

“Peace of God”

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Scripture: Job 42:1-3 and Mark 4:35-41 (Modern English Version)

Job 42 ¹ Then Job answered the Lord and said: ² “I know that You can do everything, and that no thought can be withheld from You. ³ ‘Who is he who hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me which I did not know.

Mark 4 ³⁵ ¶ On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” ³⁶ And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. ³⁷ And a great storm of wind arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. ³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care if we perish?” ³⁹ And he awoke and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?” ⁴¹ And they were filled with awe, and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?”

Sermon

This is a compilation of 3 sermons by [Darrin Fish](#), [Tim Zingale](#) and Rev. Dawn Hutchings

Today’s message is on peace, in honor of International Peace Day, September 21st. If someone were to come and ask you, “WHAT IS PEACE?” How would you answer them? It seems, Peace is one of those things that everyone wants, but no one really knows how to get it. And if they do manage to get it, they don’t know how to keep it for very long.

Here’s a Peace story of “Two Ladies on a Train.”

A few years ago, a man found himself on a train between two ladies. Unfortunately for him the two ladies were arguing constantly about whether the window should be open or shut. The lady farthest from the window argued that she would die of heat stroke if it wasn’t opened. The other said she would certainly catch pneumonia if it didn’t stay closed. When the ticket taker arrived, the ladies begged to him to come up with a solution, but unfortunately, he didn’t have a solution.

Finally, the man spoke up. “First open the window. That will kill the one. Then close it. That will kill the other. Then we will have peace.” (I don’t think the man was a Mennonite.)

Many people have a concept of peace similar to the man in this story. For them, peace is the absence of conflict. However, this falls short of the biblical vision. We often use the phrase “peace and quiet” as our need to slow down. But Peace is more than living without anger. In Scripture, peace is not the absence of conflict but the presence of love, generosity, and grace as the transforming principle of our relationships. Peace is a frame of mind that we have when we are right with God.

Here's another story about Peace.

"An artist was commissioned by a wealthy man to paint something that would depict peace. After a great deal of thought, the artist painted a beautiful country scene. There were green fields with cows standing in them, birds were flying in the blue sky and a lovely little village lay in a distant valley. The artist gave the picture to the man, but there was a look of disappointment on his face.

The man said to the artist, " This isn't a picture of true peace. It isn't right. Go back and try again.

The artist went back to his studio, thought for several hours about peace, then went to his canvas and began to paint. When he was finished, there on the canvas was a beautiful picture of a mother, holding a sleeping baby in her arms, smiling lovingly at the child. He thought, surely, this is true peace, and hurried to give the picture to the wealthy man.

But again, the wealthy man refused the painting and asked the painter to try again.

The artist returned again to his studio. He was discouraged, he was tired and he was disappointed. Anger swelled inside him and he felt the rejection of this wealthy man. Again, he thought, he even prayed for inspiration to paint a picture of true peace. Then, all of a sudden, an idea came, he rushed to the canvas and began to paint as he had never painted before. When he finished, he hurried to the wealthy man.

He gave the painting to the man. He studied it carefully for several minutes. The artist held his breath. Then the wealthy man said, "Now this is a picture of true peace." He accepted the painting, paid the artist and everyone was happy.

So, you want to know what was this picture of true peace?

Well, the picture showed a stormy sea pounding against a cliff. The artist had captured the fury of the wind as it whipped black rain clouds which were laced with streaks of lightening. The sea was roaring in turmoil, waves churning, the dark sky filled with the power of the furious thunderstorm. And in the middle of the picture, under a cliff, the artist had painted a small bird, safe and dry in her nest snuggled safely in the rocks. The bird was at peace midst the storm that raged about her."

Peace, tranquility, calmness, these are the emotions that we seek as we experience the storms of life. We long, we search, for peace. We search for the quiet, the calm, the contentment as we experience the storms, the chaos, the uncertainties of life.

As we live with all the brokenness of sin, with all the tension of this sinful world, we cry out, we long for some peace to somehow insulate, or protect us from all the fury around us. We are very much like that wealthy man, searching, dreaming, wanting peace in the middle of the fury of life.

We search and long, for that peace. We even call out as the disciples did to Jesus, in our scripture this morning, in that sinking boat; we call out to God for peace, for comfort. We call out to God, wondering if He is around, wondering if He is sleeping while we are searching.

The question asked more often by human beings is always some variation of: "Where are you, God?" Or "God, are you sleeping?" or "God, are you dead?" or "God, do you hear me?" or "God, why don't you answer me?"

We need to remember that the Peace that Jesus gives is not the absence of trouble, but rather the confidence that He is there with us always. Only God can provide the peace that we need.

Sometimes we think we have to get rid of all the problems in our lives. And if we do, then and only then, we'll have peace. If we can get rid of the stress, if we can just get a new job, if we can just pay off our credit cards, and get on top of things. We have to understand that if this is what is needed to achieve peace, we will never get it.

A few things I learned over the years:

- Life is not about how fast you run, or how high you climb, but how well you bounce.
- In Life you need to forgive your enemies. Because it messes with their heads.
- In Life, every path has some puddles.
- In Life, don't corner something meaner than you.
- And in Life, words that sink into your soul are whispered, not yelled.

Jesus offers us peace. John 14:27 "I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid."

He wants us to have His peace, so let's look at how to gain that peace in order to find the peace of God in unsettling times. We need to . . . Put first things first . . . have to gain peace with God.

We need to understand that God is in control, from beginning to end, and that ultimately, His plans will succeed. Jesus said that He has overcome the world. He did that in His death, in which He conquered sin and its power, and He did it through His resurrection where He conquered death and its power. He also did that in giving us His Word, so we could learn how to live for Him and at the same time find comfort.

God's plans will never be stopped by anyone on earth. No one can change the plans of God; no matter how hard they try. God is sovereign. Understanding this goes a long way to help us live in the peace of God.

We need to Pray about everything. A few years ago in Kentucky, there was a little boy who was being very disruptive during service after a few minutes, his father, who had put him under his arm, carried him out. No one in the congregation so much as raised an eyebrow -- until the child cried out in a Southern accent, "Ya'll pray for me now!"

From Philippians 4:6-7, "6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with gratitude, make your requests known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will protect your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." The Bible tells us to pray without ceasing, and to never give up. God hears and He moves on behalf of His people. God doesn't always answer us the way we want Him to, but He doesn't ignore our prayers. He hears each and every one of them.

So, one of the best ways to reduce the problems in our life is to turn them into prayers. We need to ask God for His help with our problems instead of trying to do it all on our own. We

need to Give our problems over to God and let Him take care of them. One way of Praying is simply talking to God about what you think of Him, and what's going on in your life. Then God's peace begins to fill us up, not because the problem is gone, but because we know that we have everything we need to handle what comes our way.

Cynthia Bourgeault wrote "learning came not from my formal Sunday School training, but through the good fortune of spending my first six school years in a Quaker school, where weekly silent "meeting for worship" was as an invariable part of the rhythm of life...there was simply silence. And in that silence... I began to know a prayer much deeper than "talking to God." Somewhere in those depths of silence I came upon my first experiences of God as a loving presence that was always near, and prayer as a simple trust in that presence."
We tap into the power of God Through other Believers also. From Ecclesiastes 4:12 "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

It is thru unity with one another that we find peace. When we bind together with our fellow Christians, it makes us stronger. And when we're stronger we can stand up to the world when its problems hit us in the face. I don't think it's a surprise to anyone here that we live in a world that's plagued with violence and hatred. Wars are being fought all over the world.

Here are some startling statistics. Only eight percent of the time since the beginning of recorded history has the world been entirely at peace. In over 3,100 years, only 286 years have been without war and over 8,000 treaties have been broken in this time.

Jesus Himself tells us in Matthew 24: "6 And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don't panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won't follow immediately. 7 Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world."

That being said Jesus then comforts us in John 16:33 saying "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."

He wanted His disciples to have that same peace. A peace that knows that no matter what circumstances in life we may find ourselves, God is in control, so there is peace. Peace does come, peace is equal to faith in the power of God to control and to provide. The disciples saw the power of God in nature as Jesus calmed the storm. That same power is present in all circumstances of life. There is peace to life when we believe in and trust in the power of God to be with us, to guide us, to save us from all the storms of life.

Here is another story for an example: "A story from the days of sailing ships, tell about a ship caught in a sudden and severe storm. The passengers became panicky, rushing here and there as the waves beat upon the ship. There was fear and dread on the faces of all the passengers except one little boy, who remained calm and cheerful. When asked why he was so calm, he said, "Why should I be afraid? My father is at the helm." In other words, he was not afraid, because his father was in control.

So, too, with us we face the storms of life. We need not be afraid, or full of despair, because God through His Son Jesus Christ is in control. God is at the helm of life. We need to believe and trust in His power to guide our lives. But if our prayer is a one-dimensional request for a

miraculous calm, we may let ourselves be in for a large helping of disappointment and despair if God's plan dictates something different from our request.

The prayer of faith will include a second dimension that God will help us, hear his voice in the storm. His voice which says loud and clear, I am with you, I am with you."

As Job found out, as the disciples found out the only answer to our questions about life comes with a simple but powerful answer, "I am with you, period." That is all we need to know that our God is with us as we face all the why questions of life. As we heard earlier, Jesus said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?"

If only we could hear or see the birds chirping away as they care for their nests? What would become of our violence if we noticed the beauty that continues to break out over and over again. We don't have to look very far to see the power of non-violence to achieve peace. There are plenty of stories, lots of statistics.

The experts have tried to tell us that over the last century nonviolent campaigns are twice as likely to achieve their goals as violent campaigns. The experts have determined that it only takes around 3.5% of a population actively participating in peaceful protests to ensure political change.

So let us never tire of hearing Dr. King insist that, "Hate begets hate; violence begets violence; toughness begets a greater toughness. We must meet the forces of hate with the power of love."

Remember Gandhi's words, "I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent."

Let's put our faith in a radical non-violent resister like Jesus.

The image of that mother bird tending her nest among the rocks and ravages of the storm continues to compel us. The promise of peace breaking out in our chaos, continues to allure us. "Do to others what you would have them do to you" continues to inspire us. The peace you have left us with dear Jesus, may not be the kind of peace the world gives, but surely it is the kind of peace that calms all fears. Do not let your hearts be distressed; to not be fearful. Peace the kind of peace that surpasses our understanding breaks out when together we find the courage to set aside all fear.

In John 14:23, "23 Jesus answered him, "If a man loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our home with him."

Come, oh GOD who IS LOVE.

Dwell with us.

Let the hopes and dreams of our ancestors live in, with, and through us.

Do not let our hearts be troubled.

Do not be afraid.

Let peace break out in the most unlikely of places.

Let us begin by loving our enemies.

LOVE in the name and for the sake of the ONE, who IS LOVE. Amen.