

## **John 14:23-29**

23Jesus answered him, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

25”I have said these things to you while I am still with you. 26But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. 27Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

28You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I am coming to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. 29And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.

Sermon:

*The Peace of the Lord be with you always....*

The absolute weirdest experience I had in a church that follows a traditional liturgy happened during the sharing of the peace. The presider told us to get up, stretch and ‘say hi to our neighbour’. Maybe the pastor wanted to set a tone of friendliness. In reality, the worshipping community that day lost the opportunity to proclaim how God does a radical new thing—God is about bringing a total well being to all creation. The prophets called it “shalom”.

It might surprise you to know that tradition deems mandatory the sharing of the peace at communion services. Mandatory? Really? Why?

For openers, Jesus call for us to live peacefully with each other and to integrate our faith with the relationships we have with each other. It’s easy to think about peace in the abstract and a lot more difficult when you’re living in close quarters, trying to stretch limited resources, or even having strong disagreements about the colour scheme for the new carpet.

Sharing the peace goes deeper than Hallmark-ey nice sentiment. It goes to the heart of our existence . Sharing the peace is a bold declaration that God's got this...and God's heart and God's action is set on healing all that's broken.

Consider the audacity of proclaiming peace in our churches. We're saying things aren't right in the world....War, hate, violence, and generalized cussedness appear to be the world's default setting. This is NOT God's doing. God is committed to making things right.

The sort of peace Jesus is talking about is downright counter cultural. Jesus spells it out...it's not the peace the world gives. It comes from God, not kings or emperors or economic schemes. God's peace doesn't impose' exclusion clauses or terms and conditions of use. God's peace transcends the absence of guns and rockets—bringing deep and wholistic well being.

The prophets imagine God's peace—shalom as a time when people repurpose their weapons and convert them into ways of feeding each other. Shalom is what happens when people experience jubilee in the form of debt forgiveness, when money grabs are defeated, and when people are free from fear of starving, eviction, or going without medicine.

Are we there yet?

This is not the peace the world gives...the occupying emperor of Jesus' day crowed about Pax Romana—the war's over. That's true because for a while Rome ran out of people to run over. Augustus' brand of peace boils down to *“do it our way and we just might let you live.”*

New Testament scholar Matt Skinner invites us all to consider the terms-or the cost attached to the peace the world gives. One slogan bandied about between the first two world wars was “peace at any price”. The so-called doctrine of appeasement failed more because of predators like Otto Von Bismarck and his successor Adolf Hitler. So called peace in the American West came under the structure of apartheid's spiritual ancestor- something parallel to Canada's Indian Act.

Even when we're not at peace with ourselves, money making world tells us if we're feeling insecure, we can just buy products to look and smell better, we'll be feel at peace. The beauty of such a gimmick is that it failure is

baked right in! The unease returns, and we keep on buying and we keep in trying.

The preachers from this week's Festival agree that the warring, polluting, and oppressing will get worse—the headline news backs them up. And don't go for the easy answer or the quick fix. The empire and the ad writer's—or the influencer's myth of a magic bullet is counterfeit and deadly.

*But do not let your hearts be troubled*—Jesus sends the Spirit- God's comfort, and reminders of all Jesus is about and all he has taught to a scared, tired, confused community of followers. Maybe that community isn't all that different from us. The promise to Phillip, Thomas and all the the others of God's abiding presence now and forever is God's promise to us too.

When we share the peace later in this service, recall the risen Christ who defeats death, bypasses barred doors and breathes his own unique peace into us. And imagine..... what would happen if some of God's shalom were unleashed in the world.