**Peace I Give To You**

**John 14:23-31**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

In our Gospel lesson, Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

I cannot speak for all y’all, but I know that there were a few of you with troubled hearts for a good portion of May. I know my own heart was troubled for almost three weeks. It was an anxiety-laden time as I spoke with friends, congregational leaders, my beloved heart – Pauline – in praying the Lord lead me to make a decision pleasing to Him. Shamefully, I let my heart be sinfully troubled at times.

When I announced that I had a call to Trinity Lutheran in Ironwood on May 5, some of you were afraid. I heard comments from a few people, and it was evident from what they said that they expected that I was leaving, and that made them very sad – if not afraid.

Dear friends in Christ, I appreciate that you were concerned that I might leave, but there never should have been fear. Christ is still Lord of His Church which He rules, governs and cares for as a Bridegroom loves His Bride.

How often does that happen in our lives? Not this specific situation, but the fact that we let Satan trouble our hearts and we become afraid. There are so many things in which we forget to lay our lives into the hands of our Lord God, and we forget the Word of the Lord and think with our hearts.

Illness strikes or maybe death threatens, either us or someone in our lives, and we are afraid, our hearts become troubled. We begin thinking in a selfish manner, clinging to the things of this world, and believe that only one outcome is “good” – that we or they are healed, and live.

What we need to remember is this, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

We have issues within the family, and let’s face it, we want one outcome to the problems – the one “I” want. We are selfish, clinging to our own fleshly desires in the world. What we need to remember is this. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

What is going to happen to my church? Finances are tight at my church and the numbers of people at my church are failing. What is going to happen to my church?

Whose church? First of all, the church is never “ours,” it is Christ’s church! Who died for the church? Who purchased it with His own blood shed upon the cross? Who is the One who has stated the purpose for His church? Who is the One who calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the church? It is indeed God who does all these things. And, He promises that He will be with His Church.

So, in regard to “your” congregation, which is actually Christ’s Church, He says, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.”

I have heard people say, “I want to ‘feel good’ when I leave church.” Really? And what exactly does that mean? Does it mean you want to have a “feeling of warmth” running through you when you leave the service?

OK, what brings that on? I could pull out a guitar right now… Yes, I play guitar! …and I could get this place jumping. Since I am a pastor, and we are here in church, and supposedly it would be Christian stuff, I could have you leave here “feeling” good. I’d only have to mention Jesus a little bit, and it would be the music that got you all “feeling good.”

In fact, many are the places that do that. People flock to these churches in droves! There is no confrontation there, nobody is called to repent of their sins, and in the case of the ones I have witnessed, Christ crucified for the forgiveness of sins is rarely, if ever mentioned. But the music rocked the house and people left “feeling” good. This is what the world gives and it makes flesh happy, but it is not what Christ gives.

In the meantime, what we do each week here may not always make you “feel” good. Your specific sins may have been pointed out to you. You may have been called to repentance. You may have felt guilty about those sins, wanting to do better.

Christ crucified was also proclaimed, the forgiveness He purchased delivered, Christ Himself was present as the Word, and He gave you to eat of His very own flesh pierced for you, and gave you to drink of the very blood He shed for you. Untied to Him, you are at peace with God.

You may still feel guilt over your sinfulness, the music may not have had the same grove and a feeling, and the pastor may have been downright boring. But, Christ was present.

Just because you do not “feel” forgiven and at peace does not mean it is not so. Peace as the world thinks about it, peace as the world suggests your flesh should “feel” it, is not all it is cracked up to be. In fact, that is all it is, a feeling. After the feeling is gone, what is left?

Jesus does not want you to rely upon your feelings, so He gives you His Word of promise – His water of promise – His flesh of promise – His blood of promise. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.”

All these promises come with one even towering behind them. As Hebrews proclaims, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb. 12:2)

Jesus laid down His life, only to take it up again. Nobody took His life from Him! Yes, the Jewish high court found Him guilty and declared He should be killed. Yes, Pilate washed his hands and declared that He be sent to Golgotha with the other two criminal to die. And yes, the Roman soldiers nailed Him to the cross, but it was all done for you. Jesus ***ALLOWED*** all these things to be done to Him in order to free you from sin and death. As John declared of Him, Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

As we heard a couple weeks ago, Jesus has overcome the world! He overcame the world for you – He overcame sin in His own flesh, perfect and without sin. He overcame death for you – taking your death into His own body and granting you His life eternal.

So today Jesus says to you, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.”

Hear the truth of God in Christ Jesus about you. You are forgiven – for your failures to trust that Christ is still Lord of His church, for your selfishly thinking that it is your church and not His, for wanting Jesus to be worldly when He was bringing eternal salvation, and for all your sins – you are forgiven! Hear Christ speak in those words of forgiveness, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.”

As you gather at Christ’s table to eat of the very flesh He allowed to be pierced for you, and as you drink of the very blood He shed for the forgiveness of your sins, hear in this meal the words of Christ, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.” In the name of Jesus. Amen.