

John 14:23-29

²³Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will hold on to my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴The one who does not love me does not hold on to my words. The word that you are hearing is not mine, but it is from the Father who sent me.

²⁵“I have told you these things while staying with you. ²⁶But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I told you.

²⁷“Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, and do not let it be afraid. ²⁸You heard me tell you, ‘I am going away and I am coming to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I.

²⁹“I have told you now before it happens so that, when it does happen, you may believe.”

Peace

I.

Today’s gospel begins with the phrase: “Jesus answered him” (John 14:23, EHV). It makes you wonder, doesn’t it? Just who was the “him” who Jesus was answering? Perhaps more importantly, what was the question?

The verse before today’s gospel reads: “Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, ‘Lord, what has happened that you are going to show yourself to us and not to the world?’” (John 14:22, EHV). One of Jesus’ disciples, Judas, but not the one who would betray Jesus into the hands of the Chief Priests shortly after this incident, asked a very important question. It seemed to Judas that something had changed in the attitude of Jesus. He had heard Jesus say that he had come on a mission from the Heavenly Father to be the Savior to all—the Savior of the whole world. Judas—not Iscariot—had taken Jesus at his word. It seemed to Judas that *everyone* ought to know about Jesus being the Savior of the world. So... “what has happened that you are going to show yourself to us and not to the world?”

It seems as though Jesus leaves the question hanging and proceeds off on a tangent of his own choosing. “Jesus answered him, ‘If anyone loves me, he will hold on to my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴The one who does not love me does not hold on to my words” (John 14:23-24, EHV).

Pay close attention to Jesus’ words, however, and you realize that Jesus *did* answer the question. The answer is a bit ominous: “The one who does not love me does not hold on to my words.”

The ominous part of Jesus’ answer is that so many are left out because of self-exclusion. To not hold on to Jesus’ words is to reject him in unbelief.

Jesus *did* come to be the Savior of the whole world, just as Judas had learned to understand from Jesus’ previous teachings. Believers today can look back at his completed saving activity and realize that what he did was done for all. But millions and millions of people in our own country self-exclude.

II.

“Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, and do not let it be afraid” (John 14:27, EHV).

Peace. Everyone wants peace, don’t they? Water tumbling relentlessly over a fall makes

a lot of noise, but the sound is comforting in a way. Maybe it only pulls your attention away from the things that would rob you of peace—the chaotic noises of modern society, the discord and disharmony of family strife, the pressures of school or job—the falling water allows you to shut out everything else.

Since everyone wants peace and Jesus offers what he calls a special kind of peace, why aren't the doors of churches bursting at the seams? What kind of peace are people seeking?

Certainly problems are evident in society. Aberrant behavior so permeates the culture of the day that even if it isn't affecting your life personally you can't get away from it's prominent position in entertainment—tv and movies are filled with violence and rape and substance abuse.

If these things *do* touch your life personally, you just want to sit on a bench near that waterfall and hope that somehow, someday, the sound of the falls can just whisk away all your cares and concerns. The tumbling water can take with it all the cacophony that fills your life and robs you of peace every day.

Peace. Just a little peace.

Sadly some churches offer a deceiving peace. They promise peace from financial concerns if you just scatter some seed money in the offering plate. They promise you peace of mind and body—no more physical or emotional problems—if you just believe strongly enough or purely enough.

Such offers of peace deny what God said when sin entered the world by Adam and Eve's misdeed: "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children....¹⁷ Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you...¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return" (Genesis 3:17-19, NIV84).

Peace. What kinds of peace were *you* looking for? What peace continually eludes you?

Pocketbook peace is false peace. Peace of mind and body is a false peace. *All* the peace offered by the world is false peace. It is all false peace because it ignores the underlying problem: sin.

What really robs you of peace is sin. It isn't just the big sins that land you in prison, like murder and rape and armed robbery that deny you peace, the little ones do it, too. Your conscience is there to relentlessly remind you of each tiny misdeed. A repetition of evil acts might dull the conscience in one area or another, but the nagging doesn't cease. Tell one little white lie and constantly you must try to remember who you told what so your stories stay consistent.

III.

It is sin that destroys peace. It is sin that robs you of peace.

Jesus didn't come to put a superficial band-aid on things. He didn't come to cover up the problems of sin with victory over substance abuse or financial security. He came to deal with the actual problem: sin.

"You heard me tell you, 'I am going away and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I" (John 14:28, EHV). Jesus spoke these words before his death and resurrection. He speaks of his death as a "going away." This is also why he speaks of his Father as greater than he—he is speaking from his state of humiliation. He does not and will not use all his power as God, because he must suffer and die to pay for the sin that robs peace from all.

The sin problem has been dealt with. Jesus lived perfectly from his birth in the little town of Bethlehem to the very moment he surrendered his spirit to the Heavenly Father from the cross and breathed his last. His death was not to pay for his own capital crimes, but his death—and even more so the fact that the Heavenly Father had forsaken him there on the cross—was to completely pay for the underlying cause of a lack of peace.

“Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you” (John 14:27, EHV).

Peace, real peace, is peace with God. Peace with God cannot be had when your heart is full of sin. Jesus leaves you his peace. Jesus gives you his peace. It is a peace with God. It is a peace that comes, not just because your sins have been paid for, but because you stand righteous and holy—perfect in God’s sight—because Jesus has made you perfect. *This* is the peace he gives.

IV.

“I have told you now before it happens so that, when it does happen, you may believe” (John 14:29, EHV).

Jesus’ death and resurrection *have* happened. We see and believe with the eyes of faith. We see through the eyes of the disciples who were first there and recorded even their doubts and skepticism to give us even more understanding of the kind of peace Jesus brings.

Worldly peace may still seem elusive, but you have an even greater peace. It isn’t a waterfall you need to drown out the cares and concerns of the world, it is Jesus, the spring of living water welling up inside you that brings you the peace that passes all human understanding. Live in *that* peace. Live knowing that no matter what challenges you face in this life, your Savior is there to guide you and guard you and to give you continual peace with God. Amen.