

Sermon for Sunday, March 1, 1981 by Andrew A. Jumper, D. D., Pastor  
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"THE LEGACY OF CHRIST"

St. John 14:15-31

Text: "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." St. John 14:27

There is something that Jesus has left for every Christian. It is His legacy to each of us. In our text for this morning He tells us what it is. He says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." I suppose that is one of the more familiar passages in the New Testament. Just to test it out, when I gave my sermon title to the secretaries for the bulletin, I asked them, "Jesus said He was leaving us something. What was it?" Instantly, one of the secretaries replied, "Peace." As a matter of fact, our text is also used as a part of the funeral service. I suppose that is rather appropriate. At a time like that when our hearts are broken and our eyes filled with tears, we need to hear Jesus say to us, "Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

But here is another statement Jesus once made about peace. And while it is not as familiar as our text, I think you will remember it. It reads this way, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it and he who loses his life for my sake will find it." (St. Matt. 10:34-39)

That's a rather interesting contradiction, don't you think? On the one hand, Jesus says He has not come to bring peace on earth, but a sword. And then He turns right around and says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." In both instances when Jesus uses the word "peace", the same Greek word is used. It means, "to put back together." I have in my mind the picture of a fine plate that is dropped on the floor. But the owner takes some of that new glue that is on the market and he puts that plate back together again. That which was broken and shattered is made one again, it is put back together. Now, that's the meaning of the word Jesus uses. With that in mind, let's reexamine what Jesus said. First, He says, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth." That is, "don't think that I have come to make you at one again with the world. Don't think that I have come to put you and the world together." "No," he says, "I came to separate you from the things of the world, even your closest family members."

Now, with that understanding of the meaning of the Greek word for "peace," let's apply it to the other statement. There Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." That means, "I make you one with me again, I put you back together again with God."

Well, that makes sense to me, does it you? As it turns out, the two statements are not contradictory at all. I think in another place Jesus makes the whole idea crystal clear. In John 16:33 He says, "...in me you have peace, in the world you have tribulation." Now, that puts a clear choice in front of you and me. Jesus says we

can have peace in the world, we can be at one with the world, but that separates us from Him. On the other hand, He says that if we are at one with Him, if we are put back together with God, it is going to separate us from the world.

Now, that is the first thing I want to say this morning. You can't be at peace--you can't be at one--with the world and with God at the same time. Now, a lot of us try to do that. We want everything the world has to offer and we want a little piece of God, too. But the fact is, that won't work. Remember the story of the rich young ruler? He wanted God and he said to Jesus, "What must I do to have eternal life?" But Jesus told him he couldn't have the world and God, too. He said, "Take all you have, sell it, and follow me." Well, the young man wasn't ready for that. He was rich, the Bible says, and he wanted the things of the world. Jesus said he couldn't have both. Either he gave his heart to the world, or he gave his heart to God, but he couldn't do both.

Don't you find yourself always being confronted by that choice? I do. I'm always having to choose between the things of the world and what God wants me to do. And like the rich young ruler, I frequently make the wrong choice. I can testify from personal experience that the consequence is not peace. I find my heart being torn in torment between what I want and what God wants from me. There is no peace. So, that's the first thing, you can't be at peace with the world and God at the same time.

The second thing I want to say is this: If you choose to be at peace with the world--if you decide for the material things or the pleasurable things, or the desires of the flesh--that peace will fail you. See how it works. Suppose you decide to gratify the sexual desires of the flesh in any way you choose, do you think that will bring you ultimate happiness? No, it only breaks up marriages and destroys homes and relationships. Or suppose you decide that making money will be the goal of your life. When you have become rich, do you think you will have all the happiness in the world? No, being rich won't guarantee happiness. Or, again, suppose you invest all of your love in your family and put them first. Will that make you happy? Well, it will unless a child goes wrong, or a loved one dies. And then it doesn't work so well.

No matter what illustration you use, if you choose the world--if you decide to be at one with the things of this earth--they will always fail you. There are some of us here this morning who have lived life gratifying the desires of the flesh--some who have made material things the goal of life--some who have put family above all else, even God--and you have discovered that it isn't working. You are not very happy and life isn't working very well.

The third thing I want to say this morning is this: If you are at one with God, if you have had your heart put back together with God's heart, you have found a peace that will never fail you. Jesus says the kind of peace He gives is different from the peace of the world. "Not as the world gives do I give to you," says Jesus.

Well, I would like that kind of peace, wouldn't you? I would like a peace that never fails me. You see, there is trouble in the world, isn't there? Jobs are lost, loved ones die, dreams and hopes often don't work out, there is sickness, loneliness; there are breakdowns in relationships with friends or family; our own emotional needs make us do things we are ashamed and sorry for. Yes, there is tribulation in the world. But do you remember what Jesus said? He said, "I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) Well, that's what I need--I need peace in the midst of a troubled world. Is that what you need, too?

Let me suggest three ways Jesus gives us peace. First, we have peace in the knowledge that no matter what happens, we know God still loves us. Sometimes things happen, maybe a loved one dies or something terrible happens, and we wonder, "Doesn't God care? Doesn't God realize how my heart is breaking?" And then we look at the cross--there we see God's own Son dying for us. Then we know, no matter what is going wrong, that God still loves us. I know there are some of you this morning who have sorrow in your life, some who have great tragedies, some with deep disappointments. But you can be sure of one thing: God loves you very much. Just look at Calvary--see Jesus there--for God so loved the world...and that means you.

Second, we can have peace in a troubled world because no matter what happens, the Bible tells us that God is bringing good out of it. The Bible says, "all things work together for good to them that love God." We may not always see it. Sometimes it may be years later that we will be able to look back and then we will see how God's hand was on us, how He was bringing good out of our sorrow and troubles. But we have this confidence, that out of our sorrow, God takes our tears and turns them into diamonds. There was once a farmer named Ali Hafed who owned a little farm. But he didn't like his farm. It wasn't what he wanted in life and he was angry at God for not blessing him. So, he sold his farm to a neighbor and went off to seek his fortune. However, nothing worked for him and finally, with his money all gone, he took his own life. One day the man who had bought the farm picked up a black stone from the brook running through the garden. It had a light shining from it so he put it on his mantle. Some days later a priest came to visit and saw the stone with its flash of light. He knew something about gems and recognized the stone as a diamond. This was the discovery of the Goldconda Diamond Mine, the largest in the world. Ali Hafed never knew that the little farm he despised was filled with diamonds. Isn't that often true of us? We come to some hurt, some disappointment, some sorrow, some loss and we despise that moment and sometimes we get angry with God. But out of that tribulation, God takes our tears and turns them into diamonds. That's His promise to you. If you love him, all things work together for good. You may not be able to see it now, but one day--looking back--you will see the diamonds God made from your tears.

Yes, God loves us and out of our sorrow, He brings good. The third way we find a peace that never fails is in the knowledge that God is in control. God has a plan for our lives. Sometimes we don't feel that way. Sometimes we feel that the Devil is in control or nobody is in control. But Jesus says, "let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." He says, "be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Yes, God is still in control. He may permit things in our lives because we are sinful people living in a broken world. We call that the Permissive Decree of God. If He protected us totally from our sins, if He kept every trouble from our door, we would never grow and mature spiritually, we would never learn to lean on Him totally. But He still loves us, He brings good out of troubles and sorrows, and He is still in control, He has a plan for our lives. A poet has put it beautifully this way:

My life is but a weaving between my Lord and me.  
I cannot choose the colors He works in steadily.  
Oft times He weaveth sorrow and I in foolish pride,  
Forget He sees the upper, and I the underside.

Not till the loom is silent and the shutters cease to fly  
Shall God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why,  
The dark threads are as needed in the weaver's skillful hand  
As the threads of gold and silver in the pattern He has planned.

Yes, "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." When our hearts are at one with God's heart we will have peace. We will have peace because no matter what happens we know God loves us, we know He brings good out of our troubles, and we know that God is in control who has a plan for our lives. Yes, we will have peace because we can trust that the dark threads are as needed in the weaver's skillful hand as the threads of gold and silver in the pattern He has planned.