

Sixth Sunday of Easter

- [Acts 16:9-15](#)
- [Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5](#)
- [John 14:23-29](#)
- [Psalm 67](#)

How does one find peace when they're warned that something terribly sad is about to happen? The gospel today, from Jesus' "Farewell discourse", is trying to prepare the disciples for what is ahead as he is about to leave the world. It's nothing new by Jesus' nature- he spent his ministry not only reaching out to the least among us, but also ministering and preparing his friends and disciples for the inevitable future of his death, resurrection and ascension. As the summer Blockbuster Movie Season approaches, it's almost as if Jesus' is giving them a final preview of the coming attractions. The stakes though, are a bit higher in this case than what is at the box office. And while the disciples' ministries would have moments of joy through the healing they brought to the world, it would also be filled with considerable challenges. In other words, Jesus tells them this huge thing is coming, and not only is he leaving them for good, but they're about to embark on something unknown that the world has never seen before. There's a difference in being reminded and hearing something, and then actually understanding it and taking it to heart. How did the disciples really feel about hearing Jesus' words concerning peace about the future, when chaos swirled about them and seemed more of the inevitable conclusion?

Every week we share the peace of Christ to one another before we take communion. There are a multitude of poems and hymns and mantras and Bible verses about peace. The world continues to be an anxious place, and so many of us are seeking peace through a number of things- books of prayer, meditation apps on our phones, coming to church or being out in nature- you name what fits you. It sometimes feels like a hopeless endeavor- for if we do find peace, our hearts soon become troubled by something else. It's incredibly difficult to continue to open our hearts to peace as they'll just be troubled again. The hymn, "Peace like a River", kept coming to mind. You may have heard it- it's a simple song- I've got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river in my soul. The next verses grow from that foundation- I've got love like an ocean, and I've got joy like a fountain. I've got peace, love and joy like a river in my soul. While the time and origin are unknown, we do know that it has roots in African American Spirituals, and was sung and provided sustenance and nourishment during difficult times.

It makes me think of Jesus' words to his disciples. Jesus offered a lot in the Gospels about what it means to follow him. That when we love him and choose to follow him, we follow his commandments. We're invited to follow that Great Commandment: love God, and love our neighbor. But it's makes it much easier to do that work if find that measure of peace first. Love, joy, all of those fruits of the spirit will grow from that as peace is the place we start. Think about Paul. He had a dream to go to Macedonia. He stopped everything he was doing, got on a boat, and found

his way to Philippi. Talk about no fear. He had a vision, he took it to heart, and when he arrived, he found a group of the faithful gathered. Lydia, a worshipper of God, opened her heart eagerly to listen to God.

It's hard to open our hearts eagerly when we live in fear and anxiety. We need that peace as a place to start so that we can be vulnerable to hear God and hear the needs of the world. What spiritual practices do you have throughout your day to receive peace? How do you live and practice peace when the times are troubled? The gift of peace is just that- a gift- we don't have to do anything to earn it or deserve it, much like grace. But in searching for it, we can do one thing, and that is release our worries and cast our cares on God. We don't need to hold on to them or carry these burdens with us.

Because in the end, we needn't worry because we're not in this alone. We don't have to remember everything and more on how to be the perfect Christian or person. Part of receiving the gift of peace from Jesus is remembering that the Holy Spirit is with us, walking alongside of us, and prompting us to do the work we're called to do. We'll be reminded of that peace that Jesus always leaves behind- where ever he goes- and we are invited to do the same. To quell troubled hearts. To replace fear with love. To refuse to accept what the world gives and proclaim that there is more than the brokenness we encounter. The world gives other things- it feeds

anxiety. Builds competition. Ego. Resentment and greed. Peace doesn't have a part in that.

Poet Ken Rookes writes, "The disciple pours out self recklessly, to enhance the justice to build the peace; knowing that hope is an elusive costly thing."¹ It's an encouraging nudge to know that whatever we're walking through, personally or what we see in the world, God will never abandon us. It doesn't mean that life's difficulties disappear, it just means we are never alone in the quest to build peace and share hope. There's a reason why we preach peace over and over again. Because in it, we personally can find healing to live our fullest lives, and in it, the world may begin to find healing in the darkest of parts. In being infused with peace, we don't ignore the realities of the world and the work that needs to be done, but we're able to more effectively in listening and addressing those needs. There are lots of different ways to find peace. A new scientific study says that with just 3 deep breaths- three- that's it- you can re-center and find calm and peace. We each have our own ways to discover it. When you are connected to the divine source of peace, and living from a place of peace, have you noticed a difference?

¹ "You are Salt" Ken Rookes