

John 14:27

A young man had received a birthday gift from his elderly father. The father was very wealthy, and so his son was hoping to get a brand new sports car. But upon opening the gift, he discovered it was a box containing a brand new Bible. In disgust the young man threw the book in the back of his closet. Years passed and the son never spoke to his father again. After his funeral, he noticed the Bible still in the back of his closet. Opening it he found a check his father had written many years earlier. It was written out to him in the amount of a brand new sports car.

Sometimes we treat God the way this son treated his father. If He doesn't give us what we want, we get disgusted and blame Him for what is wrong in our life.

Now I'm not sure what you're hoping to receive from God here today. I don't think it's a brand new sports car. I hope not. But be assured that what God has to give is something much greater in value. Listen to what Jesus says in our text on this Pentecost Sunday: *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you."* And maybe we're thinking, "Is that it?" And we're tempted to throw this gift in the back of our closet. I mean, look around us. There's no peace. The angel declared, "Peace on earth" 2,000 years ago. But since then, peace is the one thing rarely ever found in the world.

But hear Jesus out. *"Not as the world gives do I give to you."* There is no lasting peace in the world. Enemies can sign peace treaties. Hostile neighbors can shake hands. But all these are temporary. Jesus tells us there will always be wars and rumors of wars; that hostilities will increase as the end approaches. And besides this, the peace that Jesus gives is not a mere external peace. It's internal.

Now maybe there are some who don't think they need this. "I'm doing fine. My life is sailing along smoothly. I'm not bothered much at all by anything really." Well we're glad to hear that. And they can feel free to take a nap during a sermon such as this, for they don't need to hear Jesus' words. They can just open the door of their closet and toss His peace way in the back.

But I hope and pray that's not you. Can I say this? I hope the devil bothers you so much that you're driven to the peace of Christ!

There were two paintings done by two different artists. They both were attempting to paint a scene describing this peace Jesus speaks of. The one painted a quiet, deep blue mountain lake. It was somber and made one feel calm just by looking at it. The other chose to paint a little cottage sitting in the midst of a raging thunderstorm, and in a window by candlelight was a father gently rocking his tiny child, holding him close within his arms.

For me, this one captures the peace that Jesus gives. We've been through some storms, haven't we? Some have been pretty rough. And not just out there...in here. You've had days in which you've barely hung on. I know this because I've had them too. The only saints who are enduring no troubles at all are those who now rest from their labors; the ones we've buried who are now in heaven.

The saints here on earth, though, are still in the fight. We fight against the devil. We fight against the sinful world around us. And perhaps the toughest fight of all is the one we have with ourself. When Jesus says, "*Let not your heart be troubled,*" this is *tarasso* in the Greek. The meaning is "to tear this way and that way." And He's right. Many days this describes exactly what's going on in our hearts and minds.

People see us and think that we're stable. But inside of us we're a mess. We're all torn up. Torn this way by what someone says to us. Torn that way by how we react. And torn up in our hearts because we blame others, and we do blame God. And then our conscience plagues us. We get torn up inside because once again we proved just how sinful we truly are.

This is the thunderstorm, and it's fierce. But see yourself being held in the Father's arms. This is where you are, for you are baptized into Christ Jesus. And listen to what Jesus says to you: "*Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*"

Now it would be cruel just to tell someone not to worry or be troubled without giving the reason for this. Jesus does tell you - because He gives you peace. And not just any peace; His peace. "*My peace I give to you.*"

Think about this: Jesus and His Heavenly Father, they're at peace with each other, aren't they? This peace, "*My peace,*" says Jesus, is the same peace He gives to you. The way the Father loves Jesus is the way He loves you...the same way. The way the Heavenly Father feels about Jesus is the same way He feels about you. The peace that exists between the Father and the Son is the very same peace that exists between God and you.

Jesus made this happen for you by dying on the cross for you. I don't care who you are or what you know and believe. It's true. God is at peace with you. He loves you. He forgives you of all your sins...all of them. Jesus made this happen. He died for every sinner...including you.

Do not take this gift and throw it in the back of your closet. For then, like the check the father had written, it will do you no good. Believe it. And believing it, live it.

Remember what day this is - Pentecost Sunday. On this day we rejoice that the Father and the Son sent to us the Holy Spirit. For He is the one who brings Jesus' words to you and grants you the faith to believe them and to live them.

The Holy Spirit is our Comforter says Jesus. He comforts you with the peace Jesus gives to you. He paints that scene of the father holding his child close during the storm. And the Holy Spirit declares that this is you. You are this child...God's child. "*Let not your heart be torn this way and that way, neither let it be afraid,*" for you are safe with the Heavenly Father, and nothing can ever, ever tear you away from Jesus. Amen.