peace to make peace between us and God, and God has sent His Holy Spirit to sow the fruit of peace in our hearts and lives. Peace is a person.

God is the God of shalom. God's peace is a gift, it is grace. It cannot be earned, deserved or bought, its only given by the Holy Spirit. Salvation is by grace and peace is what comes when the free offer of salvation is accepted. There is no peace apart from the person of Jesus.

We tend to think of peace in the negative, that is, as the absence of conflict or whatever disturbs our peace. We think take those things away and we will have peace.

Parents long for a little peace and quiet. Peace to them is the absence of noise. Nations define peace as a cessation of hostilities. This kind of peace is a peace based on circumstances. This is the kind of peace the world understands.

It's like when someone says joy is the absence of sorrow. That ties joy to circumstances. But God's joy is deeper, God's joy is possible in the midst of sorrow. Paul and Silas singing in jail.

In Scripture peace is much deeper and more substantive, a state of inner well-being, wholeness and harmony that touches all aspects of life, not just peace of mind. God's peace is possible in the midst of unsettling circumstances because it's internal, not external.

Jesus' most profound teaching on peace was given just hours before his horrible death. Jesus comforted His anxious disciples with a message of true peace and calm in the midst of terrible circumstances.

**John 14:27** Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Don't seek the world's peace, my peace is better, it is other worldly, surpassing human understanding. I have overcome the world and its peace. Fear not, trust me.

Remember the Christian was inappropriately joyful. Christians should exhibit an uncommon, other-worldly peace, that defies human explanation.

This peace Jesus gives is rock solid confidence and trust in the wisdom and sovereignty of God.

**Obstacles to Peace.**

***Unwelcome circumstances are intruders that rob our peace.*** The peace the world gives is a circumstantial peace, based on emotions or environment or positive things happening.

The world's peace can be disrupted by war, fighting, conflict, a bad phone call, a bad day, pain, a pink slip, a crop failure, a death, sin, a whole host of things can rob and steal our peace. The world's peace is built on sand.

We are robbed of peace when the only peace we want is to be free from whatever is disturbing our peace. When we want our will over God's will. When we want deliverance more than peace.

***Uncertainty or fear about the future robs us of peace.***

Worry is the enemy of peace. Control freaks will not find peace in an uncontrollable life and world. Anxiety is practical atheism, it is unbelief, forgetting God controls the sparrows and us.

***Unconfessed sin or tolerating disobedience, robs us of our peace.*** Sin destroys our peace with God, it breaks our fellowship with God. All the serious seven sins are enemies of our peace. There is no peace in a heart full of envy, greed, jealousy, pride or anger.

**Isaiah 57:20-21** The wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. 21 There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

This lack of peace is good and necessary to bring us to repentance.

***Uncontrolled desires and not resisting the devil rob us of peace.*** Striving, ambition, seeking wealth, power, position, worldly things, selfishness, all create restlessness, a lack of peace.

Depression, despair, discouragement, negative thoughts and emotions all disturb our peace. We must not give them too long or strong a voice. Don't listen to them. Push the away with constant prayer and Scripture.

**Cultivating Peace.**

Many of you know some of the story of the Horatio Spafford who wrote the hymn we sang earlier, "When peace like a river."

He was a wealthy and successful lawyer in Chicago when his substantial property investments were destroyed in the great Chicago fire in 1871. After that he decided to take his family on a vacation to England. At the last minute business delayed him, but he sent his wife and four daughters, with the plan to catch up soon. Their ship was hit by another and sank, killing all four daughters. His wife was one of the few survivors. Horatio sailed soon after and when his ship passed the spot of the accident, he was inspired to write that hymn.

How could Horatio Spafford write those lines? Where did he get peace like that? Is that kind of peace really possible for us? How do you cultivate this deep kind of peace?

***First, we can only cultivate this peace by seeking reconciliation with God through Christ.***

Colossians 1:19-20 says we are reconciled to God and have peace by the blood of his cross (see Romans 5:1-2). Seek peace with God in a relationship with Jesus. Some of us here have never surrendered, never asked Christ to rule and reign in our hearts.

***Cultivate peace by abiding in Christ.***

**John 14:27** Peace I leave with you; ***my peace*** I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

**John 16:33** I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

Let His peace rule in your hearts (Col. 3:14-15) being a branch connected to the vine.

***Cultivate peace by depending on the power of the Holy Spirit.***

All of us are susceptible to anxiety and fear and doubt. No wonder we read so often in Scripture, fear not. It's what we do and we are good at it.

I am as vulnerable as any of you. Maybe more so. I don't just worry about myself and my family, I worry about a whole flock of people.

God says we can have His peace, in fact He commands us to have it, so let us pray for this fruit from the Spirit until He answers.

*Cultivate peace within, the peace of God.*

**Psalm 46:10** Be still and know I am God.

**Isaiah 26:3** You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

**Philippians 4:6-9** do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the *peace of God*, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and *the God of peace will be with you*.

This passage starts with anxiety and ends in peace, and it gets there by prayer.

Cultivate this peace with *continual prayer*. Turn negative thoughts and emotions around with this kind of thinking. Memorize this passage and others that will fill your mind with truth.

Grace may not be able to return to her home, but she isn't anxious, just trusting God.

Peace is like a security guard at the entrance of our hearts and minds to deal with anything that might come to disturb our peace. With Christ at the helm we can have peace in any storm. Remember the security you felt as a child when daddy was home. Your Father is home.

*Cultivate peace by casting your cares on God.*

**I Peter 5:6-7** Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Bring to God every anxious thought, over and over. Surrender them to Him and His perfect care. Let every anxiety lead to the action of casting, throwing it on God.

God is God and He has all power and authority and is in control of all things, and all things must work for the good of all who love Him. Not a single sparrow falls and not a single hair falls without His knowledge and purpose.

This knowledge and confidence creates a peace in our hearts in the midst of the circumstances and uncertainties of life.

One of the devil's lies that he plants in our hearts is if God really loved us this bad thing won't be happening, or if God really loved you He would get you out of this fix.

We just sang, every joy and testing comes from God above, given to His children as an act of love, we may trust Him fully.

**John 16:33** I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

**Romans 8:35, 37** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ... 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

God proved His love for you on the cross and that while you were still a sinner He loved you.

**I John 3:1** See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God.

Perfect love casts out fear. In God's perfect love is our peace.

*Cultivate peace by controlling your tongue.*

How many battles and wars have been begun by our tongue? How much more peace would there be in our homes if we controlled our own tongue?

Are we causing discord? Are we being harsh, critical, opinionated, aggressive, proud, self-righteous? Or are we displaying the fruit of the Spirit?

**I Peter 3:10-11** Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; 11 let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.

*Cultivate peace with others, by being a peacemaker.*

**Matthew 5:9** Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

**Romans 12:18** If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

**Ephesians 4:3** eager [make every effort] to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Make every effort, spare no effort, work at it, don't give up after one lame attempt. Peace is serious business, it is at the heart of the Gospel and why Jesus came to earth.

Break cycles of violence or abuse or hatred or bitterness or criticism. Work and strive for freedom from past bondages, sow the seeds of peace.

Peace with others will mean dying to ourselves and our individual desires and preferences and rights. When we die to ourselves we promote peace with God and others.

Seek this in your home, in our church, in the community, at home, at school. Let us demonstrate to others what God has done for us. Take the initiative to sow the seeds of peace with others.

Can you imagine different parts of our body at odds with or at war with other parts of our body? Unresolved conflict between Christians is sin and we must seek reconciliation as far as we are able and as much as it depends on us.

*Cultivate peace by forgiving one another.*

God's peace with us begins with forgiveness and our peace with each other begins with forgiveness of each other.

If God doesn't treat our sins against Him as they deserve, if God lays aside His rights and reconciles and restores us, then ought we not also lay aside our rights, our offenses, our petty differences and be reconciled and restored?

Nothing makes for peace better and faster than genuine forgiveness of sin. Nothing restores relationships better and faster than humbling ourselves and saying we have sinned and asking for forgiveness.

Next week is communion. Seek shalom with your brothers and sisters, and so forgive one another and promote and build the unity and harmony of the body.

*Cultivate peace by caring for one another, looking out for the interests of one another, building up the body and edifying one another.*

What a testimony this church had by its love and care for John Smit, all the drivers, all the food, all the visits, all the prayers.

This is the body of Christ being the body of Christ, this is wholeness and well-being, this is shalom.

*Cultivate peace in the world by praying for peace.*

**Jeremiah 29:7** Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

**I Timothy 2:1-2** I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life.

**Prayer:** Make us to abide in Christ that we might be conformed to the image of Christ who embodies the fruit of the Spirit.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.