

Sixth Sunday of Easter May 22 2022

John 14:23-29

What does the world give? What does God in Jesus Christ give? That's the question from our text in John today.

In thinking about it, I think the difference between the two is the difference between "You're not" and "You are".

Jesus points out that what the world gives is hearts that are troubled and afraid. The word for troubled- tarasso- means to set in motion what should be still, a useless back and forth motion the description of which always reminds me of what squirrels do in front of the car when you are driving towards them!

The world sets us into useless motion, it makes us cowardly and afraid, it goes so fast that it pulls us apart by centripetal force if not by malice.

But I don't have to tell you about this do I? Especially you graduates and your parents. You know all about deadlines for papers and applications, the push to be more productive, to do more, normally with less. You know about the race to go from class, to practice, to performance, to game. Sometimes literally pulling families apart more than they bring them together. I still

remember the number of parents who in the early days of the pandemic when everything was canceled talked about how nice it was to just be together. To not be moving all the time. Set into motion endlessly.

This way of being that the world gives is filled with “You’re not’s”. You’re not good enough for this scholarship. You’re not good enough to make this team. You’re not working hard enough. You’re not driving the best car you can. You’re not saving enough. It pushes social media images on TikTok, Snapchat, and others that gives us more things that we’re not... beautiful, ripped, funny, artistic. That always holds out the possibility of something better, creates a fear of missing out that pulls us apart even when we are trying to find something fun to do.

How many of you can imagine right now your own “You’re not” moments?

What the world gives is driven by a system that is designed around the accumulation of power, money, influence. And it is garnered, through division, fear, stirring into useless motion. It is the world we have created on our own. Thank you Adam and Eve.

Jesus says, I will give you something different. Peace. The word is the Greek version of the Hebrew shalom. Shalom means something more than the absence of conflict. It means wholeness. When all the essential elements are together. It is a profound sense of well-being that permeates all of who you are. It is peace like the still waters the shepherd leads us by in Psalm 23. It is the result of the command/invitation of God in Psalm 46, "Be still and know that I am God."

The very first thing Jesus says to the disciples when he appears to them in the locked room after his resurrection is peace be with you. Shalom be with you. It is meant to banish the fear, the cowardice, the timidity that the world had placed in those disciples. That had them hiding behind locked doors. It is accompanied by the warm breath of the Holy Spirit that calms them. Peace, wholeness, unity be with you.

The voice of Jesus says, "You are..." You are enough... just as you are. Even without extra curriculars, spectacular grades, the perfect resume... you are enough. The voice of Jesus says, You are loved- with no conditions or reservations. You are loved with wild abandon just because you are God's creation. The voice of Jesus says, you are skilled, gifted with talents unique to you. You are loved, you are skilled, talented. You have worth.

What Jesus gives is a peace that grounds us, slows us down so that we will no longer be stirred up by the foolishness that the world thinks is wise. The peace that Jesus gives is that regardless of what you think you see in the mirror, God sees the truth. A beautiful child of God whom God loves and takes infinite pride in.

Jesus' "You are..." brings peace by silencing all the "You're not's..." It brings shalom, wholeness, by seeing and accepting and loving who you are right now. By stilling your heart and saying, you are enough for me.

Which reign would you prefer to live under? One that always says, "You're not..."? One that spins you up into sound and fury that ultimately signifies nothing, that pulls us apart as individuals but also tears us apart as a society. That divides us into us and them. All for the sake of gaining power, adulation, money.

Or a reign that says "You Are..." You are loved, you are enough, that calls us into relationship with each other. Moves us to curiosity to discover the uniqueness of that person over there. Wondering what their gifts are, what their story might be. That celebrates the diversity that God has created into this world... on purpose.

A reign that acknowledges our imperfections, but also that God's love and forgiveness covers over all of that imperfection. And that has an endless fountain of grace so that we can start over again with no embarrassment or self-consciousness... because we all need that grace. For none of us are perfect. That's why we gather in this place. Because we recognize our need for that grace and we need to be reminded that we are...

I pray that we all choose peace. To join with Jesus Christ and reject the ways of this world and live under his reign. To sit at his feet and learn how to deepen the pools of our souls such that nothing can ever stir them up into useless motion.

For the way of the world is ultimately death, death of our souls, death of our self-esteem, sometimes literal death.

What Jesus gives is life. Life fuller and more abundant. Real life, not a virtual, staged, washed and touched up image of it. Life, with all of its warts and bumps. With imperfections galore, but real. Deep. Whole. With relationships that sustain us, that love us in the same way God does. That leaves us still, calm, at peace.

May that peace that only Christ can give be yours today, and always.