Peace

Unity Church October 5, 2025

John 14:26-28 Philippians 4:6-8

Last Sunday as Sherry and I were traveling between Jackson Center church and Unity, it occurred to me that I had covered the first two fruits of the Spirit, in order and without even planning to. Two weeks ago we looked at love and loving, last week, Joy, especially the unbridled joy of a child. They taught us back in high school geometry class that two points define a line, so guess what’s coming today.

I’ll give you a hint, 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.”

In light of what’s going on outside our personal lives, assassinations, violent protests, attacks on law enforcement, and calls for violence that we’ve not seen in years, etc. The idea of talking about peace seems counter intuitive, some might say that it’s either denial or choosing to ignore reality.

You have heard me talk about what Brant Hansen calls a “second naiveté,” the reality behind certain believers’ unflappability. He states that this naïveté doesn’t come from having one’s head in the sand, but from the lived experience that God has not abandoned them in the various trials and tribulations of their lives, but He has responded and that his way of response is not only the best way but ultimately the only way.

This assurance, that comes out of experience gives us a base, a foundation, from which to blossom as believers to show love and have joy. This foundation is a peace that passes all understanding. That is what I’d like to spend some time with today.

A side comment though before we get into peace: Someone commented that I mention or preach the Holy Spirit more than most preachers. I hear other pastors and believers talk, God, God, God or Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, and then throw in the Holy Spirit almost as an afterthought, like they remembered him at the last moment. I find myself chuckling at this.

1

Not taking anything away from the other two aspects of the Trinity, the aspect or face of the Trinity which we see, talk to, argue with daily is the Holy Spirit. What we sense as the very presence of God, the comfort, calm, inspiration that occurs in our lives is the Holy Spirit. This is not focused on a lot because to do so might get you labeled as Charismatic or Pentecostal. I don’t have much patience for labels or boxes, I’ve found that I don’t fit neatly into any of them.

Regardless of labels and boxes, the reality remains that the the joys, blessings and divine gifts that we enjoy in our relationship with God the Father, through God the Son, come to us, are brought to us, and instilled in us by God the Spirit. If you want to wrestle with this idea, Paul lists these as fruits of the Spirit. In other places he speaks of the Gifts of the Spirit. These fruits and gifts are what empower us as believers to move the body of Christ forward, both in our personal faith walk and the church.

Outside of feeling the need to clarify why I focus so much on the Holy Spirit, there is actually a secondary method in my madness, which will hopefully come clear.

As is typical of English, the word “Peace,” covers a lot of things. When we say that two nations are at peace, or the evening shadows crept in peacefully, or I am at peace with what happened last week, we are using the same word, but it’s use implies three different things.

Two countries at peace means they have a treaty where they have agreed to either work together or not attack each other. The shadows creeping in peacefully means quietly, possibly comfortably. Being at peace about something that was disturbing or hurtful means either that one has accepted it, embraced it or simply decided to not let it bother them. The word, “Peace,” is defined by the way it’s used.

I’d like to focus on the personal aspect of peace, that is the spiritual gift or fruit of peace, which shows itself in one’s life because it is internal. By definition, it has been placed inside us by the Spirit. Jesus said in John 14:27, “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.”

2

Which leads to the question, what exactly did Jesus give us? Although he was speaking Aramaic, the word Peace, is translated from the Hebrew, Shalom. Although it is almost always translated as Peace, Shalom implies or infers a much broader gift than we think of when we hear this word, peace.

The lexicon in Strong’s Concordance defines Shalom as: completeness, wholeness, health, peace, welfare, safety, soundness, tranquility, prosperity, perfectness, fullness, rest, harmony, the absence of agitation or discord. Shalom comes from the root verb “shalem" meaning to be complete, perfect and full.

In the Old Testament book of Nehemiah, the rebuilt walls of Jerusalem were described as being Shalom, meaning sound and plumb. Like I said, the idea of peace is only one aspect. The Greek word translated as peace, is fairly synonymous with Shalom. In other words, the scripture I just cited from John, Jesus is actually saying, “My wholeness or my completeness I give to you.” That is, Jesus sets us right, makes us whole, completes us.

Just to reenforce what I said earlier about the Holy Spirit, he says this after explaining that, “the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” In short, the Holy Spirit will remind you that I said Shalom I give you.

Without getting into government theory about peace through strength, I think that what Jesus is talking about here is actually that. It’s not just that my Father owns the cattle on a thousand hills, or I have a big brother who standardly performs miracles and commands legions of angels, but through the fruits of the Holy Spirit, he has given me, us, completeness, wholeness, health, peace, welfare, safety, soundness, tranquility, prosperity, perfectness, fullness, rest, harmony, the absence of agitation or discord.

In other words, we have all this external help from both the Father and the Son, but through this Shalom that we are given, we have resources that our loving father has placed in us by giving us the Spirit which bears these fruits.

We are not yet complete, whole, but through the Spirit we are becoming. Our sins are forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ, but the healing, the growing, the becoming, is a process. I think I said in both of the last sermons, that these fruits are not the result of us telling our selves that we “should” be loving, joyful, and at peace.

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These are not things that we can beat into ourselves. These are things, better described as fruits, that the Spirit bears within us. Our part of the equation is less about discipline and more about embracing, opening ourselves to him and our willingness not only to submit but also follow.

More than the old Yiddish line that “If good fortune comes to your door, offer him a chair.” When the Spirit comes into your heart, let him have whatever he wants. He will only make it better.

Which leads me back to the idea I mentioned at the outset about Brant Hansen’s idea of a second Naiveté, a knowledge that I know that whatever God brings me to, he will bring me through, and an assurance that His way through is the best way. Part of this is that he has already given us, started the process that adds to what the father is and will do.

I’d like to tie this up by pointing out something that needs stated whenever the Fruit of the Spirit or Gifts of the Spirit are discussed. That is, we tend to look at these blessings from a personal point of view, they are after all internal, inside of us. Part of, if not most of these fruits are intended to benefit not only the individual but more so, the body if not the world at large.

Because I have been loved with an immeasurable love, our job is to love them, whoever “them” is. Because I have been given joy, I am to be a wellspring of joy to others. Because I have been given a peace that passes all understanding, I need to be a peacemaker, to help spread peace. Jesus said in the beatitudes in Matthew, “Blessed are the peacemakers, they will be called Sons of God.”

Or as St Francis of Assisi prayed.

“Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.”

“O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.”

Let’s gather around the table of our Lord.

4

John 14:26-28 Revised Standard Version (RSV)

“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. 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.”

Philippians 4:6-8 (RSV)

Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.  And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.