

Father, I thank you for these words that we've just heard sung over us. And I pray that that would be what is going on in our hearts and minds over the next while, that we would take these things, this teaching from your word, take the questions and the doubts, the challenges, the direction that we would take all of this to you and ask you, spirit, to speak to us in your name, Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Well, you know, Covenant Family, we have been, as we are in this sermon series, pilgrims in a weary world. We have been starting each sermon with this important reminder from First Peter, chapter one. And this is from the new living translation, and let me read it to you. This is where we've started. Each sermon Sunday, Peter is writing to God's chosen people who are living as foreigners.

And he says, put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. Live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living. Be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. Live in reverent fear of him during your time here as temporary residents.

For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited. It was the precious blood of Jesus, the sinless, spotless lamb. God chose him as your ransom long before the world began. But now, in these last days, he has been revealed for your sake. Through Christ, you have come to trust in God and now have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory.

You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth. So now show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart, for you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal living Word of God. Praise be to God for his good word to us.

So you know that we are pilgrims living as foreigners in this place. And we focus this morning on what it is to be pilgrims experiencing or trying to experience or longing to experience peace amidst and despite circumstances. So the question then is, what is peace? This is the picture that came to my mind initially. What is peace?

Well, peace is the absence of trouble. Perhaps peace is calm waters. I'm tempted to think that peace is perhaps retirement. Some of you may have ways to inform me on that. But when you think more critically, I realize that you know what peace, while there have moments of the absence of trouble, there's still sometimes a void, a longing for more, while I have moments of calm waters, perhaps on vacation, even that is fleeting.

And then retirement, I hear from others, and I learn gradually that to think that retirement is peace is a bit over simplistic thinking. So what is peace? We're going to consider these verses from John 14 and 16 and 20. And in this section of John's Gospel, what Jesus is doing is he's preparing his disciples for the tumultuous days ahead when he's going to leave. And he's imparting to them some gifts.

Tim Keller relates this section of scripture to what C.S. Lewis is doing in the Narnia series, which when gifts are being imparted to Peter and Susan and Lucy, these gifts are imparted to them to prepare them, equip them for the difficult days ahead. To Peter is given a sword and a shield. To Susan is given a bow and arrows and a magical horn. And to Lucy is given a magical healing cordial and a small dagger.

So in these verses that we're going to look at, I want us to notice what gift is Jesus is imparting to his disciples to prepare them for the difficult days ahead. So we'll start in John 14, verse 27. And in that verse, Jesus says this to his disciples. He says, peace, I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.

Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. So he's going to leave his peace with them. So first of all, we ask the question, well, what does it even mean to leave my peace with somebody? He's going to leave this peace with them. And he says he's going to do it not as the world gives.

So we might think the world gives that we have to earn things or capture them, take them for ourselves. But Jesus is saying, I'm going to give this to you, not as the world gives, but it is a grace gift. So the question then is, what is this

grace gift of peace that Jesus is giving his disciples? He goes on to say, don't let your heart be troubled. Now, you know, we all know how this works when someone tells you how to feel, right?

You know, don't feel mad. I'm not mad. Don't feel sad. Don't tell me how to feel this. So this doesn't work.

But this is not what Jesus is doing. He's. He's communicating in a winsome way that things will be made right, they will be protected. So These are hopeful words, but they actually raise more questions for me than they give answers. So we'll keep on going to see what else Jesus says about peace in this section.

In John 16:33, he says to his disciples, I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart, I have overcome the world. So the question here, when he says, I have told you these things, you're wondering, okay, what things has Jesus just told his disciples? And as we read through chapters 13 and 14 and 15, some of the things that Jesus is telling his disciples is things like, one of you is going to betray me, another one of you is going to deny me.

I'm going to die. And then later when you follow me, the world is going to hate you. So then you think, okay, so he told them these things so that they will have his peace. And initially we don't see the connection there. So what kind of peace is Jesus talking about?

Jesus is communicating then that we're not going or that we are going to have trouble. But then he communicates that the trouble the disciples are going to have, it's not going to have the last word. Jesus will, or he has somehow secured victory for them over the trouble that they will experience. So this still doesn't explain this piece. How is this.

How are these horrible things that Jesus is sharing with them that are going to happen? How does that somehow lead to them having his peace? Then he goes on, in John 20:21, he says, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. Peace be with you.

So what does that really mean? Is Jesus giving them well wishes? It's got to be more than that. So somehow his peace being with us is related to the way that God sent Jesus to earth. So God sent Jesus to earth, and Jesus had all sorts of trouble.

But God did send Jesus in some way, perhaps with peace. So then now he's sending the disciples out in the same way, that is, with the same peace. So what is this peace that somehow is not primarily about the absence of trouble, about calm waters, or about retirement? Our English word for peace that we see translated from Scripture. It's often translated in the Old Testament from the Hebrew word shalom.

And the meaning of the word shalom is to make whole or complete. When we see peace in the New Testament, it's often translated from the Greek word erene, which means to set at one again. So peace throughout Scripture has this idea of to make whole or complete, and to set at One again. So I want to walk through some Old Testament and New Testament passages to trace this theme of shalom and Arene, to see what this reveals about peace. We know in Genesis 1 that God created the heavens and the earth, and then he created man and woman.

And he said it was good. And he rested on the seventh day because he it was complete, it was whole, his creation was good. And then sadly, what happens soon after that is Adam and Eve, they rebel against God. They break that relationship, that relationship between God and man and woman and is broken. So we see that peace is fractured.

What was whole is fractured. But then what happens after Adam and Eve is every single one of us or every single one of humanity who lives after that, they rebel against God. And these fractures in relationship between humanity and God, between humanity and one another, they continue and they multiply by thousands and and millions. We see that when God talks to Adam and Eve about the consequences of sin, that it's not just their relationships with each other and with him are broken, but it's their relationship even with creation itself is broken. So we see the absence of wholeness, fracture, separation all around the world.

And that's what we experience. That is not peace.

So then what you have in Isaiah 9, 6, when God prophesies about this promised Prince of peace, this promised Savior who will come and he will make things whole again, he will bring everlasting peace. Then in Ezekiel, we see this fabulous prophecy in chapter 37, verses 26 through 28, and God declares this. He says, I will make a covenant of peace with. With my people. It will be an everlasting covenant.

I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them. I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I, the Lord, make Israel holy when my sanctuary is among them forever. So this covenant of peace, this is his sanctuary, his dwelling with his people.

This covenant of peace is God with us in the New Testament, Then Paul writes in First Corinthians 3:16, he says, you do you not know that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit, who who is in you, whom you've received from Christ, you are the temple, the sanctuary, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1:13, Paul writes, having believed you were marked in him with the Spirit, a deposit guaranteeing your inheritance. So you become the dwelling place, you faithful followers of Jesus, you house the presence of God, God's Spirit in you is God's presence in you. God's peace. Hear this with the message we receive from Scripture.

God's peace is God's presence with his people. So now that I have that understanding, if I retrace these steps, if I. If I go back to Genesis and I see that peace was broken in the fall, sin condemned us to death, which was separation from God. And when Jesus, the Prince of Peace, was prophesied, Jesus comes. And because of what he does, he removes that separation between God and man and he brings peace in relationship.

He makes possible peace with God. We are made whole again. We enjoy God's presence. We can look back at the questions that, that were raised in those John passages. When we hear that Jesus says, my peace, I leave with you.

My peace, I give you. And now we see that, okay, the peace Jesus was giving them while he was going to leave, he was then going to put his Spirit in them, his presence in them. So the peace he was giving them, promising them, was his presence coming through the Spirit, them. When he says in John 16, I have told you these things so that you may have my peace. He tells them these things so that later on they look back, they see that God knew exactly what was going on, that Jesus was doing all of this deliberately.

And as they see his deliberate path, they grow in their faith. And as they place faith in him, they receive his Spirit, his peace. So these things that he's telling them is leading to, to their experience of God's presence, of God's peace. In John 20:21, we wondered, what does this mean? That Jesus leaves his peace with them as the Father has sent them.

He is sending them. And we remember that Jesus, when he was baptized by John the Baptist, God sent the Spirit to descend on him. And then Jesus was sent by the Father with the Spirit, Spirit. So now we are sent in that same way with the Spirit, with the presence of God in us. That is peace.

So we see these things and then we're convinced that the presence of God is peace. Ephesians 2, 14, 18. Paul writes, and he proclaims, he says, Christ is our peace. He walks through in this passage, how, because of what Christ did on the cross. He brought, he destroyed the dividing wall of hostility between man and God and between man and one another.

Christ came in, removed that wall of hostility, and he brought peace, peace between God and man, and peace between man and other followers of Jesus. Christ brought peace, peace. He brings shalom. He makes things whole again. He works, he's setting things at one again.

The foundational reality of peace is the presence of God. Dwelling with his people. So here is where I want us to realize that peace is not a feeling. Peace is not a set of circumstances. But peace is the presence of its unity with the living God.

So that's why it's true that nothing can take our peace away, because God will not remove his presence from us. There are very difficult things we go through that distract us from the presence of God in us, where we choose to put our mind on other things, our eyes on other things, to try to get comfort from other things. And that is us looking elsewhere. That

is never peace being removed from us. God tells us that as he puts the Spirit in us, he will never leave us.

So that's why peace never leaves us. It's our eyes that get drawn away.

The foundational reality of peace is the presence of God dwelling with his people. So what does it mean that Christ is in us? What does it change or how does it impact our life that Christ is in us? Christ in us, that is peace brings rescue. We were spiritually dead, and now we're spiritually alive.

Christ in us, that is peace, it brings victory. I am now included in Christ. Victory over sin and death. Christ in us, that is peace. It brings power.

While the devil is far more powerful than any of us are, Christ in us, Christ is far more powerful than the devil. He tells us, Christ, that whenever we are tempted, no temptation except with his common demand has come to us. And whenever we are tempted, we will be able to stand up underneath it. So that means that Christ passed power in us gives us the ability to stand up in the face of absolutely any temptation that the devil brings to us. Christ in us, that is peace means comfort.

First Peter 5, 7 says, Cast your anxiety on him, for he cares for you. The psalms exemplify this movement again and again. Our lives are filled with trouble. And if we bring that trouble and we talk to the Lord and we listen to him and we you will experience his comfort and know that sometimes the comfort of the Lord, it's not exactly what we may have been looking for. He may not say exactly what we're wanting him to say, but it's his wisdom and comfort.

Christ in us, that is peace. That brings correction and direction. So in the face of failure, the devil wants to tell us that you are a loser. But in the face of failure, Christ comes to give us correction and direction. And he says, I am with you.

I love you. Come near. And here's how. Christ in us, that is peace, it brings unity between us and the living God. It brings Unity between us and our fellow followers of Jesus.

Peace is God's presence with us. He is making things whole. And his wholeness brings rescue and victory and power and comfort and correction and direction and unity with God and unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul writes this wonderful phrase in Romans 16, verse 20. He says, the God of peace will soon crush Satan. That is peace. The wholeness and the presence of God. Peace.

It's not a violent or harsh movement. It's this gentle and steady movement that moves with such deliberate momentum that nothing can stop it. Nothing in all the world can stop God's movement of making peace. It will crush Satan. God has been, he is, and he will make things whole again, as he promises in Revelation 21.

Nothing can stop his peacemaking movement.

When you place your faith in Jesus and He puts his spirit in you, his presence, his peace in you, you become part of this unstoppable movement of making things whole again.

If you choose not to place your faith in Jesus, you will remain without peace, fractured from his presence for eternity, and you will never be made whole again. Don't make that choice. Placing faith in Jesus brings us into his unstoppable peace making process. I know that for every one of us in this room, there's difficulties that we're dealing with today or this week or in life right now. Difficulties that seem overwhelming in this moment.

And I believe that those troubles will crumble in the path of God's peacemaking process. Maybe not in the timing we want them to, but they will crumble because he is making things whole again. And that includes us. When you think about it, sometimes the very troubles that we're suffering from become the instruments that draw our eyes to our need for the Lord. And as we look at our need for the Lord, we're.

We're reminded of the presence of the Lord. And the presence of the Lord is our peace.

So we see that even in these troubles that the devil throws at us, they become our journey into a deeper and deeper intimacy with the Lord, which is peace. He is making us more whole again. Without his presence, we are broken and dead. But with his presence, we are whole and alive. Pilgrims, this is not our home.

This is not our destination. God is in us and he is in the process of making us whole and making things new and, and nothing can stop this process. That, that is peace. That is powerful, powerful peace.

I want to invite the worship team up and I want to pray and just invite our response to the Lord. Father, we look to you and we hear these words, your promise, your reality of peace you are offering. You are making things whole again as you have created them to be. I pray that each of us would experience the wholeness and the life of the peace of your presence.

Father, nothing can stop your peacemaking movement. And we want to be a part of that. We are grateful for your powerful. Your powerful peace. In your name, Jesus, I pray.

Amen.