

Peace

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[0 : 00] Will you turn with me this evening to words which you will find in the Gospel according to John. The Gospel according to John, the 14th chapter, and reading at verse 27, where our Lord is speaking to his disciples.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you, let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you.

This gracious benediction was pronounced by the Lord on the eve of the crucifixion.

And while it was destined to bring comfort and cheer to his disciples in all ages, yet he knew that before it could become a reality, he had to engage in the greatest conflict in which the world has ever known, the conflict between himself and the forces of evil, a conflict from which he was to emerge victorious, and as a result of which he was to bring peace to many through the blood of his cross.

[1 : 47] Now it is true to say that there is no blessing which is more eagerly sought after in the world today than the blessing of peace.

In a world which is characterized by hatred and jealousy and suspicion, in a world where there is a restlessness and a longing and a yearning in the hearts of men for something they scarce know what, surely what they need above all else is peace and serenity and calm.

And our text reminds us that there are two parties, two contesting parties which are offering us peace, the world and Jesus Christ.

The former offers us peace by gratifying desire. Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. Why should you worry about what is going on around you?

And the peace which Christ offers is that of the healing of a disordered heart. Getting to the root of the trouble, so to speak.

[3 : 17] Dealing with the conflict which threatens our peace. And through that conflict, bringing us the peace of God which passes all understanding.

And so for a short time this evening, let us consider these two offers of peace in order that we may be able to examine them and to evaluate them and to ask ourselves which kind of peace, if any, we are enjoyed.

And to ask ourselves especially whether we know anything of that peace of God which passeth all understanding.

First of all then, there is the peace which the world offers. And Satan proves himself to be a good psychologist when he makes an offer of peace to men.

He has made a special study of the temperaments of the temperaments of men. And it is with a view to lulling them into a sense of false security.

[4 : 41] And so to a certain class or to a certain type of men he offers what we might describe as the peace of conquest.

There is the great leader for example. The one who is interested, intensely interested and ambitious either nationally or internationally.

The one who wants to be a great leader. The one who wants to be head and shoulders above his fellows. And who has a tremendous ambition along these lines.

And to him Satan says yes, you're on the right lines. You achieve your desire.

Achieve your ambition. And all will be well. And how many there are who have achieved their ambition only to find at the end of it that they were broken hearted and dispirited men.

[5 : 47] And instead of peace they found despair. Is it not recorded for example of Alexander the Great that when he reached the height of his ambition when there were no more conquests to be made he literally wept.

That was the best which the world could do for him. Or again on the same lines this piece of conquest there is the businessman.

The man who wants to make a success of his business and who doesn't want to make a success of his business. But I am thinking of the man in particular who is so wrapped up so concerned with the material things of life that the spiritual is obliterated.

And to that type of person Satan once more says yes you're on the right lines make a success of your business prove yourself to be the most successful businessman in the community or in the district and when your dream is realized you can lie back and you can enjoy peace.

And how many people in seeking to achieve their goal have found at the end of the day that they are broken and dispirited men.

[7 : 17] The world offered so much and the world at the end of the day proved to be a disappointment and they know nothing not a thing about peace.

Or there is the man whose chief concern is in becoming rich and again the arch enemy of soul says yes you're on the right lines you achieve riches and when you have a certain amount on the bank you can sit back and you can take things easy and you'll enjoy a peace that you never dreamed of.

You remember the man in the gospels of whom it is recorded that he was becoming so wealthy that he built extra barns in order to cope with the abundant harvest and you remember the message that came to him and what a startling message it was.

You foolish man do you not realize that this very night your soul will be required of you and what are all your riches what is all your wealth what are all your possessions to mean to you then nothing no peace but misery and unhappiness.

When is a man satisfied the question was once asked and the answer given was this a man is satisfied when he has a little more than he has now and it doesn't require much logic to remind us that that is never riches can never satisfied satisfy or again Satan comes to the man whose great love in life is excitement he's not particularly ambitious along business lines or making a great deal of money but he wants excitement and along with it he wants popularity he wants to be the signature of all eyes the person to whom the gaze of men will be directed because he's the most popular in the circle where he moves and so he goes about it and at the end of the day he finds how futile has his search or his quest been because the popularity of the world is a fickle popularity and like the prodigal of old when his money was done people turn aside from him and he finds himself miserable and downcast and there is one thing that is very often true and characterizes such a man because he has lived for a life of excitement he can't bear to be alone

[10 : 35] I remember meeting a young man once and he said to me you know I just can't bear to be alone because when I'm alone I'm conscious of the fact that there is a voice speaking to me he didn't say it was the voice of God but undoubtedly it was and he was trying to escape from that voice to evade it and he had to get into the company of his fellows so that the voice would be silenced no peace there is no peace saith my God to the wicked but the evil one becomes more subtle still and he says to some well you will find peace peace and peace and peace and peace and peace and peace and peace and peace and good deeds and so on and many have been frustrated when they have sought peace in this way for even good deeds cannot bring peace peace is something which is deeper by far than that which is to be found through the result of good deeds no matter how honest we may be in our seeking to perform them that peace is the offer which the world makes peace and somehow or other we never seem to be able to lay hands on it the peace of conquest but then there is another type of peace which the world offers and that is the peace of unconcern and Satan now applies himself not to the type of person I have just described not to the person who is ambitious or who is interested in wealth or excitement and so forth but to the person who perhaps is a little bit indolent and a little bit lazy and he says to him he says why worry why worry don't take religion seriously just remain neutral just plod along the way you have been doing and everything will be all right at the end of the day just remain placid but the trouble is that at the end of the day this peace this peace of unconcern very often becomes what we might call the peace of fatalism a peace which makes a voice whisper in the hearts of men particularly and this is the danger of it particularly in the hearts of those who have been brought up to come to church church now your destiny you have nothing to do with your destiny your destiny is sealed from the beginning either you're going to be numbered among the elect of

God or you're not and this piece of fatalism grips them they feel that there's nothing that they can do and it becomes this piece of stagnation and amidst all this stagnation they find themselves drifting further and further away from the God whom they had been taught to worship in their youth I remember in North Africa during the war we were traveling from one place to another once and we were looking for a spot to set up our camp for the night and there weren't very many inviting spots in that part of North Africa and then we came to a place which just looked ideal there was a little stream it was the land was so flat there that it was hardly moving and there were a few trees eucalyptus trees and it looked just an ideal spot but when we came to it there was a military sign up positively no camping here malarious area it looked so inviting and yet that stagnant water it was the breeding ground was the breeding ground of the fly which carried the malarial germ and which wrought havoc among those who contracted it and we had to push on it was a peaceful scene but it was the peace of stagnation and you see that is exactly a picture of those who are not prepared to do anything they say well why should I worry everything will go all right let me just take things at their face value and before they know it they're in the grip of this peace of stagnation they think it's peace but it's the very reverse the peace which the world gives but now let us turn to that other kind of peace my peace says Christ

I give unto you not as the world giveth give I unto you you see it's a different quality of peace it's a peace which comes through surrender it's a peace which comes through the recognition of the lordship of Jesus Christ and there are three things which are essential to the full enjoyment of that peace and to begin with there is reconciliation can two walk together unless they be agreed of course they can't if you have had an estrangement with a friend then you no longer enjoy fellowship along as you walk along the road until that estrangement has been settled and you see that's exactly the position between

God and men there's been this estrangement man has fallen from the state in which he was created as I was saying this morning man has proved himself to be a rebel shaking his puny fist in the face of God and until they are brought together until they are reconciled there can be no peace but conflict you remember when Jacob fled from the face of his brother Esau he felt guilty because he had robbed his brother of his birthright and then when years afterwards he heard about his brother coming to meet him he wasn't at all happy he was afraid because he felt that his brother was going to take revenge or vengeance on him because of what he had done and there was no peace until they were reconciled and so it is with men there is an estrangement between the souls of men and God and what those who proclaim the gospel have to say is this now then we are ambassadors for Christ we are his representatives we have a message to bring you from Christ and the portent of that message is be ye reconciled to God because it is through reconciliation that we are going to enter into peace but not only must there be reconciliation there must also be separation come ye out from among them and be ye separate saith the

Lord now it is a hundred pities one might say a thousand pities that that text is sometimes quoted as a justification for separation between Christian brethren because of some little difference that they might have one from the other what a pity it is to see the true children of God divided and what a pity it is that they should listen to the voice of Satan and quote such words as the justification for the situation in which they find themselves no these words apply to a separation to a division between the believers between the people of God and the world around there must be a line of demarcation if any man be in

[20 : 39] Christ he is a new creature a new creation all things are passed away behold all things are become new and there are many who are not enjoying peace for this reason they are trying to sit on the fence they are not recognizing to the full the lordship of Jesus Christ in their lives peace and then also there is consecration and in consecration we have peace through service a moment or two ago I was telling you about that malarial swamp which was a picture of the peace of stagnation and what a dangerous peace that is but there is another picture comes to my mind a picture of my boyhood days when there was the little stream coming trickling down the hillside and then it meandered across the meadow and it came to the old mill wheel and as it tumbled over the mill wheel it turned it round and the miller was busy grinding the corn and making food for man and for beast it was a peaceful scene but it was the peace of activity and it reminded me of the words of the prophet then had thy peace been as a river a happy scene a joyful scene an active scene but what peace what serenity what calm and that is the peace which we enjoy when we lay ourselves unreservedly on the altar of

God's service and when you lay yourself there my friend it will do certain things for you first of all it will bring peace amidst personal anxieties you see we are all beset being human we are all beset with the cares and the worries of life it may be domestic cares about our households it may be health cares concerning ourselves or our loved ones it may be business anxieties but how different in these situations is the attitude of the Christian to that of the worldling the worldling is worried and the worldling becomes rebellious in his worry but the Christian reminds himself that he who notes the sparrow's fall is much more interested in the welfare of his child and doesn't that thought bring peace you see there's nothing too little to bring to our

Lord in prayer and then too it will bring us peace amidst the unrest of this present world and surely there is much that is fitting to cause anxiety in these days in which we live the spirit of foreboding is abroad there are wars and rumors of wars and there are weapons apparently which if unleashed could blot out mankind in a moment but how comforting to remind ourselves in such a situation that our God knows the end from the beginning that he keepeth the souls of his saints that we know whom we have believed and that we are persuaded that he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him against that day doesn't that calm our troubled spirits

God is in control he hasn't lost his grip of the situation he knows the end from the beginning and then too there is peace amidst the strife of tongues you see the Christian is often misrepresented and misunderstood people are always ready to ridicule particularly the young person who was prepared to take a stand for Jesus Christ but does our master not remind us that there is a blessing for those who are reviled and persecuted he doesn't leave them to themselves men may ridicule you but one thing they can't do is they can't rob you of your peace I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of

God said the psalmist and dwell in the tents of wickedness why because there he would enjoy peace of conscience because there he would know he was in the place where God had promised to meet with his people and then too and surely this is most wonderful of all there is peace through the knowledge of sins forgiven you see sin is a great disturber of the peace sin as we already noticed estranges men from God but you remember the words which we read in the epistle to the Romans therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ peace perfect peace in this dark world of sin the blood of

[27 : 16] Jesus whispers peace within yes peace comes through the shedding of blood peace comes peace through conflict I happened to be in the city of Jerusalem on the day when the second world war finished and it was an unforgettable experience I think the city of Jerusalem for its size has probably more bells than any other city of a similar size and on that day not one single bell was silent each one seemed to be vying with his neighbour as to who was going to make the loudest noise in order to ring out the glad news of peace in fact I heard afterwards that the old beadle in the

Scots Kirk there was so enthusiastic that he broke the bell rope but then why shouldn't he be it was a day of glad tidings and there was a message of peace to be wrung out to the world and our thoughts of course and some of us had been many years from home our thoughts went out to home and to loved ones now we could see the day when there would be in the good providence of God a glad reunion and as we were thinking along those lines we were standing on the parapet of St.

Andrew's Church in Jerusalem looking down into the valley and I could see a lot of soldiers men yes and women too in khaki making their way up the hill and it was evident that they were coming to the church there were there from all nationalities Scotland was well represented there were English and Irish there there were South Africans Australians Canadians the lot and somehow or other they seemed to have one thought in common they were wending their way to that church in order to engage in an act of thanksgiving to a God who had brought peace and I held a service for that group of service men who came along and I think I can safely say that it was the most thrilling and the most inspiring service which

I ever conducted there was a silence there was a hush they were there in this true spirit of thanksgiving God had been speaking to them and they recognized that God was the author of peace some of them were wearing their battle scars and together we prayed for the peace of Jerusalem in its widest sense and from that day forward our opening psalm the 122nd psalm took on a new meaning for me for every time I sing it I picture not the tribes but those men and do they not form the tribes coming up the hillside to the city of Jerusalem to worship God but that day my friends we remembered a greater conflict still as we stood looking across at that hill outside the city wall we remembered him who made peace through the blood of his cross and we could hear his voice saying to us peace

I leave with you my peace I give unto you not as the world giveth give I unto you let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid can we express our confidence in him tonight in those well known words two lines of which I have already quoted peace perfect peace in this dark world of sin the blood of Jesus whispers peace within peace perfect peace by thronging duties pressed to do the will of Jesus this is rest peace perfect peace our future all unknown Jesus we know and he is on the throne peace perfect peace death shadowing us and ours

[32 : 34] Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers it is enough earth struggles soon shall cease and Jesus call to heaven's perfect peace my friend the author of peace is here tonight he has signed the peace treaty with his own blood and now he offers it to you are you going to by his grace enter into an experience of that peace of God which passeth all understanding this is not a figment of the imagination this as many can testify is a glorious reality a glorious possibility by the grace of God so may we hear his voice and may his benediction go with us through all our earthly life until by his grace at the end of the day we hear his voice saying to us peace

I leave with you my peace I give unto you not as the world giveth give I unto you let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid amen let's pray oh thou who art the author of peace and who has made peace through the blood of thy cross who entered into that dreadful conflict and who bore upon thy body the sins of thy people help us to remember what this peace cost in order that it might be offered to us help us to remember that we are not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold but with the precious blood of

Christ as of a lamb without blemish and help us dear Lord by thy grace to lay ourselves unreservedly in the altar of thy service to spend and to be spent in the service of the best of masters if there be any here tonight dear Lord who know nothing of this peace which we have been considering grant oh Lord that they may turn away from the world and from the peace which the world offers and find that peace which thou alone canst give direct their eyes toward thyself and may they have no rest and no peace until they enter into an experience of that peace of God which passeth all understanding we ask this with the pardon of our every sin for

Jesus sake Amen we had we we we we we we we we we we we