

MY PEACE I GIVE TO YOU

Message by Ann Hamel

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Jesus says: "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 let them be afraid"

What kind of peace is this that Jesus speaks of. What do these words mean to us as a community of faith, to each of us personally. What is Jesus saying to us as we wait and walk in the time between. The time between the loss of what was in the past to what will be in the future. As a denomination we have lost members-what lies in the future. The society we live in has changed-what lies in the future. We will soon have a new president, things will change-what lies in the future. We lose people we love-what lies in the future. we experience life changes-what lies in the future.

In our scripture for today, the disciples are facing an unknown future. It is the evening before the Passover and they have come together for supper. Jesus has just finished washing their feet and has let them know that he is soon to be betrayed and will no longer be with them. He has also given them a new commandment to love one another as he has loved them. Place yourself in this room for a moment as one of the disciples. Can you imagine which of these statements the disciples more heavily focused on. I would say on the words of betrayal and loss. It seems more of the human response. And if so what might the disciples be thinking and feeling after they heard these words. We do know from the previous chapter , that Peter did speak some of his thoughts as he did ask the beloved disciple who was next to Jesus to ask Jesus who was going to betray him and then later asked Jesus where he was going. However, what other thoughts and questions might be on the minds of these disciples . Might they be thinking. What is Jesus saying? He won't be with us. He's our leader/teacher. What will we do without him? What is going to happen to him? What will happen to us? Can you imagine the emotions, the anxiety, the fear, the confusion and the pain. The pain of feeling the depth of loss of Jesus whom they had traveled with, lived with for 3 years and grown to love. But Jesus has not left them, He is still present with them and knowing their hearts and minds does not leave them with just the words of betrayal and loss but goes on to speak words of comfort and hope. Jesus says " Let your hearts not be troubled, Believe in God, Believe in me. I go to

prepare a place for you, . I will come again and take you to myself. As Jesus continues to speak he comes to the verses we have read aloud today. Let's look at them more closely for some of the key principles and promises that are there.

First we see in the heart of Jesus, that love for him is shown by obedience, Jesus says "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. Would this not bring to mind the new commandment that Jesus had spoken just a short time before? "Love one another as I have loved you." Would this not have brought to mind some of the many ways Jesus had shown them His love in relationship with them as he lived daily with them and taught them? Jesus first loved them. In obeying His commandments, his teachings they show their love for him. This is a loving response, not a duty, not works but a response to someone that is known, trusted and loved.

Secondly, we see the promise of the Holy Spirit: Jesus promises to those that love him the Holy spirit, the advocate, the comforter. Someone who will always be with them. The Spirit of truth who will teach them everything and remind them of all that he said.

Third there is assurance of eternal life: Jesus assures them that he will not leave them as orphans but they will see him again, and because he lives they will live. Jesus is speaking of His resurrection, and because of His resurrection assures them of theirs as he says "Because I live, you also will live.

Fourth There is the promise of continuous abiding relationship in the present: Not only does Jesus promise the Holy Spirit in the life of those who love him but also because of their love for him, he reveals himself to them, the Father will love them and they Jesus and the Father will make their home with them. What an awesome relationship.

Fifth There is the promise of his peace: 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 let them be afraid." This peace we may experience in different ways for we all are different. It may be the sense of stability in the presence of Christ through times of chaos. It may be the sense of calm in the beauty of the creator's sunset as one travels to visit an ill family member. It may

be the release from all anxiety and fear as one hears the name of Jesus in prayer prior to surgery. The peace that Christ gives passes all understanding.

Jesus then shares that the ruler of the world who is coming, has no power over him and he will do as the Father commanded him so that the world may know that he loves the Father and then says Rise, let us be on our way.

What does all this say to us today? Before we go on with some response to this question, let's look at the context of the community to whom John was writing. This was a community of most likely Gentile Christians living in the latter part of the first century in what appears to be a pluralistic society similar to our time. They were dealing with conflicts outside the community with the synagogue leaders of Judaism and inside with heretical groups questioning either the divinity of Jesus or his humanity and they were losing hope in the delay of Jesus's second coming. In a way we can say that their identity as followers of Christ and their faith was being challenged. The purpose of John in placing the gospel and these words of Jesus in writing was to affirm the faith of the believers and to proclaim Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, to those who did not yet believe so that they too would come to believe and have life in him.

So as we live our lives today in this pluralistic society with conflicts outside and within the church, as we deal with losses and change, where our faith and our identity as Christians may be challenged, let us hear the words of Jesus. "Let your hearts not be troubled, believe in God, believe in me." And, Let our response be of loving obedience to His commandments, his teachings to the best of our ability remembering always His mercy, grace and forgiveness.

Let us honor him with all our hearts, acknowledging always the awesome relationship of love we have in Him and through him with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

And in doing so he will be our anchor through all the in between times, the unknown –the time of what was to the time of what will be. In knowing him, in trusting him, in loving him, in that relationship, we will know the peace that he gives. The peace that passes all understanding. We may be shaken, we may grieve losses and change as we journey through life but with faith, in Christ's presence, in his strength, we can go on facing each challenge with hope and confidence trusting that he will lead and guide us until we see him face to face.

Let us pray

Resources

The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version

C 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America

Published by Thomas Nelson, Inc Nashville, Tenn.

The Holy Bible, New International Version

C 1984 International Bible Society

Zondervan Publishing House

John

Jay J. Kanagara, New Covenant Commentary Series

C 2013 Wipf and Stock Publishers

The Gospel of John, A reading

Stanley B. Marrow

C 1995 The Society of Jesus of New England

The Bible Knowledge Commentary

John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck

C 1983 SP Publications, Inc.

The Gospel of John

William Barclay

C 2001 Westminster John Knox Press

The New Application Commentary

Gary M. Burge

C 2000 Gary M. Burge

Zondervan Publishing Company