

All Is Well

John 14:25-27; 16:33

**A sermon preached by Dr. Calvin Warpula
at the West University Church of Christ, Houston, Texas
on December 26, 2010**

Yesterday was Christmas day. I hope that all of you have had and are having a happy, holy and blessed Christmas season. I know our family is—praise God. I am so pleased by the grace of God to have all the members of my immediate family present today. My four children and their mates and our fourteen grandchildren are here today in this service. Again and again over the last three days, Judy and I have said to one another, “We are so blessed.” I am sure that you feel the same way. “God is good---all the time.” And, “All the time—God is good.”

A verse that you have heard many times during this season is Luke 2:14 from the King James Version, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men.” This reading makes us think that Jesus brought two blessings to mankind all over the earth: peace and good will. Actually this is not the best rendering of this verse. The King James Version was translated four hundred years ago in 1611. The oldest manuscripts that the King James translators had available were dated from A. D. 900 and later. Since 1611, thousands of more manuscripts have been discovered and many of them dated much earlier than the tenth century. The three best manuscripts of the N.T., the Sinaiticus, the Vaticanus, and the Alexandrian were not available in 1611. These manuscripts date from the fourth and sixth centuries. These earlier and better manuscripts are the basis of the modern translations we have today like the Revised Standard Version, the Revised English Bible, the Contemporary English Version, the New Living Translation, and the New International Version. Thus, the readings in some of the verses in the NIV , for example, and the KJV are different, though the basic integrity and message remain the same. These earlier manuscripts revealed no additional texts or doctrines; they only clarified the reading and gave a more accurate text. In the NIV and other translations made in the last century, the reading of Luke 2:14 is more correctly translated, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace among men on whom his favor rests.”

This means that God is not giving general , worldwide peace for all mankind through the birth of Jesus. What it does mean is that God is giving peace to those “on whom his favor rests.” I like the reading of the RSV even better, “peace to men in whom he is well pleased.” This means that peace comes to those who receive God's grace. When we receive by faith the blessing of God's grace in the gift of Jesus coming into the world, then we will have peace. God's grace brings peace.

This grace and peace are objective, i.e., they are not subjective wishes, thoughts,

feelings, or intuitions. This grace and peace are outside us and our reasoning and personal confidences. This grace is the gift of God given in the incarnate Christ. The peace that results from the acceptance of this Christ is the peace that is spoken of here. The apostle Paul made this very plain in Romans chapter five, verse one where he wrote, “We are justified by faith in Christ Jesus and we have peace with God.” Peace with God then is a relationship status with God. It is not a subjective, inner feeling of tranquility, lack of stress, and the absence of trouble. No. Peace with God is an objective position. It is positional peace: “we have peace with God through Jesus Christ.” We have entered into a relationship of peace with God when we believe in God's gift, his son, Jesus Christ our lord.

We can see this clearly if we read some more verses in Romans 5. Note vs. 2, 5-11 [read them]. Note carefully how Paul says we are justified, reconciled, put right with God through the death of Jesus Christ. He wrote the same type of thoughts in Colossians, chapter one, verses 20-22 [read them].

The conclusion then is that God's peace does not come to mankind in general but only to those whom God has put right with himself through their personal faith in Jesus Christ his son.

So whom is God pleased with? Those who accept the son.

God is not pleased with those that reject his son. It is only believers in Jesus that have a relationship of peace with God.

A question that all of us need to confront is this: Do I have peace with God? Have I accepted by faith the gospel of Jesus Christ? Have I turned my life over to Jesus Christ? Is he my Lord and Savior? If I died today, and stood before God, would I be welcomed into glory with God or would I be condemned before God?

You can know this for sure. The Bible teaches a “know so” salvation, not a “hope so” one. This assurance of a right relationship with God rings throughout Romans.

- Rom. 5:11—we now rejoice
- 5:17—we receive grace and reign in life
- 6:4 we are buried and resurrected with Christ
- 8:1 we now have no condemnation in Christ

In Romans 8, there are five unanswered questions:

1. If God is for us, who can be against us?
2. If God did not spare his own son, will he not also give us all things?
3. Who can bring a charge against God's elect?
4. Who can condemn those for whom Christ died and now intercedes?
5. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Then he names some things. Look at the list of things that will not separate us from the love of God in Christ: troubles, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword, death, life, angels, demons, present, future, powers, height, depth, nor anything else in

all creation. None of these can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now, this background can help us understand some things Jesus told us in his final discussions with the disciples on the evening before he was crucified. John chapters 14, 15, and 16 are Jesus' final words to his disciples before he is arrested that evening and faced trials that night and early the next morning. Within 24 hours, Jesus will be in the tomb. The most terrible, excruciating events will occur in the next 12 hours. And yet Jesus calmly speaks of these coming events, and says something that seems absurd and contradictory. It is certainly strange and bewildering to those who are in the world without a relationship with God.

Let's notice what he said in John 14:25-27: [read it]

Notice v. 27--"my peace I give to you." The word "peace" here is the same as the Hebrew greeting and blessing, "Shalom." To most people, peace means an absence of trouble. But the word "shalom" is much broader and deeper than that. The word means a positive blessing, total well-being, it means having adequate resources for whatever you face. It's the thought of the priestly blessing of Number 6:22: "The Lord give you peace and make his face to shine upon you. "

Does this peace mean no conflict, no trouble, no opposition? No.

Remember Rom. 8--"shall trouble...?" Paul, the writer of Romans 8, was persecuted, troubled, pained, imprisoned and finally beheaded for the cause of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:7-12; 11:23-29).

Paul does not preach a health and wealth gospel. Paul is not Pollyanna. He is not a dreamer; he is a realist.

Consider the example of Jesus himself. He said he would give us his peace, but this peace only came about through his death by crucifixion on the cross for our sins. The cross was painful. It was suffering. The cross was not gold plated or cushioned with foam rubber. It was so real that if you ran your fingers against it you would get splinters in your hand.

What kind of peace then does Jesus give? It is a peace based on the word of God. Notice in v. 25-26 that the Holy Spirit will "give you my words." We have those words now from the apostles here in our N.T.

These words assure us, they teach us, they inform us, they guide us, they strengthen us, and they are God's message to our hearts. Because of the truth of these words and what they say, then we can receive the peace of Jesus and "our hearts will not be troubled or afraid."

This is because these words bring to us the presence of the son and the father into our hearts. Look at v. 23: [read it]. Jesus has a relationship with the Father. Vs. 27-31 have the word "Father" four times. The word "Father" is 22 times in chapter 14.

Jesus says we must obey these words (v. 24). When we love and obey the words of Jesus, we have the peace of Jesus within us. We are not troubled or afraid.

These words show us that we can pray and that God listens (14:13-14).

These words show us the eternalities of God (14:1-3). Jesus is with us now and

will not abandon us in death. He will receive us because he has gone to prepare a place for us.

So the peace of v. 27 is based on the word of God that reveals to us that God hears us and prepares a place for us in the world to come. We are not alone. We are not abandoned. Christ is with us now and forever.

Jesus says this peace is “not as the world gives.” What kind of peace does the world give? The peace that the world gives cannot satisfy the deepest yearnings and longings and hungers of the human heart. Only God can do that.

If you go to a doctor and say you have no peace, he will give you a prescription for a tranquillizer. This is chemical peace. It is artificial, it wears off, it dulls the mind and it can be habit forming.

Another kind of worldly peace is escapism: “Take a trip to Hawaii, go skiing, go sailing, play golf or tennis, visit Disney World, take a cruise.” But when you get back home, your troubles are still there. One dating service advertises, “Life is short. Have an affair.” That short term pleasure brings long term pain and wrecks and destroys families and all the people involved.

There are five differences between worldly peace and the peace that Christ gives.

1. Worldly peace is based on resources. God's peace is based on relationships. To be right with God is to enjoy peace with God.
2. Worldly peace depends on human ability. God's peace depends on spiritual adequacy in Christ
3. Worldly peace is something you work you or you hope for. God's peace is something you receive by faith.
4. Worldly peace is absence of trouble. God's peace is the presence of God in the midst of trouble.
5. Worldly peace is walking by sight and depending on externals. God's peace is walking by faith and depending on eternal.

This inner peace, this total blessing, this total well-being, this assurance of adequate resources in every situation does not mean that we will not face conflict without, that all our troubles will disappear, that we will have a holiday journey as walk through the rose garden of life. No. Look at what Jesus continued to say to his disciples in chapter 15, verses 18-20c [read].

Jesus says the world will oppose his disciples. God's people who want to do right have always been opposed by those who do wrong. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus spoke of his disciples being persecuted for righteousness sake (Matt. 5:10, 11-12). The apostles Peter spoke of this also [read I Pet. 4:12-16].

Our faith in Christ brings into a relationship of peace with God but at the same time brings conflict from the world. God and the world are opposed. The things that God wants, the devil detests. The things that the devil wants, God condemns.

Jesus spoke more of this opposition from the world but peace with God and within ourselves in the final words of this final discussion with his disciples. Turn with me to

chapter 16 and the last verses of this chapter. Notice v. 33: “I have spoken these things unto you that you may have peace.” Here is peace through the assurances of God's word. The final sentence of Jesus sums up our situation: “In this world you will have trouble. But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

Jesus speaks of our peace with God. We gladly sing,

“My hope is built on nothing less,
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.”

We live in Christ (20:31). We bear fruit in Christ (15:5).

We may not have money, health, or personal security but we can still sing, “Be not dismayed whatever betide, God will take care of you.”

Jesus tells us plainly and frankly to expect trouble and opposition. You see the contrast here between “in me” and “in the world.” All of us are living in this world but some of us are also living in Christ. Those that live in the world only will oppose those that are living in Christ.

The world “trouble” here is a Greek word that expresses hardship, the breaking of grapes under pressure that releases the juice from the pulp and skin. This is pressure to the breaking point.

This is what we face. Jesus does not promise to keep us out of trouble. He promises to be with us in trouble. How can we be cheerful in trouble? Or take heart in trouble? Only one answer: Jesus Christ.

Jesus says, “I have overcome the world.” This is not a wish or a hope, but a fact. Jesus is going to the cross tomorrow, but he says, “I have overcome the world.” The verb tense here says that Jesus has already overcome the world, even though he is dying tomorrow. Jesus goes to the cross, not in fear or gloom, but as a conqueror. Jesus won the victory through pain, weakness, and the humiliation of the cross. The world says this strategy will never succeed but God says that it will never fail. To the world, the cross is a symbol of weakness and defeat, but to us who are saved it is a symbol of divine love and the power of God.

He is not alone, the Father is with him (v. 32). We, too, are not alone. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are with us (Matt. 28:20; 2 Cor. 13:14). The Bible says, “You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you” [Isa. 26:3].

He is our peace. He experienced far more than we will ever experience, yet he is a conqueror, a winner. In him we have both objective peace with God because of his sacrifice for us, and in him we have subjective peace with God because of the assurance and comfort he gives us through his word and the truth it reveals to us about God.

Our African-American brethren like to say, “I am blessed by the best and destined for success.” So when people say to you, “How are you?” instead of saying “Fine,” how about saying, “Blessed”?

Another similar expression that I suggest we use is “All is well.” If someone says, “How are you?” say, “All is well.” You do not mean that everything is going your way.

It never has and never will. You do not mean that your health is solid and secure. That is often not the case. You do not mean that you are not being attacked by Satan trying to tear down your faith and ruin your relationship with God. It does not mean that everything in your life is fine.

It simply means like the song we sing, "It is well, it is well with my soul." All is well no matter what. Whether up or down, in sickness or health, God will bring you through.

In Psalm 23, after David sang of "green pastures and still waters," he spoke of walking "through the valley of the shadow of death." He knew that "all is well" no matter what and that he would "dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego knew that "all is well" even if they were cast into the fiery furnace and God chose not to deliver them (read Dan. 3:16-17).

The renowned black singer, Ethel Waters, found out that Christ is her peace the hard way.

She said that as a child she always felt lost and like an outsider. She was born out of wedlock and got into trouble continuously.

Here's the way she describes it, "I never was really a child, was never liked or understood by my family, never felt like I belonged, nobody brought me up. I ran wild as a little girl, was real bad, was leader of a street gang, and a general hell-raiser."

One night she went to a revival service to which she had been invited. She heard the message of God and the good news of Jesus. The preacher said that God could save anyone from their sins. Ethel wanted to be delivered. She asked God to take her. She turned to the Lord and responded to him in faith and obedience.

From that experience she wrote the words of this song:

"Why should I feel discouraged?
Why should the shadows fall?
Why should my heart be lonely, and long for heaven and home?
When Jesus is my portion, my constant friend is he,
For his eye is on the sparrow, and I know that he cares for me."

This is the peace that passes understanding. Our lives are in God's hand. "All is well."

God will work in our lives as he chooses. He may take care of us immediately. He may wait a while. He may not till we gather on heaven's fair shore.

So whether in this world or the next, whether in this life or the life to come, we can say, "All is well, all is well with my soul."

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