

"My Peace I Give to You"

John 14:23-31

Introduction

On one level it is very difficult to make sense of the tragic massacre that took place on the campus of Virginia Tech this last week. Even as the reports and descriptions of the killer emerged, we were all left to wonder how any human being could do something so wicked and evil. But on another level, if we understand the depravity of man and the downward snare of sin, we are not so surprised. As we have looked in Romans 1 in recent weeks, we have seen clearly what can happen when men do not honor God, but utterly reject Him. In light of what happened this week, listen again to some excerpts from Romans 1. *They became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened . . . Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, . . . For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; . . . And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice,;*

That this student at Virginia Tech was a deeply troubled man who was tormented in his soul is without question. Here is an ultimate example of a man at war in the deepest parts of his heart. And while the ultimate example is often hard to understand and relate to, we also can understand that we all fight various battles in our hearts. None of us are immune to anxiety, fear, anger, despair,

and inner conflict. That's why Jesus' words in this chapter catch our attention. *Let not your hearts be troubled.* It just resonates in our soul. We know we need to hear those words. And we need the peace that they promise.

This morning we come to the subject of peace. Who doesn't long for peace of heart and mind? Men seek it from many sources, but nothing the world offers can bring deep, inner peace. Only Jesus Christ can leave us and give us all we need for a life of peace.

[John 14:23-31]

One of the questions some people ask in evangelism – and this is especially true if someone is facing their last days on earth is *have you made peace with God.* The problem with that question is that it asks of someone something they are unable to do. The beauty of Jesus' words here in John 14 is that He shows us that it is He that has done the work necessary to make peace with us. Peace in fact is a gift, an inheritance that He has left us as a result of His death, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father.

But before we get too far ahead of ourselves lets look at a couple of things that have caused us to need a gift of peace.

Why are men not at peace? The Bible gives us several explanations.

1. We are born at war with God.
2. Our natural desires are in conflict with our consciences. We know one thing, because the law of God is written on our hearts, but we desire the opposite thing.
3. We follow those natural inclinations – what the Bible calls sin. And when we sin we face the

conviction, the consequences, the trouble and the judgment that follows those sins.

So, all of this means that we are prone to live in a state of turmoil. The biblical idea of anxiety, which is the polar opposite of peace, means to be pulled in different directions; to be pulled apart.

Now, make no mistake about it. Apart from Christ, men and women learn to cope. One of the distinctive things about what Jesus says in this passage (v. 27) is that He gives peace, *not as the world gives*. Jesus acknowledges that the world offers a brand of peace. And in fact we find evidences of this false peace throughout the Scriptures. (Solutions of the world)

1. Mask the turmoil of the soul. Isn't this what Saul tried to do after Samuel told him the kingdom would be taken from him and given to another. I Samuel 16:14-16 says *Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord terrorized him. Saul's servants then said to him, "Behold now, an evil spirit from God is terrorizing you. "Let our lord now command your servants who are before you. Let them seek a man who is a skillful player on the harp; and it shall come about when the evil spirit from God is on you, that he shall play the harp with his hand, and you will be well.* Sometimes it seems like this is exactly what we do to alleviate our pain and inner trouble today. We overwhelm our senses with music and entertainment so we won't feel the pain.

2. Another peace offering of the world is to simply indulge in the desires of the flesh. *Eat, drink and be merry.* James wrote in chapter 4: *You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulteresses, do you not*

know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

3. The world redefines peace. This is what Jeremiah faced as he prophesied about the pending judgment against Jerusalem. The people didn't want to hear the Word of God. They hardened their hearts against all testimony, internal or external that pointed to their deep trouble. Jeremiah 6:14 speaking of the false prophets of the day says this: *They have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, Saying, 'Peace, peace,' But there is no peace.* Do you think you lack peace? The world would simply say to you that what you are feeling is normal. Don't worry about it. There is no problem.

Now it's in the face of the false promise of peace that Jesus say, *Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.*

The word peace in the Bible has a huge range of meanings and applications. In its basic root idea, from the Old Testament word *shalom*, peace means well being or wholeness. But in the New Testament it is used:

- as a greeting or blessing
- to indicate absence of war and strife
- to describe harmony among believers
- to picture reconciliation of man with God
- to communicate inner and spiritual rest of the soul.

Of these five uses, Jesus seems here to particularly have in mind the idea of peace with God that leads to an inner peace and settledness. So the question we want to answer this morning is *how does Jesus give us peace?*

1. By dwelling in us

This has been the theme of this second half of chapter 14 and we looked at it extensively last week. One of the fruit of the Holy Spirit is peace. Because Christ lives in us now through the Holy Spirit, we have real peace. This peace has as its beginning faith. And I would say again to any of you here who have not tasted real peace in your soul, it may well be because you are still in a war with God Himself. If you have not trust in the work of Jesus Christ to forgive you of your sins, then no true peace is possible for you. At best you can mask your own turmoil and learn to cope with it.

In verse 29 we see that the reason Jesus is telling the disciples these things is because He wants to drive them to deep faith and trust. And once that faith is in place, not only does the Holy Spirit take up residency in your life, but the fruit of that is love and harmony. Verse 23 is, in a sense, a definition of peace. *If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.* That's what peace with God looks like. Mutual love. Unswerving loyalty. Fellowship and communion.

2. By giving us His Word.

Verse 26. *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.* The meaning of this verse is first and foremost a specific promise to the 11 men that were with Him at that moment. The apostles were going to write the New Testament. Here is the assurance of Christ that the Holy Spirit would teach them and remind them of everything Christ had taught them. This is why we can have such great confidence when we

read the Bible. The Bible is not the words of men, but the word of God.

But this verse has an application for us as well. Calvin says that the Spirit teaches all of us in two ways: First He *sounds our ears by the mouth of men*. How are we reminded of the words of Christ? By the preaching of the Word. He uses pastors to teach us and remind us. Secondly, Calvin says, *he addresses us inwardly by the Spirit*. Your intake of the Word of God is not a mere intellectual experience. It is profoundly spiritual. Whenever you hear the Word preached, or you read it and meditate on it yourself, you have every right to expect and anticipate the Holy Spirit will teach you.

And by the way, this is not a proof text for charismatic prophetic utterances. Notice that the content of this teaching and remembering is *all that I have said to you*. The Word of Christ is our life.

The connection of this to peace is that it gives you the foundation upon which to order your thoughts. The word of Christ teaches us how to think and live. It gives us the commandments to obey as well as the wisdom to know truth. Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 26:3, *The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You*. There is nothing like the Word of God to give you a steadfast mind that trusts in Christ.

3. By defeating the enemies of peace.

The reason Jesus can give us peace is because He has secured our peace. It is His to give. That's why we don't say *have you made peace with God*. We might ask *do you **have** peace with God*, but not *have you **made** peace with God*.

I hate so many of the gimmick advertising schemes today. How often have you been offered some great thing "absolutely free" only to find out

that the absolutely free part had 5 conditions attached to it? (What out newly weds! You are targeted.) People promise things that they cannot or will not give. But Jesus' offer of peace is real because He has the power and authority to give it.

Verse 28 is an important verse to understand – and it's easily misunderstood. (read) What does it mean that *the Father is greater than I*? Jesus is not talking here about His nature. He's not referencing either His humanity or His deity. Certain false teachers and cults insist that this is proof text that Jesus is less than God, that He was created, and that therefore He is not fully divine.

But as the context so clearly demonstrates, Jesus is speaking here of His work of redemption. How did Jesus defeat His enemies? He descended. He left heaven. He left the Father. He came to earth to stand between God and man as the mediator. As Paul wrote in Philippians 2, *although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* It's in that sense that Jesus said *the Father is greater than I*.

Peace is ours, not because all of our enemies have at this time been removed, but because they have been defeated. In verse 30 Jesus acknowledged that *the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me*. Jesus is talking about Satan. As Jesus stood on the threshold of the cross, Satan thought he was about to win the war. He tasted the defeat of Christ and wrongly thought it was within His grasp.

But the Father had grand designs for the death of His Son. Jesus was ready to do exactly

what the Father commanded (31) because His death and resurrection sealed Satan's defeat and secured our peace with God. The last words of this chapter reveal the resolve of Christ to finish His mission. *Get up, let us go from here*, that is the sound of the trumpet calling Christ to engage the enemy. Jesus would shortly see His enemy's earthly form in the Garden of Gethsemane as Judas betrayed him with a kiss. He would encounter him again as the nails were driven into His hands and feet and His blood and life was drained from Him. But in that death and in the resurrection that was to follow, our sins were paid for, the wrath and judgment of God was satisfied and the head of Satan was crushed.

Because of that work, brothers and sisters, you have been left the gift of peace. Trust in Christ and the Spirit of Peace will dwell within you. Trust in Christ and He will teach you His truths and His Word. Trust in Christ and you will be at peace with God.