

Peace, I Leave You
John 14:27
Monday, April 20, 2020

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.

There is a common assumption, and not a completely accurate one, that peace is the absence of conflict, anxiety, fear and turmoil. When we define peace through this conventional understanding, it leads to staying away from conflict and anxiety producing situations. Leaving us to believe that peace can only be achieved in an antiseptic or a serene environment, in which hardly anything is asked of us. We have only to negotiate the silence and our inner thoughts, building in habits that keep us calm. But there is a problem with this----there are other people you cannot control. Furthermore, trying to escape from the world also prevents us from finding a purpose, sharpened through the experience of having to negotiate with others.

In the end peace is not the absence of those things that cause us pain and frustration. It is the fact of frustration and pain that drives us to seek a way through them. When Jesus sent the disciples into the world with the promise, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you," he did not send them into a world devoid of conflict. Just the opposite is true. He sent them into a world that exemplified his own; a world that will continue to fight against what they are teaching. They will be up against some of the most frightening experiences of their life. Some will lose their life, as well. But, through all of it they will carry the peace of Jesus. They will carry the purpose of Jesus into every part of the world. They will make authorities angry, they will bring good news to those that hear and they will be tempted many times to put it all behind them, to live a more comfortable life. This is life; and it is difficult.

Of course, this does not mean that we shouldn't seek shelter from time to time. It is good to seek the solitude of the wind and trees, devoid of human contamination. But this is not the goal, it is a respite that can only be experienced for a time, before it becomes an escape and not a healing. Peace is not, necessarily, something we get from the silence, it is something we bring into the silence. Peace is more about faith and knowledge than it is about controlling our environment. Taking Jesus into the hard moments of life, knowing that no one can really destroy our peace is where life and faith begin to merge together. Paul says it the clearest in Romans 8, **"³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."** In this knowledge is where our peace is developed and nourished.

It behooves us when the world gets frustrating and chaotic to first dive into what is happening, with our peace and love. If we need to take a walk through the silence, then do. But don't stay too long. Find your peace in walking through the fire with Jesus holding you up. Then you will find the "peace that passes (goes beyond) all understanding."