

***Pass It On-
Given Peace,
Making Peace***

**Numbers 6:22-27
John 14:25-27**

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It came as quite a shock.

People couldn't believe that Barrack Obama had just been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The commander-in-chief of the most powerful army in the world, an army involved in bloody conflict, and possessing the world's greatest arsenal of nuclear weapons, being touted as a great peace-maker.

People are having trouble with it.

As much trouble as they would have had with the claims of the ancient Caesars - that **they** were great peacemakers.

In the days of Jesus, Rome was living in what had been coined by Augustus as the *pax Romana* - the great peace of Rome. In bloody conflict after blood conflict they had conquered much of the then-known world.

Indeed, if you were a Roman citizen, it was great.

But if you were a Jewish peasant, it was a poverty stricken and fearful time.

No freedom. No rights. National wealth all funneled to Rome.

Some peace, indeed.

Peace.

In John 14 Jesus is having dinner with his disciples.

He knows that the crucifixion is just ahead.

The next few days will be ones of great trauma.

And so, before it happens, Jesus gives the disciples a blessing.

The blessing is found in verse 27 -

Peace I leave with you.

My peace I give to you.

Peace - in Hebrew, **Shalom**.

What is *shalom*?

Wholeness.

Completeness.

Life as God intended it to be.

That's Shalom.

Shalom, blesses Jesus, *is what I am giving you.*

I do not give to you as the world gives.

And then Jesus talks **prophetically**

of going and coming back.

and of a confrontation with the ruler of this world coming.

Yes, these are **prophetic** words.

And there is something we need to remember about prophecy.

It often comes in layers.

There is rarely only one meaning that fulfills it all.

Like these prophetic words of Jesus about going and coming back.

There are three layers here.

He would go into the tomb, and come out in three days. That's layer one.

Layer two - he'd ascend to heaven - physically going away.

And he would come back - through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

That coming we celebrate each year at Pentecost.

Layer three - yet another coming back.

There is a day yet to come when Jesus will physically return

and bring the New Heaven and New Earth.

In each one of those levels there is peace to be found.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.

There is shalom, a sense of wholeness - in each one of these levels through Jesus.

It is his gift of peace to us

even though there is one coming, one that Jesus calls "The Ruler Of This World"

Who is that one?

Does Jesus mean Judas, who will betray him?

Or does he mean the power of social forces that will gain influence around the world and bring much suffering and struggle to millions over the years?

Or does he mean the Devil Himself - come to lay claim to creation itself?

Honestly - I wonder if Jesus would allow all three meanings.

Just like we can see three layers to the meaning of him going and coming again.

Whatever it is, the part that is absolutely clear is that the ruler, the force of evil, has **no control** over Jesus.

He has no power over me - says Jesus.

When Jesus says,

My peace I give to you

that Ruler of the World, whatever face he assumes, cannot stop that peace.

It **will** come.

So, let's think about each of those layers for the moment.

Layer number one - related to Jesus' death and resurrection.

This past week Wietse's family has kept vigil at his bedside, traveling with him through the valley of the shadow of death. They have done so with hope, hanging on to the promise of Jesus spoken in the opening words of John 14:

Do not let your hearts be troubled... In my Father's house there are many dwelling places.... I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

And those words brought **peace** into a room where death was present.

Knowing that the grave does not utter the last word.

That last word belongs to Jesus -

"Welcome home, my child, welcome home!"

It's a promise for all believers - from the pre-born to the elderly.

A promise of what waits for us on the far side of the valley of the shadow of death.

A promise that brings peace.

You know - the greatest desire that the Bible describes from the heart of God

the greatest desire is to be in close living relationship with his children.

When Adam and Eve rebelled in the Garden of Eden, the next thing we read about is God hunting for them, calling "*Where are you?*"

The curse of sin brought separation.
And separation is **NOT** God's plan - it is not part of shalom.
Union between God and humanity is his plan - **that's** where shalom / peace is found.
Which Jesus brings.

The knowledge that for Wietse,
who has struggled over 30 years against Parkinson's Disease,
the outcome of this last battle is freedom and wholeness in heaven,
brings peace
even through the tears!

That's the first layer.

The second layer is the layer of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Into a world where there seem to be many dark forces at work
rulers that seem to leave chaos and destruction in their wake
diseases and disabilities that rob individuals of freedom and joy
natural disasters that wipe out entire communities
Into that kind of world comes the news that God has not turned his back on us.

He has not pulled down the shades across the windows of heaven, or taken the divine phone off the hook, or turned his back on us.
No - His Spirit has come to dwell and to move and to work.

That Spirit is the one who gives courage to combat evil and suffering.
That Spirit is the one who gives us inner hints of God's nearness;
connecting us with heaven, until we get there.
That Spirit is the presence of God alongside us through life's challenges.
Which is Shalom - how God wants it to be - peace.

No ruler or culture or natural disaster can rip that away.
That's layer two.
A layer that we can also, in various ways and degrees, experience.

Layers one and two -
both bring peace.

AND YET.....

.....Both layers one and two,
great though they are,
and comforting though they can be,
still leave us with a cup that is somewhat empty.

The words of Psalm 23 - *my cup overflows*
Well, not always or fully true.
That will have to wait for the final layer.

The final layer of Christ going and coming back.
The final layer of the Ruler of the world being defeated.

That's the layer for which Jesus is busy preparing in heaven even now.
And toward which we live with longing.
And in anticipation of which we live by standards that others in the world may find very odd.

The final layer - the final day of cosmic history as we know it.

The day when Shalom in all its fullness will come -
to every stream that now struggles with mercury pollution
to every plant that shrivels from drought
to every animal that presently faces extinction
to every community that struggles with bloodshed and distrust.

The coming of that day is level three of the Peace promise.
That's the day for which we long when we call out, "*Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus!*"
When Earth and Heaven will be together,
the home of God and humanity.

That's the great day that Revelation 21 prophecies -
Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone.
2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a beautiful bride prepared for her husband.
3 I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, the home of God is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.
4 He will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever."
5 And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making all things new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true."
6 And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega-- the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give the springs of the water of life without charge!
7 All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.

Romans 8 tells us that right now creation groans.
Oh, how we know it.

The south Pacific is struggling with the devastation of typhoons and earthquakes.
Pakistan cleaning up from yet another suicide bombing
Someone lays awake at night with a recent cancer diagnosis
A couple cries, frustrated because of infertility.

YES - creation groans..... and waits for a better day.

The Bible's message,
the words of Jesus himself,
are that this better day IS coming!!

Let that fill you with the close cousin of Peace.....
....**HOPE**.

And, filled with hope and the first taste of peace, let us hear these words of Scripture:

*1 Cor 15:58 So, my dear brothers and sisters,
be strong and steady,
always enthusiastic about the Lord's work,
for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.*

Yes! The peace you receive - pass it on!!
Blessed are the peacemakers, said Jesus.
Cooking a casserole.
Lobbying for the voiceless.
Writing a cheque.
Bending a knee in prayer.
Lending an ear.

Giving a hug.

None of that is useless when done in the name of Jesus.
Because it resonates in heaven itself.

Do you believe that?

Do you **expect** that the power of Jesus is at work in your faith-filled work?

Do you **watch** to see signs of it;
signs of the active work of Jesus around you?

It would be easy to lapse into thinking that Jesus has gone to heaven to relax.

That he's on vacation at some heavenly retreat.

That, somehow, he is off duty.

And then we would easily miss signs of the power of God at work.

So - question for this morning -

Do **you** see it working in your life?

The work of Jesus that extends from his base in heaven to here on earth.

Within you.

Around you.

Through you.

Are you praying to see it?

Yes, pray for it, believer.

To see it, and to be part of it.

A part of the movement through history towards the final day when Jesus will return,
and Peace will

fully

and finally

come.