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The Holy Spirit And Peace
John 14:23-29

Jesus has just told his disciples that the Father will give them an Advocate, to be with them forever, the Spirit of truth, and that those who love Him will keep His Word. Now hear the Word of the Lord for us today:

²⁵ "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate,^[i] the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.

What **words or images** come to your mind when you hear that word **peace**?
What does peace mean—**in your life**?

I picture a calm in my soul, despite the circumstances,
a deep breath that allows me to slow down and think.

What do you think of?

And ***how badly do you need*** some peace right now?

It's ***been a hard week***, right?

I have tornado siren 'fatigue', if there is such a thing.

We heard them so much this week it started to seem surreal!

As we think about all those ***directly impacted*** by tornadoes and flooding,
all around us, we start to understand ***why we might need some peace***, right?

I mean, it's been chaotic in our area, and people on high alert....

When ***disaster*** of any kind strikes,

we need some peace in the storms of life-sometimes quite literally!

But it's ***not just disasters*** is it?

We also need peace in our daily lives as we face the ***stresses*** of finances, family, workplace, illness, caregiving, and more.

We need it for the ***battles*** we face of illness, pain, and addiction.

We need it for ***traumas***—those recent, and some from way back in the past.

Let's think for a minute about the ***context*** of today's passage.

Jesus is saying this to his disciples, on that last night, after the Last Supper.

He has just told them verses earlier that ***he is leaving*** them.

They are likely ***scared and anxious***—what does this mean?

The Teacher I've followed for three years is going to abandon us now?

After all that we have seen?

After all he's accomplished?

After all the hardships we've faced together?

And ***Jesus knows*** all of that.

He can hear the conversations going on in their heads!

(Now that's a sobering thought!)

So, he chooses to ***speak directly*** to those fears, doubts, and worries.

In John 14: 1 he says *do not let your hearts be troubled, do not be afraid...*

And here just a few verses later he says:

*I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate,^[U] the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷ **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.

What if ***Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit***, the Advocate, is in ***response to their fears***? and anxieties? And their lack of peace?

I wonder if this is the case.

As I read and re-read these words this week I thought wow—

they needed peace, just like we do today,

So, Jesus gave them the Holy Spirit!

The Greek word for Spirit is ***paracletos***,

Which literally means the ***One who comes alongside.***

It also means ***Advocate, Intercessor, Counselor, or Comforter,***

which is why different Bible translations use different words.
To me that just shows how ***deep and multilayered***
this member of the Trinity really is!

Right here in this passage we see that the Holy Spirit is a ***teacher***
and the One who ***reminds*** us of all Jesus said and did.
Earlier in John Jesus describes the Spirit as the ***Spirit of truth***.

The word for Holy Spirit gives the image of ***someone right beside us***,
helping us through life, as an Advocate, Counselor, or Comforter.
If we keep reading in the New Testament we'll hear from Paul that the Holy
Spirit is the Great ***Intercessor***, pleading for us in prayer,
even praying for us—when we do not have the words! (Romans 8)

And today I am especially interested in ***when*** Jesus promises this Spirit,
and ***why***.

Is Jesus doing it, at least in part,
in response to their fears, doubts, and worries?
because as he promises them the Advocate or Comforter,
he promises them ***peace?***

Ministers who study family systems theory know the term
'non-anxious' presence.

It's what pastors and chaplains strive for—to be the non-anxious person in
the room, not reacting to everything.

Why? Because that calmness is ***contagious***.
It helps everyone to be calmer.

What if this is ***one aspect of the Holy Spirit?***

To be the non-anxious person in our lives of faith?

To ***spread the peace of God?***

And ***what does JESUS mean by peace?***

Well, we know from the whole story of Jesus,
it is ***not the absence of conflict or trials or suffering***.

Jesus has just told Judas to leave and do what he knows he will do—
betray him to the authorities and have him arrested.

Jesus feeds and washes the feet of all his disciples, even Peter—who he knows
will deny him three times after his arrest.

So ***peace is not necessarily the same as everything going great.***

In the ancient world, the Hebrew words for peace was ***shalom***.

Shalom is a ***greeting*** that Jews share upon meeting, and departing.

And it ***doesn't mean 'everything is great'.***

Or even, there is no conflict, no doubt, no war.

It is a desire for something ***beyond*** all that.

Shalom means ***wholeness—in the body, mind, or spirit.***

It is a sense of being ***complete.***

Jesus' disciples would have been quite ***familiar*** with this word and the concept of shalom.

The Greek word here for peace---***eirene*** means harmony, accord, tranquility, but in it's root, it comes from the word '***to join***'.

Which I think is fascinating,

because the ***Holy Spirit is the one who JOINS us*** after Jesus death—coming ***alongside*** us to help and comfort and counsel, and guide!

Which might be why ***Jesus describes his peace differently.***

Listen to Jesus' words again, and ask yourself, what kind of peace is this?

*²⁷ 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.

Sounds like the peace of Jesus

is ***vastly different from the 'peace' of the world***, doesn't it?

What is the so called peace we see in the world?

What is the peace that people talk about?

When people for instance say, middle east peace—

it means an ***end to ongoing war.***

Or ***world peace***—most people think of an end to war and violence, disaster, and destruction.

Why does Jesus say ***his peace is DIFFERENT*** from the one the world gives?

Don't we read in the O.T. prophets,

that one day they will lay down all weapons, and turn their swords into plowshares? That the Messiah will bring peace?

Don't we read in Revelation that Jesus will bring an end to all sorrow and suffering? Definitely.

So what is he saying "my peace" I give to you, I give, not as the the world gives?

What if the peace that comes ***directly from our Savior is a gift far greater*** than an end to conflict or pain?

What if it is the ***ability to have peace in the midst*** of any conflict or pain?

What if this is ***why the Holy Spirit is known as*** our Advocate? Counselor? Comforter?

Jesus ***never ever promises*** that disciples of his will have lives ***free of pain***. We won't---not this side of heaven.

Jesus in fact, promises that his followers ***WILL face hard times***, trials, pain, and even persecution.

Which might just be why ***he also promises this Holy Spirit for us***—to remind us and teach us all that he taught and said and did, including his promise of peace!

What if the Holy Spirit Jesus gives to all believers is someone ***who helps us walk through*** our pain, suffering, and trauma? What if the Holy Spirit is ***our key to being healed*** from all that hurts us?

The ***peace of Jesus is different***, to be sure.

Listen to Jesus words a little after those we heard today, in John 16:

*The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. ³³ I have said this to you, so that ***in me you may have peace***. In the world you face persecution. But ***take courage; I have overcome the world!***"*

Where is that peace?

Jesus says: ***"In me you may have peace"***

It's found ***in our relationship with Jesus!***

It is something that we ***receive from him***, now that he is no longer on earth.

When Jesus says '***my peace***'---what if he is talking about that which ***only the Holy Spirit can give*** to us today?

After all, the Holy Spirit is our Counselor, Advocate, Intercessor, Comforter.
What is more comforting than having peace—especially IN the storms
 (literally and figuratively) that we encounter in this life?

What if **Jesus' peace comes from the Holy Spirit**
 (which resides within his followers),
 and it is **more than** harmony and accord,
 or a world without violence or disaster?
 What if it's the **shalom** that his disciples would have known?
 What if it's about a sense of **wholeness**?
 A kind of **calm IN the storms**?
 A kind of **health IN sickness and trials**?

That's the kind of peace that we **desperately need**, isn't it?
 If we are **not going to get a world** from God today
 that is without violence and destruction---
what if we could get a peace to survive whatever we have to face?

That would be **awesome!**
 That sounds like some **real healing from the pain** of today,
 and the pain of the past.
 It sounds like **a balm, a salve** for whatever has hurt us—before or today.

Maybe that's **why Jesus says he doesn't give the way the world gives**.
 Because what does the world give?

The world offers us some '**escapes from pain**—
 we are urged to fly away to a vacation,
 or spend a lot of money on 'stuff' that will never heal us.
 The world offers us a 'peace' that might include money, status, leisure, getting
 your own way, looking good, having the right house, or car, or friends....

In fact, if we're honest, we'd find that **the 'peace' the world** offers
 is something that involves us **hanging on to our stuff**,
 and new stuff, and more stuff...
 Or it's a peace that involves us '**numbing' ourselves**
 from all the pain in our lives!

Trying to get that peace is like trying to ‘*pull yourself up*’ by your bootstraps’—It’s a *false believe that we can solve* all of our own problems! It’s *holding onto* our stuff, or our ideas, or our fears so tightly---hoping and believing that’s the answer to our pain, or suffering, or trauma!

And *it’s not*.

It never is.

You know what else?

WE are not the answer to our problems!

Can I get an Amen for that?

Apparently Jesus knows this (seems like he knows a lot, right?)

So Jesus promises ‘His’ peace.

The question is, *how do we receive the peace of Christ?*

The answer might be in the verb I just used.

We *RECEIVE* it.

We don't reach out and grab it.

We don't manufacture it, or get it from another human being.

It is a gift—a gift from Christ alone.

And *what do you have to do to accept a gift?*

You have to *open* your hands, and heart.

If you are holding on so tight onto all those ‘promises’ of peace from the world—you can’t do this (open your hands and heart) for Jesus.

The peace of Christ is something *we RECEIVE*.

This week I was reading a blog by one of my favorite pastor, David Lose. He writes: *How often have we accepted what the world offers as peace only to discover it was a counterfeit promise? ...God’s peace isn’t something you can seek or grasp but only receive. That only as we release our grip on the many things we are trying to hold onto do we discover open hands that can receive God’s gift of peace. a gift the world cannot give.* “Peace the World Cannot Give” David Lose, *...in the meantime*, 2016.

This very special peace, this divine gift,
it is the *key to changing* our lives.

It is our *key to finding true calm, wholeness, health, and healing.*

All of which we can find *even if* our lives are chaotic or distressing!

Maybe that's why Paul says in Philippians 4:7
*"And the peace of God, which **surpasses all understanding**,
 will **guard your hearts and minds** in Christ Jesus."*

Surpasses all understanding might be an ***understatement!***

We can ***hardly conceive*** of this peace when the storms in our lives are raging,
 and yet, it is a gift of God, ***especially for those times!***

And most of us can hardly imagine a peace coming to us,
 when we have ***failed*** those around us, when we have made ***poor choices***,
 when we have ***strayed*** from God's way of life,
 And yet there it is---the peace of Christ, for us.

I can hardly think of a greater gift from Jesus, to all of us.

His peace.

Divine peace.

The peace of Christ.

If we're smart, ***we'll drop everything else*** that promises us peace,
and receive this amazing gift of grace, hope, and faith.

Jesus is offering it to each and every one of us—right now today.

If you need that kind of peace—

The peace of Christ which can hold you together

when your world is falling apart---

Please stand.

Now, let us ***pass the Peace of Christ*** to our neighbors,

Thinking about what Christ's peace really means....

Friends, hear the ***Good News of the Gospel:***

Paul is right: ***Jesus IS our peace.***

And he promises a peace ***we can't find anywhere else.***

A peace that ***protects our hearts and minds.***

A peace that brings ***healing and wholeness*** to all of our brokenness.

May we let go of all that bind us,
 and ***open our hearts*** to this peace!
 For that all God's people said, Amen!