

PEACE. TO. YOU.

By Rev. Will Nelken

Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, California, on Sunday, April 1, 2018

Today, we are considering the events of what we call Holy Week, from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday. (Trust me, Jesus' original disciples did not call it that. For them, it was more like Hell Week!)

You've heard the story this morning (or you may review it in the last chapter of Matthew, Mark or Luke, or John 20). Now, think about that eventful week from the disciples' point of view:

- They had given Jesus four years of their lives; left their family and career
- Palm Sunday reached a crescendo of hope, as Jesus arrived in Jerusalem amidst shouts of praise
- But they were a little let down when Monday came and nothing had been done to re-establish the kingdom of Israel
- That Wednesday was the Passover, a High Sabbath (in addition to the weekly Sabbath)
- They ate the Seder together, but the dinner conversations were unusual (Jesus spoke about betrayal, death, substitution, service)
- Then came the betrayal, the arrest, the mock trials, the beatings, the crowd chanting for His death, the long walk to Golgotha, the crucifixion, the darkness, the earthquake—could it be any more unsettling? Could it be any worse?
- Their hopes were crushed!

Tension was high! Emotions were swirling! Minds were numb. Energy was depleted. Most of us can relate. Sometimes, when it rains, it pours!

Now, take a breath and calm down and reflect again.

Consider the same events from another point of view—that of Jesus, the Son of God:

- This was the consummation of the Father's plan and of His incarnation (the reason He had come to the earth)
- The betrayer went to work; in fact, Jesus sent him to work!
- Jesus fulfilled and transformed the Seder meal (what had been the commemoration of an historic deliverance of a people became the remembrance of the everlasting rescue of humanity)
- Then Jesus battled on His knees in the Garden of Gethsemane (until He prayed, "Not My will, but Yours be done.")
- Jesus entrusted Himself again to the Father's plan (and into the hands of wicked men)

- He witnessed the blindness of religious leaders, their mockery of truth, their hatred of the light, their abuse of the Law and of their power
- Then came the beatings, the long walk to Golgotha, the nails piercing His hands and feet, hanging for hours on the cross under the Middle Eastern sun, the sudden darkness at noon, and at last, the finish line (“It is finished! He cried)

We all make our plans, but the Lord orders our steps.

When God’s order conflicts with our plans, what then?

When we plan for rest and relaxation, but His plan calls for work, what then?

When we plan for ease and comfort, but His plan calls for hardship and difficulty, what then?

When we plan to spend on ourselves, but His plan calls for us to spend on others, what then?

If your primary measuring stick is your own personal comfort and convenience, you’re going to face a lot of frustrating, wearisome days. Perhaps there’s another measure you could use... Maybe there’s another way to look at it, another perspective...

Let me ask some questions for your contemplation.

Did the Father ever abandon His Son?

John 16:31 Jesus asked (His disciples), “Do you finally believe? 32 But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when you will be scattered, each one going his own way, leaving me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. 33 I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”

Did Jesus ever get beyond the Father’s reach?

Did the Father cease to care for His Son?

Did the Father cease to work His plan? (He only ever took *one day’s rest* that we know of!)

Jesus said, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working” (John 5:17).

What was happening *behind* the visible and tangible circumstances—those events we read about?

- Battles in the Spirit (the curse of sin was broken; the devil was played; Christ defeated death, Hell, and the grave).
- Transformations of the heart. (the disciples reliance upon sensory information was challenged; their understanding of the prophetic nature of the Scriptures was increased; minds were boggled, but hope was restored)

When your plans go awry, has God left you?

When your plans go awry, do you look for someone to blame? (Yourself, others, God?)

Do you ever consider that God is in the change? That He may have ordered the change? That the change, though unwanted, may result in good? That the change may be a key to your destiny? That the change may be necessary?

If you cannot understand why things happen as they do, does that make the changes necessarily bad or wrong?

This story—the resurrection story—preaches... in a BIG way! Here are several of Jesus' own Sunday sermons (taken directly from the resurrection story):

- Why are you weeping? (Not that weeping is wrong, but *why*? What are you feeling, thinking, needing, hoping?)
- Don't be afraid; don't be overcome. (Fears are normal, but they don't have to be in charge.)
- Why such sad faces? (Your heart's faith informs your facial expression—what does that tell you?)
- You are slow of heart to believe everything the prophets said. (Not of head, but of heart. Trust the Word.)
- Isn't it necessary for suffering to precede glory? (Do you really expect a crown without a cross?)
- Why are you alarmed? (Good one for 2018!)
- Why do doubts arise in your minds? (Again, not scolding, but asking why. What is their source? Is it reliable? How does it compare with the words of Jesus?)

God leads us to *victory*; that's the destination. But that says nothing of the pathway from here to there. Victory implies a battle—probable danger, opposition, uncertainties, wounds, pain. *But victory is still victory!*

Remember, how a mother forgets the pain of childbirth when she holds her newborn in her arms?

Whether or not you ever have held or ever will hold your own newborn in your arms, every battle that you face and endure to the end—to the victory—with the gracious help of the Lord,

will be a victory that eclipses and transforms your pain, your grief. Transforms it to good, to blessing, to joy, to peace.

What does the Bible say? *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”* (Romans 8:28)

At the end of a very long and stressful day, Jesus brought a single message to His followers: *“Peace to you.”*

To back it up, to give it authenticity, to make it real, He said, *“Look, it is I Myself. Touch Me and see.”* The word of Jesus is the final word (on any subject). His word is reality—often a reality beyond what we can see, but not beyond our trust. Because, after all, it’s Jesus.

Then He said a second time, *“Peace to you. As the Father has sent Me, so I am sending you.”*

Your peace is not the end, not the goal, not the final state. Rather, peace is the context— the basis, and the inner atmosphere—of all divine activity, and of all your activity in His name.

If you’re not serving or working from peace, don’t move! FIRST, find His peace, then proceed.

Jesus will be to you what the Father was to Jesus.

- Your ever-present Guide.
- Your ever-present Friend.
- Your ever-present Healer.
- Your ever-present Strengthened.
- Your ever-present Protector.
- Your ever-present Provider.
- And, make no mistake about it, your ever-present Commander.

Jesus did not come to earth and die on a cruel cross just to fulfill your every personal dream, but to enable you to fulfill *His dream* for your life.

No matter what you’ve been through, no matter what it cost you, no matter what you can’t understand, PEACE TO YOU.

No matter how you’ve failed, how you’ve doubted, how you procrastinated, how distracted you have been, how reluctant, or how afraid, PEACE TO YOU.

Regardless of setbacks, reversals of fortune, obstacles in your path, or opposition in your home, PEACE TO YOU.

Jesus is alive! And He brings PEACE TO YOU.

His presence is peace to you. His desire is peace to you. His promise is peace to you. His gift is peace to you.

Peace. To. You.

Will you receive it? By faith.

Faith in the sovereign purpose of God for your life.

Faith in the sovereign power of God for your life.

Faith in the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Faith in the unending love of God for you.

Will you receive His gift of peace?

Will you cling to it? Protect it? Fight for it? Cherish it?

It is your destiny.

It is your prize.

Peace. To. You.

Jesus is alive to give you peace.

Jesus is alive to anchor your peace.

Jesus is alive to guarantee your peace.

Peace. To. You.