Sermon on John 14: 23 – 29 – Where Can You Go For Peace?

“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.”

I like to think of them as those peaceful moments in life. When all seems right with the world. When a sense of calm fills your heart and mind. When you’re not stressed about everything you have to do or everything going on in your life. Peaceful moments that sometimes come at odd times and odd places. Maybe it’s watching a child playing cheerfully with a toy. Maybe it’s watching the clouds float by in the sky. Peaceful moments that are sometimes few and far between. Peaceful moments that are shattered when a child’s toys are scattered across the floor in frustration. Peaceful moments that are shattered when those white clouds become storm clouds and you wonder whether or not your sump pump will hold out.

Back to reality. The stress and demands of life. Everything you have to do. It can be overwhelming at times. It can find you lying awake at night and stressed out during your days. So where do you go to get away from it all? Too often people go to the wrong places. The bottom of a bottle or the pills on a shelf. Maybe a shopping spree will help you feel better? Too often these things leave people feeling even more shame, guilt, and regret. So, Where Can You Go For Peace? Dear friends in Christ, I. It won’t be found in this world. II. It can only be found in Jesus.

The words of our text were spoken on the night before Jesus’ death on the cross. Talk about demands. God’s plan of salvation demanded that Jesus live a perfect life as our substitute. Long days and stressful situations couldn’t find him lashing out at others in anger like we so often do. Talk about stress. God’s plan of salvation demanded that Jesus carry the sins of the world on his shoulders. Trying to be all things to all people couldn’t find his patience wearing thin like ours so often does. Yet even on the eve of the most violent day of his life, we don’t see him thinking about himself, we see him thinking about others, we see him thinking about you. “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.”

Do not be troubled? Do not be afraid? What world was Jesus living in? Does he really know what it’s like to live in ours? Of course he does! On that same night Jesus tells us, “in this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” Because he has we have too! Do not be troubled? Do not be afraid? Then again, maybe we should be troubled and afraid when Jesus tells us, “if anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching… he who does not love me will not obey my teaching.” How are you doing when it comes to obeying his teachings? Jesus teaches us not to worry about anything because he will take of everything. How well have we obeyed that teaching? Jesus teaches us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. How well have we obeyed that teaching? Jesus teaches us to be kind and compassionate, forgiving others, speaking well of others, taking the words and actions of others in the kindest possible way. How well have we obeyed that teaching? “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.” Jesus says, “he who does not love me will not obey my teaching.” Take those words at face value and they’re downright scary because we realize the logical conclusion. We haven’t always obeyed his teachings which means we haven’t always loved him. Not with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Failing to love him and others perfectly makes us deserving of hell where there is no peace for the wicked, no rest for the weary, only pain and suffering, weeping and gnashing of teeth.

But thankfully, God didn’t want that for us. That’s why he sent Jesus. The peace Jesus gives us is more than just wishes to have a nice day. The peace Jesus gives us transcends all human understanding. It came at a price, the price of his life. Though he was one with his Father, his Father punished him for your sins and mine and the sins of the world. Nailed to the cross for our transgressions, he endured the pains of hell to give us his peace. Peace that assures us of the full and free forgiveness of sins and eternal life with him in heaven. And those scary thoughts of not obeying his teachings and not loving him? They aren’t scary anymore because of the peace we have in Jesus. The peace we have in Jesus assures us that we have obeyed his teachings because
his perfect life is now our perfect life. The peace we have in Jesus assures us that we do love him because he loved us first.

On the night before his death, Jesus gives us his peace. Think about everything that happened that night. One of his disciples sold him out for a pocket full of change. Another disciple cursed up and down that he had never known the man much less followed him for three years. From what we’re told, only one stood with him to the very end. Even on the night of his resurrection when they should have been celebrating, they were locked away in fear. Jesus could have appeared to them and shamed them into submission, but rather he appeared to them and strengthened them to serve. Showing them the scars on his hands and side, he said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

Fellow disciples of Jesus, no better and no worse than those original disciples, that same peace is yours. What are you going to do with it? Think about it. What could the world ever give you that would give you that kind of peace? Wealth and possessions? Jesus warns us about the deceitfulness of wealth and how it promises more than it actually delivers. Worse yet, he warns us how it can choke God’s Word out of our lives. Family and friends? Blessings when they’re there for us, but what happens when they’re not there for us? Far greater is the blessing of being a part of God’s family and having the friend we have in Jesus. So many people in this world are searching for peace in all sorts of places except the one place where it alone can be found, in His Word, where Jesus gives us his peace.

What’s that you say? “That kind of peace sounds really good. I wish I had more of it in my life.” You can and Jesus wants to give it to you. In our text Jesus says, “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.” It seems like the older I get, the more I forget. Sticky notes are helpful if I can remember where I left them. We need reminders in our lives for all sorts of things. How much more so the reminder of the peace we have in Jesus, the promise that, “he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” His love and forgiveness assures us that we are at peace with God. His love and forgiveness strengthens us to live at peace with those around us. God’s storehouse of love and forgiveness is infinite. He wants to pour it out on us. How can we get more of it? By making use of the means by which he pours it into our hearts and lives. He does so through the Means of Grace, the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. Spending time in the Means of Grace enables the Holy Spirit to fill your hearts and minds with peace. So crack open that Bible at home. Strive to be in church every weekend. Stick around for Bible class and send those kids to Sunday School. Fill up on the peace that is yours in Jesus. Without the Means of Grace, there is no Jesus and there is no peace. But with the Means of Grace, you know Jesus and you know peace. True and lasting peace, something the world cannot give.

Do you want to know an added bonus for those who know the peace of Jesus? Jesus says, “My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” You couldn’t ask for better roommates, or should I say heartmates, than the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! Home is where the heart is. What kind of home will your heart be? One filled with anger and hatred, frustration and worry, or one filled with the peace of God that transcends all understanding?

The peace of Jesus is yours as a totally free gift. It doesn’t depend on how well world powers or earthly families and friends are getting along. It cannot be dampened by deceitful words or hurt feelings. It isn’t affected when things don’t always go the way you want them to. That’s what makes the peace of Jesus so amazing, so divine, so worthy of our time and attention. That’s why Paul writes, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” Yes, let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts by letting the word of Christ dwell in you richly and don’t be surprised when more of those peaceful moments in life come your way.

Amen.