Good morning, Family. Let me begin with a rereading of Galatians 5:22-23:

 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

We are in our fourth week of review of the fruit of the Spirit—nine attributes of God, evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in the life of the believer. Last week, we talked about joy, our joyful God, and joy’s availability to us. This morning, we talk about peace. Many of us this morning may be feeling less than peaceful. Church, listen. Jesus wants you to find and to experience peace because peace comes from Him. Peace is the tranquil state of the soul, assured of its salvation in Christ. It is active fellowship with the Prince of Peace. Peace comes from knowing that my eternal account with God has been settled. In other words, the peace *of* God comes from peace *with* God.

 Christ’s arrival was announced with peace: Luke 2:14 says, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.” And Christ’s departure was announced with peace. Let me set the stage. The Passover dinner is over, and Judas is gone. Jesus is going to be betrayed and arrested, beaten, and nailed to a cross. Yet, John 14:27 records such beautiful words from Jesus: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” Notice that Christ is very clear about the specifics of this peace. HIS peace! The peace that the world offers is no

substitute. The peace of our own understanding won’t do. Christ’s peace brings security associated with His presence. HIS peace is not temporary. It begins with Jesus, it is provided by Jesus, and it is nourished by Jesus (\*Romans 5:1-11).

[see next page for text of Romans 5:1-11]

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\*Romans 5:1-11

5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we[a] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we[b] boast in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we[c] also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! 10 For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! 11 Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

[The sermon text continues on the next page.]

Accepting this peace is a chance. Walking in this peace is a daily *decision.* Stop looking for peace in a world that knows nothing about it! (\*1 Corinthians 14:33). Family, we have access to peace because we have access to Him. Does that not stir in you a tremendous sense of awe? Oh! My! Unfettered access to the Prince of Peace!

 Let’s respond to this question: Am I pursuing peace? Am I culturing an active fellowship with the Prince of Peace? Peace with God, peace with others, peace within? In his first letter, Peter tells the first century church to seek peace and to pursue it (\*1 Peter 3:8-11). Family, listen. Peace that surpasses understanding is grace-filled encouragement for us (Philippians 4:4-9; see passages in support of this sermon at the end of the text). Practice rejoicing, practice acting with a gentle spirit (two more attributes among the fruit of the Spirit, of course). And all the while, intentionally guard your thoughts: “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Philippians 4:8). Pray and be thankful. Pursue purity in light of His holiness. Dwell on these things, meditate, concentrate, make the choice to make yourself fit for peace. In Colossians 3:12-17 (see passages in support of this message at the end of the text), we are given similar instruction. Put on a new self. Family, these instructions dictate *action* and *discipline*. The plan for our peace has been established in the pages of eternity, confirmed in the promise in the Word that He has not left us alone.

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\*1 Corinthians 14:33

33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people.

8 Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For,

\*\*1 Peter 3:8-11

“Whoever would love life

 and see good days

must keep their tongue from evil

 and their lips from deceitful speech.

11 They must turn from evil and do good;

 they must seek peace and pursue it.

 Did you know that you can forfeit this peace? Peace is a gift, and much like joy, it can be forfeited. Think of the song, “What a friend we have in Jesus.” The lyrics continue:

 Oh, what peace we often forfeit,

 Oh, what needless pain we bear,

 All because we do not carry

 Everything to God in prayer.

Oh, yes, there are many ways to forfeit the gift of Peace. Here is a list I have amassed:

1. Prayerlessness
2. Trying to run your own life
3. Seeking peace somewhere other than in Jesus
4. Worrying rather than putting our situation(s) in His hands
5. Failing to take God at His Word (failing to consult His Word?!?!)
6. Focusing more on your own kingdom than on God’s kingdom
7. Failing to forgive
8. Harboring (and expressing) bitterness, complaints, criticism
9. Harboring unforgiveness
10. Busyness that reduces our time with God
11. Failing to engage in worship

In the end, this is true: Each fruit of the Spirit needs to be intentionally maintained.

Thomas Watson has said, “Christ went more willingly to the cross than we do to the Throne of Grace.” We can’t appreciate and enjoy real peace unless we are available to Christ, kneeling at the Throne of Grace.

 Christ’s peace is available because He is available. Paul writes to the believers at Ephesus (Ephesians 2:12-14), “For He Himself is our peace.” We must allow the Holy Spirit of God to kindle in us a fresh perspective. He is the peace we seek, and He cares for us personally. Gratitude and peace go together and are indispensable to the Christian character. Family, listen. We find peace when we pay attention to His presence. Take a look at the fruit of the Spirit and be encouraged that these attributes are the character of God in His Grace toward us. His character causes our confidence to grow and our peace to increase. In this, Church, we are bound to a savior who won’t let us go.

 We will never find peace in complaining or criticism. Peace is found in guarding our minds with the helmet of salvation, choosing gratitude and pursuing intimacy with Jesus. Every area of our lives under the Lordship of Christ. We can have peace through our confidence that God is who He says He is—peace with God, peace of mind, peace with others. Paul reminds his congregation in Ephesus and us, “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1-3). Peace is a gift of grace, a fruit of the Spirit, and a responsibility we have to each other. Church, when we allow the Spirit to work in us, the fruit of peace will reign in our hearts. We will be satisfied in Christ. We will find ourselves pursuing peace, as we will guard our hearts and thoughts, perpetuating our Peace through Him: “Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you” (2 Thessalonians 3:16).

Passages in Support of This Message:

*Colossians 3:12-17*

12 Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

*Philippians 4:4-9*

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.