

Sixth Sunday of Easter May 26 2019

John 14:23-29

Peace.

What comes to mind when you hear this word?

The word peace appears 92 times in the New Testament. Two of those in this reading. This particular word is translated into the Hebrew as Shalom and carries the same kind of connotations as that word. What this means is that peace here is not about lack of conflict. Rather it means something like, wholeness, when all the essential parts are pulled together.

This is the peace that Jesus leaves us, gives to us. It is the peace Jesus wishes the disciples when he appears to them as they sit, locked in their room, cowering in fear...confused by what they have heard from the women on that Easter morning. Do you remember when we had that reading? Peace, be with you, he says. Wholeness be with you. Come back together into yourself.

I have always associated this kind of peace, with stillness. The stillness of the waters to which the shepherd leads us in the 23rd Psalm. The stillness of a quiet room, or mountain top, or field. Where all my

movement in mind and body has ceased. Where even my atoms seem to settle. Where body and mind are one and they...rest.

This peace is what Jesus gives to us. And as he points out, this gift is unlike anything the world gives.

Have you seen the picture online that purports to tell you how stressed you are by how much you see the objects in it moving? How many of you have done this? What answer did you get?

I hate to tell you, it's another online fib. It's an illustration by a Ukrainian artist who did base it on some optical work by a Japanese researcher. About the only thing it gets right, I think, is the relationship between motion and stress.

This is what the world gives us.

Jesus says, do not let your hearts – which in the Jewish thought is not the center of emotion but of your decision making and being-be troubled. The word troubled means setting something in motion that which should be still. A useless back and forth movement. I always get the image of the squirrel that does the suicide shuffle in front of your car.

Even with me just talking about it, can you feel it inside yourself? That restless stirring? That need to be DOING something, which all too often leads to meaningless action.

What troubles your heart? What sets it into motion? What has the world told you that you need to do, or fear, or worry about? Andrew Shepherd, American President. Because this is how the world works. Because fear motivates. It stirs us to action, one that can often be guided by others. Can you feel it rising in you right now? Can you feel your pulse getting quicker? Your breath getting shallow and faster?

This is what the world gives us.

It's not just politicians. Advertisers will often use this tactic. The global home security market was worth 31.6 billion in 2015 and has been growing at an annual rate of 8%. ADT, Simplisafe, the Ring doorbell, home security cameras (we've got them here in Ely). Fear motivates us to spend.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. And do not let them be afraid.

Here the word means something more like, cowardly, timid. Do not be afraid to act or speak because of what you think the consequences will be. How often have you not spoken up, not acted in the past week because you were afraid? Afraid of losing your job, of angering a loved

one, of being separated out from the group? How often have you not shared the Good News of God in Jesus Christ because of what you thought the consequences would be.

This is what the world gives. Setting us into motion, cowing us into silence. Pulling us in so many directions through our worry until the very fabric of who we are seems to be on the verge of breaking. Until we are no longer whole.

Peace. Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.

Peace...be still. The very words of Jesus to the storm on the Sea of Galilee. Be still. And even the chaos of the wind and sea obey him. The sea, the storm, was the realm of Ba'al the God of the Philistines. Ancient enemies of the Jews. But even here, in the citadel of Ba'al's power, it is Jesus who is in command. Peace, Jesus says to us, be still.

Be still, and know that I am God, the reminder from Psalm 46. For the frantic movements of our lives, the fear comes when we trust in false gods. Or, even worse, when we believe the lie that we are in charge. That we control our own destiny. That it's up to us.

Peace.

Brothers and sisters, the truth is that there is nothing to fear in this world. Not as believers in Jesus Christ. In Jesus' death and resurrection, the power of death has been destroyed. There is nothing the world can do to us. Period.

This is the source of our Peace in the face of all those things that drives other's hearts to be troubled and to fear. I have had this conversation with many folks, and there is always; incredulity in their eyes. Nothing to fear? A tornado just outside of Iowa City. A senseless shooting in Cedar Rapids. Jamie Clauson's kidnapping, Floods, cancer...nothing to fear?

Yes, there is pain, suffering, things in this world we need to be careful of. But there is nothing to fear. Nothing to make us cowardly and timid. Because our Lord is Jesus. The one who calms the storms of the false gods. The one whom even death cannot hold.

But here's the catch. I can't believe it. Not all the time I get, glimpses of it. Moments when that truth is so clear I can touch it. And life and the world is different, but then...it goes.

What we are left with, is trust. A reliance even when I'm not sure. Trust in the gift and promise of Jesus. A trust that comes not from

ourselves but from Christ himself. Which is why I'm here. To renew this trust. To be reminded of what I already have. Peace.

This is why we say, "The peace of Christ be with you always." It is reminder and promise. This Peace that Christ leaves with us is- with us. We have it. We don't earn it or find it. We live in it, even when we don't trust it.

If your heart is troubled today...set into motion by all that attacks you. Peace, be still. For the peace of Christ is with you.

Whatever makes your heart cower in fear today... that closes up your mouth from speaking the truth. Peace be with you. For you have been claimed in the waters of baptism by the God who can still any storm.

Peace be with you, for you are not alone. Just look around at all these other believers who know what it means to be troubled, to be afraid, and who also know the power of the Peace that Jesus gives us, that Jesus leaves us.

Peace be with you, Be still, that it may be well with your soul.

