

Sermon Notes May 26, 2019

Focus John 14 -The goodbye dinner and a peace that passes all understanding

Lectionary Readings

https://www.lectionarypage.net/YearC_RCL/Easter/CEaster6_RCL.html

Today, Jesus is saying goodbye at the Last Supper. Jesus wants to encourage the disciples to continue his work after he is gone. His peace and the Holy Spirit will guide them in his absence.

Jesus says -

Peace 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.

That might sound like great inspirational poster, but how do we actually experience a peace that soothes a troubled heart? In other words, how do we experience a “peace that passes all understanding” (Philippians 4)? This peace is embedded in our worst experiences and failures, alongside our victories. It would not be Jesus’ gift of peace, if it was just the cherry on top of a perfect life.

Depression - part of the imperfect life

I have had long periods of **not** experiencing Jesus’ gift of peace. Only a fraction of you regularly live with depression, but 100% of you have had depressive moments. I am a pretty happy guy (now), but that happiness and peace has been hard won and long in coming.

When I was younger, I felt like darkness was just inches from overtaking me. I’ve learned to trust that even if I can’t fix it, there is a God who carries me through the shadow of the valley of despair. God - decade after decade - has been un-breaking my heart. Light and peace has shown up on the other side of a long slog. I hope you know that the next time a long shadow hits you, Jesus’ peace will still be the light at the end of the tunnel.

Needy love - fast track to depression

When I am not grounded in peace, I insist that people love me. This needy love is insatiable and when it’s not enough (it never is), peace flees.

St. Francis knows peace. He gives us a good perspective in his famous prayer. Here’s a small piece —*Seek not to be consoled as to console; To be understood as to understand; To be loved as to love* — The more we see love as freely available; something that resists insisting; infinitely renewable; and independent of our actions, the more we can step out of the needy trap to find enduring peace.

Goodness and mercy have not always followed me through the all days of my life

It has taken a long time to feel like I deserved goodness and mercy. I spent far too long convinced that what I really deserved was a swift kick to the backside.

More of St. Francis prayer -- *Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace; Where there is hatred, let me sow love; Where there is despair, hope; Where there is darkness, light; And where there is sadness, joy.*

Every time we open the door wide to other people and practice welcoming strangers and acquaintances, joy will bubble out the black tar of unworthiness — that bubble looks a lot like a peace that passes all understanding.

Affirmation trap — it's related to the needy love When I (we) demand that people affirm us, they become a one dimensional prop to our ego. We stop seeing the real and complicated people as they are. By grace, I am learning to see the face of God in broken and highly imperfect people - just like me.

St. Francis must have had some challenging people in his life to write this part of his prayer - *O Divine Master, Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console.* When we really feel good in our bones and our heart is neither troubled nor afraid, we actually find joy caring for incredibly challenging people. They don't need to affirm us and don't owe us anything.

Kindness is a good start

When we practice kindness independent of people's behavior, we get a hard-to-quench-peace. Spiritual buoyancy comes when someone is in your face, and you are not dragged to the pit with them.

More St. Frank — *For it is in giving that we receive; It is in pardoning that we are pardoned; And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

If we get grumpy and demand that people "act right" in any way, depression is soon to follow. Yet, when we think we are worthy of love and peace **and** everyone else is worthy of love and peace, it changes how we move in the world and lightens our step.

All grace, all peace

I am praying for grace - grace for depression and grace for a new peace. We can strive to see all people as intrinsically precious in God's sight. Every single person who has ever breathed - the good and the bad, the rich and the poor, the industrious and the lazy, are unconditionally awesome - cherished, worthy of love, and vessels of light. This is hard to believe and practice; but when we do - depression & darkness soon dissipate. Even if it doesn't dissipate for you as quickly as you would like, darkness is not the truth about you. Peace, light and love has the final word. **Todd**