

JOHN 14:18-31: ¹⁸“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me, and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.” ²²Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?” 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,^[a] 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. ³⁰I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me, ³¹but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on our way.

IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL- HORATIO STAFFORD

WHEN PEACE, LIKE A RIVER, ATTENDETH MY WAY,
WHEN SORROWS LIKE SEA BILLOWS ROLL; WHATEVER MY LOT, THOU
HAST TAUGHT ME TO SAY, IT IS WELL, IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL.

THOUGH SATAN SHOULD BUFFET, THOUGH TRIALS SHOULD COME, LET
THIS BLEST ASSURANCE CONTROL, THAT CHRIST HATH REGARDED MY
HELPLESS ESTATE ,AND HATH SHED HIS OWN BLOOD FOR MY SOUL.

MY SIN—OH, THE BLISS OF THIS GLORIOUS THOUGHT! MY SIN, NOT IN
PART BUT THE WHOLE, IS NAILED TO THE CROSS, AND I BEAR IT NO
MORE, PRAISE THE LORD, PRAISE THE LORD, O MY SOUL!

FOR ME, BE IT CHRIST, BE IT CHRIST HENCE TO LIVE:IF JORDAN ABOVE
ME SHALL ROLL, NO PANG SHALL BE MINE, FOR IN DEATH AS IN LIFE
THOU WILT WHISPER THY PEACE TO MY SOUL.

REFRAIN: IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL, IT IS WELL, IT IS WELL WITH MY
SOUL.

PEACE IS A POPULAR THEME IN THE WORLD. WE ALL WANT
WORLD PEACE.

INDEED, PEACE BETWEEN AND WITHIN NATIONS IS ONCE
AGAIN GREATLY NEEDED IN THE WORLD TODAY.

BUT THE END OF VIOLENCE OR EVEN VERBAL HOSTILITY IS
ONLY ONE DIMENSION OF PEACE.

THOSE WHO ARE HUNGRY, HOMELESS, SUFFERING FROM
PHYSICAL OR MENTAL ILLNESS/ABUSE, OR JUST EVEN
ORDINARY STRESS ARE NOT REALLY AT PEACE.

THE MERRIAM-WEBSTER DICTIONARY DEFINES PEACE AS “A
STATE OF TRANQUILITY OR QUIET.”

THE OXFORD DICTIONARY DEFINES IT AS “THE STATE OF
BEING CALM OR QUIET.”

THESE DESCRIBE FEELINGS OR PLACES AS PEACEFUL, OR
POINT TO A PEACEFUL STATE OF MIND.

THE PEACE OF GOD IS DIFFERENT FROM THE PEACE OF THE
WORLD.

BIBLICAL PEACE IS MORE THAN JUST THE ABSENCE OF
CONFLICT OR THE PRESENCE OF TRANQUIL THOUGHTS OR
FEELINGS.

REMEMBER JESUS SAID: “PEACE I LEAVE YOU; MY PEACE I
GIVE YOU. I DO NOT GIVE AS THE WORLD GIVES....”

LATER THAT SAME NIGHT JESUS ALSO SAID:” I HAVE SAID
THESE THINGS TO YOU, THAT IN ME YOU MAY HAVE PEACE.

IN THE WORLD YOU WILL HAVE TRIBULATION. BUT TAKE
HEART; I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD.”

THEN HE TOOK ACTION TO RESTORE THE BROKENNESS
BETWEEN US AND GOD, WHEN HE OVERCAME THE WORLD ON
THE CROSS.

THIS IS WHY HE TOLD HIS DISCIPLES THEY SHOULD BE GLAD HE WAS GOING TO LEAVE THEM.

OF COURSE, IT IS DOUBTFUL JESUS REALLY EXPECTED THEM TO REJOICE, SINCE HE KNEW THEY DID NOT YET UNDERSTAND.

BUT STILL, HE SOUGHT TO PLANT WITHIN THEM THE SEEDS OF PEACE AND JOY THAT WOULD GROW AND BLOSSOM. THIS BRINGS US TO LOOK AT THE FIRST VERSE OF THE HYMN SHARED DURING SPECIAL MUSIC:

“WHEN PEACE, LIKE A RIVER, ATTENDETH MY WAY,
WHEN SORROWS LIKE SEA BILLOWS ROLL; WHATEVER MY
LOT, THOU HAST TAUGHT ME TO SAY, IT IS WELL, IT IS WELL
WITH MY SOUL.”

THIS SONG, BY HORATIO STAFFORD HAS BEEN COMFORTING AND INSPIRATIONAL TO MANY PEOPLE. BUT PERHAPS THE WORDS MIGHT BE A LITTLE EXASPERATING TO THOSE WHO FIND THE IDEA OF PEACE IN

THE MIDST OF LIFE’S TURMOIL OR GRIEF IMPOSSIBLE. IT MIGHT HELP BOTH TYPES OF PEOPLE TO BE REMINDED ABOUT THE AUTHOR’S STORY.

HORATIO AND HIS WIFE ANNA HAD ONE SON AND FOUR DAUGHTERS.

THEY WERE WEALTHY FROM HIS WORK AS LAWYER AND AS THE OWNER OF SEVERAL REAL ESTATE INVESTMENTS IN CHICAGO.

THE STAFFORDS WERE FAITHFUL CHURCH GOERS AND GENEROUS IN GIVING TO THE CHURCH AND TO CHARITABLE CAUSES OUTSIDE THE CHURCH.

BUT TRAGEDY STRUCK IN 1871 WHEN THEIR SON DIED OF SCARLET FEVER, AND THE SAME YEAR THEY LOST MOST OF THEIR INVESTMENTS IN THE GREAT CHICAGO FIRE.

TWO YEARS LATER STAFFORD RECEIVED A TELEGRAM FROM HIS WIFE, WHO WITH THEIR DAUGHTERS, WAS SAILING TO EUROPE.

THE SHIP THEY WERE ON STRICK ANOTHER SHIP AND SANK- THE TELEGRAM SAID ONLY ANNA SURVIVED.

IT WAS SHORTLY AFTER THIS HORATIO WROTE THE WORDS OF THE HYMN “IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL.”

AND FOR THOSE WHO STILL MAY THINK THEY COULD NEVER EXPERIENCE PEACE OR WELL BEING AFTER SUCH TERRIBLE EVENTS, IT IS NOT AS IMPOSSIBLE AS IT MIGHT SEEM.

NOTICE, THAT THE LYRICS OF THE HYMN DO NOT SAY IT IS WELL WITH THE HEART OR MIND, THAT IS WITH STAFFORD’S EMOTIONS OR THOUGHTS.

INSTEAD, HE DESCRIBES THE RIVER OF CHRIST’S PEACE DEEP WITHIN HIM THAT CONTINUES TO FLOW IN THE MIDST OF GRIEF, STRESS, AND EVEN PHYSICAL SUFFERING.

JESUS SPOKE ABOUT THIS KIND OF PEACE TO HIS DISCIPLES ON THE NIGHT OF HIS BETRAYAL AND ARREST.

HE PROMISED THAT WHILE HE WOULD BE GOING AWAY, THEY WOULD NOT BE ORPHANED, BUT GOD, HIS FATHER WOULD SEND THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THEM.

JESUS BEQUEATHED TO HIS DISCIPLES, AND INDEED TO ALL FUTURE FOLLOWERS- HIS PEACE.

THE PEACE OF CHRIST IS GIVEN TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM AND SEEK TO LIVE IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD’S WILL.

CHRIST’S CALL FOR OBEDIENCE, ESPECIALLY TO THE COMMAND TO LOVE, SUGGESTS OBEDIENCE TO GOD OPENS US UP TO A DEEPER RELATIONSHIP.

THIS RELATIONSHIP BRINGS US GREATER AWARENESS OF GOD’S PRESENCE WITH US, AND THUS OPENS THE WAY FOR THE RIVER OF CHRIST’S PEACE TO FLOW MORE FREELY WITHIN THE SOUL.

THIS IS THE PEACE OF INNER SECURITY IN TIMES OF TROUBLE, EVEN WHEN OUR EMOTIONS AND THOUGHTS ARE LIKE THE TURBULENT WAVES IN A STORMY SEA.

PEACE IS FIRST- THE PEACE JESUS MAKES BETWEEN US AND GOD THROUGH HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS AND HIS RESURRECTION.

CHRIST'S PEACE ALSO FLOWS FROM HIS LOVE FOR US AND OUR LOVE FOR HIM.

THIS PEACE IS ONE OF THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT DESCRIBED IN GALATIANS CHAPTER FIVE.

FINALLY, TO THINK OF PEACE BEING LIKE A RIVER ALSO INVITES US TO REMEMBER THAT TO MORE FULLY EXPERIENCE ITS BENEFITS IT HELPS TO DIP OUR FEET, OR AT LEAST A HAND, IN IT FROM TIME TO TIME.

THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE WHEN OUR PRESENT EXPERIENCES OR INNER STATE IS ANYTHING BUT PEACEFUL.

CHURCHES, AS WELL AS INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS CAN BENEFIT FROM THE RIVER OF PEACE JESUS PROVIDES.

IN FACT, OUR PERSEVERANCE DURING THE COVID SHUT DOWN OF CHURCH WORSHIP OFFERS US AN EXAMPLE OF THIS.

IF WE HAD BEEN ASKED BEFORE 2020 HOW WELL WE THOUGHT THE CHURCH WOULD SURVIVE IF WE COULD NOT WORSHIP TOGETHER-I THINK MANY WOULD SAY NOT WELL.

THE IDEA OF NOT BEING ABLE TO WORSHIP IN COMMUNITY FOR SEVERAL MONTHS WAS ALMOST UNTHINKABLE. AND YET IT HAPPENED. AND WE AS INDIVIDUALS AND A CONGREGATION ADJUSTED.

FURTHERMORE, CHRIST'S PEACE PROVIDED WHAT WE MISSED BY NOT WORSHIPPING TOGETHER.

OF COURSE, EVEN TODAY THINGS IN CHURCH AND IN THE WORLD ARE NOT EXACTLY AS THEY WERE BEFORE.

THERE ARE PERHAPS WITHIN SOME OF US AND WITHIN THE CHURCH SOME SCARS WE MIGHT NOT EVEN BE FULLY AWARE OF.

BUT LOOKING TO JESUS CAN HELP, SPECIFICALLY THINKING ABOUT WHAT THE GOSPELS SAY ABOUT HIS RESURRECTION.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, IN PARTICULAR POINTS OUT THE BODY OF RISEN CHRIST HAD VISIBLE SCARS OF HIS CRUCIFIXION. AND YET, EVEN THOUGH HE CARRIED THOSE SCARS HE ALSO PERSONIFIED THE PEACE HE EXPRESSED BY HIS WORDS.

WHY, WE MIGHT WONDER, DID GOD NOT HEAL THOSE SCARS WHEN HE RAISED HIS SON TO LIFE AGAIN?

ONE REASON, OF COURSE, WAS TO SHOW IT REALLY WAS JESUS, WHO HAD BEEN CRUCIFIED, WHO LIVES AGAIN.

BUT PERHAPS ANOTHER REASON IS BECAUSE ALL HUMAN BEINGS LIVE WITH SOME EXTERNAL OR INTERNAL SCARS.

THE SCARS, HOWEVER DO NOT PREVENT THE RIVER OF CHRIST'S PEACE FROM CONTINUING TO FLOW WITHIN US.

DIVINE PEACE, AS OPPOSED TO WORLDLY PEACE, IS NOT A MATTER OF MUTUAL AGREEMENT, NOR IT IS THE FORCED PEACE OF OPPRESSION, OR A FEAR OF MUTUAL DESTRUCTION.

IT IS THE PEACE OF OUR SAVIOR AND GOD THAT WE CANNOT FULLY UNDERSTAND OR EXPLAIN, AND MAY NOT ALWAYS FEEL, AND YET LIKE A RIVER IT CONTINUALLY FLOWS WITHIN US.

JESUS OFFERS US PEACE NOT ONLY IN OUR PRESENT, BUT ALSO WITH OUR PAST, IF WE ONLY WILL DIP A HAND OR FOOT WITHIN THE RIVER OF HIS PEACE.

CHRIST GIVES US HIS PEACE OF FORGIVENESS AND RENEWAL, AS WELL AS PEACE WITH LIFE AND WITH DEATH.

WE CAN FIND PEACE EVEN WITH THE SCARS OR TEARS THAT NEVER FULLY HEAL WHILE WE ABIDE IN THE WORLD.

THE APOSTLES AND OTHER CHRISTIANS RECEIVED THE FULL MEASURE OF THIS PEACE WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT CAME TO LIVE WITHIN THEM ON PENTECOST.

THIS PEACE FLOWED IN THE MIDST OF PERSECUTION AND REJECTION BECAUSE OF THEIR WITNESS TO GOD'S LOVE IN JESUS. IT IS THE SAME RIVER OF PEACE THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IMPLANTS WITHIN ALL WHO ARE SAVED BY CHRIST.

HOWEVER, IT IS UP TO US TO NOTICE THE RIVER AND ALLOW THE CURRENT OF PEACE TO BRING WELL BEING TO OUR SOULS, NO MATTER WHAT IS GOING ON IN OUR LIVES.

AN ILLUSTRATION OF HOW INNER PEACE CAN EXIST BELOW THE SURFACE OF OUR LIVES IS FOUND IN THE EXPLANATION OF THE IMPACT OF A HURRICANE.

THINK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A STRONG STORM IS PREDICTED.

PEOPLE RUSH TO PROTECT THEIR WINDOWS AND IN SOME PLACES PUT UP BARRIERS AGAINST FLOODING.

THEY MAY SHELTER IN PLACE, OR PACK VEHICLES AND SOME BELONGINGS AND GET OUT OF THE AREA.

MEANWHILE THE WIND WHIPS THROUGH THE TREES AND CHURNS UP THE WAVES ON THE WATER.

BOATS BOB UP AND DOWN ON THEIR MOORING AND PEOPLE HOPE THEY SURVIVE THE WIND AND WAVES THAT ARE COMING THEIR WAY.

HOWEVER, ALL OF THIS NECESSARY ACTIVITY AND THE TURMOIL THAT IS CAUSED BY THE HURRICANE IS UNKNOWN TO THE CREATURES THAT LIVE TWENTY FEET OR MORE BELOW THE SURFACE OF THE SEA.

THEY GO ABOUT THEIR LIVES UNAWARE AND UNDISTURBED BY THE PENDING STORM AND ITS FURY WHEN IT HITS.

THOSE CALM CONDITIONS WELL BELOW THE SURFACE OF THE WATER GIVES US A PICTURE OF THE PEACE OF CHRIST DEEP WITHIN HIS FOLLOWERS.

THIS IS WHAT JESUS WAS TRYING TO EXPLAIN TO HIS DISCIPLES ABOUT THE PEACE HE WAS GIVING THEM, AND NOW GIVES TO US.

YES, WE STILL HAVE TROUBLE IN OUR OWN LITTLE WORLDS, AND IN THE WORLD AT LARGE, BUT WE ALSO HAVE PEACE IN OUR SOULS-BECAUSE JESUS IS PRESENT.

IT IS THE PEACE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD, AND IT CAN GROW INTO THE ABILITY TO EXPERIENCE PEACE WITH OTHERS AND WITH OURSELVES.

BUT REMEMBER-THE PEACE JESUS GAVE DID NOT PREVENT OR EVEN DIMINISH THE FEAR AND GRIEF AND GUILT THAT HIS ARREST AND EXECUTION CREATED AMONG AND WITHIN HIS FOLLOWERS.

AND YET-THEY DID NOT DO WHAT OFTEN HAPPENS AMONG PEOPLE IN FAMILIES OR COMMUNITIES-THE DISCIPLES AND OTHERS DID NOT TURN ON ONE ANOTHER.

IN THIS WAY CHRIST'S PEACE HAD ALREADY BEGUN TO FLOW WITHIN TO SUSTAIN UNTIL HIS RESURRECTION, AND THEN AFTER HIS ASCENSION UNTIL THE SPIRIT FILLED THEM ON PENTECOST.

THE FOURTH VERSE OF "IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL" SAYS THIS ABOUT THE POWER OF THE PEACE THAT FLOWS FROM CHRIST.

"FOR ME, BE IT CHRIST, BE IT CHRIST HENCE TO LIVE; IF THE JORDAN ABOVE ME SHALL ROLL, NO PANG SHALL BE MINE, FOR IN DEATH AS IN LIFE THOU WILT WHISPER THY PEACE TO MY SOUL."

MAY GOD GRACE US WITH THE OPENNESS TO LISTEN FOR- UNTIL WE CAN HEAR AND BE COMFORTED BY THE SAVIOR'S WHISPER OF PEACE TO OUR OWN SOULS. AMEN

SERMON SUMMARY: JOHN 14:18-31

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THEN HE TOOK ACTION TO RESTORE THE BROKENNESS BETWEEN US AND GOD, WHEN HE OVERCAME THE WORLD ON THE CROSS. HE SOUGHT TO PLANT WITHIN THEM THE SEEDS OF PEACE AND JOY THAT WOULD GROW AND BLOSSOM.

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