



St. Michael's Church
CHARLESTON, SC

SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 2017
Though Your Life be in Pieces, There is Peace in Jesus

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9
JOHN 14: 25-27

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE SERVANTS
OF OTHERS.

TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE.

+++++

Can you imagine waking up this past Monday Morning being Brian Cullinan?
Yes it was Mr. Cullinan who will forever go down in history as handing stars Faye Dunaway and
Warren Beatty--

THE WRONG

Oscar Winning envelope which would lead to the movie "LaLa Land" mistakenly being named
best picture instead of the actual winner "Moonlight..."

You have to wonder how Brian slept that night.

+++++

Going back in history,

Can you imagine being Arthur Jell, waking up on Thursday, January 16, 1919...

Arthur was chief construction supervisor at the Purity Distilling Company in Boston and had
taken shortcuts in building the huge 2.3 million gallon Molasses Tank at Keany Square.

Those shortcuts would cause what is now known as the great **Boston Molasses Flood**.
On January 15, the defective Molasses tank bursts...

Sending a 25 foot high wave of molasses

Rushing through Boston at 35 miles an hour, killing 21 people and injuring 150 others.

True story now..can you imagine a wall of molasses 25 feet high coming at you at 35 miles an hour?

That's right, people drowning in molasses.

Can you imagine being Arthur Jell, waking up on Thursday morning...?

++++++

Billy Cullinan, Arthur Jell...

When life turns to pieces, where is peace found?

Different circumstances with different consequences but a lack of peace is a lack of peace!

Today we continue our preaching series on the Fruit of the Spirit of which there are 9 and we are on the 3rd....The fruit of peace.

First there was love that we defined as agape unconditional love..

Then last week, David Booman unpacked joy saying we will have joy to the degree we allow Jesus to come into our heart.

Quick time out here..

There are certain St. Michaelites that seem to embody the fruit we've looked at so far.

- Hugh Wilson embodies to me the fruit of Love.
- Kelsey Bush Nadeau, Pam McKinney embodies the fruit of Joy

Which is really special because the fruit of the spirit: Is supernatural.

We can't drum up:

- Love
- joy
- and peace by ourselves.

The fruit of the spirit is not something we can manufacture,

it's the fruit of the spirit, not the fruit of us!

- Having the fruit of the Holy Spirit, is the outcome of being filled with the Holy Spirit.
- Therefore, The fruit of the Holy Spirit is the living proof that God dwells in us.

Here's the key...

- Love, joy and Peace rule our life,
- When Jesus rules our souls.

And this is why John 14 on peace...is so incredible.
Jesus is speaking about his impending death.

The disciples in hearing Jesus talk are experiencing **their lives being torn to pieces..**

Feeling an incredulous disillusionment, and fear.

Jesus knowing how distraught the disciples are speaks to them this hope in John 14..

Jesus says:

The Holy Spirit whom my Father will send in my name, will teach and remind you of all I have said...

- Therefore, Peace I leave with you
- My peace I give you.

When Jesus says my Peace I give you,

- Jesus is in the conflict of knowing there is a traitor in his midst
- He knows Judas and his enemies are gathering to destroy him...imagine that suspicion!
- Yet Jesus says:
 - Peace I leave with you
 - My peace I give you.

Peace defined therefore is this inward state of deepest
Contentment--

- Independent of circumstances
- Independent of sorrow
- Independent of catastrophes!

++++++

This makes sense of a study by Duke University on the top 5 peace-robbers,
the top 5 things that rob our peace...

- Number 5-Suspicion
- 4-Resentment and Grudge-holding
- 3-Living in the past
- 2-Isolationism
- 1-And the biggest...fear.

These obstacles can lead to sleepless nights filled with tossing and turning, and can even then form a loop--

where all you think about is that fear, that anxiety, like grits in the stomach just un-mercifully clinging to you..

++++++

Jesus is able to say:

- Peace I leave with you
- My peace I give you.

Despite knowing there are traitors in his midst.

Yes sometimes Jesus brings peace to the storms of our life...

But there are many more times---

When Jesus seems to let the storms rage in our lives,

while giving us this deep inner contentment of peace within-

to get through those storms as he did with the Disciples.

In other words, peace isn't always a pain free life, but a calm and contentment **within** the pain.

It reminds me of the story of a submarine on patrol in wartime.

It's submerged over night and when it re-surfaces the next day, center command radio's the captain asking:

"How did you fare in the terrible storm last night?"

Surprised the Captain replies...didn't know there was one.

The storm raged and foamed around them, but they were at peace underneath.

That's a beautiful understanding of Holy Spirit Peace.

So...

John 14 tells us this peace is inner contentment regardless of circumstances...

But it also makes clear that peace is conquest.

Jesus goes on to say in John 14..

I am not giving you peace as the world gives...

What did Jesus mean by this?

The peace that the world gives is what we call escap-ism.

It's when that

- Suspicion
- Resentment
- Grudge-holding
- Fear etc..

reaches a boiling point and we are faced with a choice.

Do we look for the peace of the world?

Or do we look for the peace of Jesus?

The peace of the world leads to escapism that comes in many forms, including:

- Self medicating
- Alcohol abuse,
- Food abuse

In my life I find these peace robbers break into my heart at night...they normally come around 3 in the morning for whatever reason.

And yes I've tried to escape to find peace.....

My form of 3am escapism is to hit the phone to read:

- BBC news
- CNN
- ESPN.

It's not the peace that lasts..

Oscar Wilde, that 19th century Irish Playwright said:

“The only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it.”

Wilde would die at the age of 46...

He would spend his last young days on earth wandering the streets alone, spending what little money had on alcohol while confined to a small room.

He even joked to a friend...

"My wallpaper and I are fighting a duel to the death. One of us has got to go."

The fruit of the spirit of peace is not that escapism, it's conquest.

For me, if those peace robbers come to my door I have a choice...escape it...or pray:

“Holy Spirit flood me with your peace,

give me deepest contentment...but then I go on a conquest of reading Scripture...the Psalms whatever is open by my bedside!

This conquest kind of peace also has to do with relationships.

Paul in Philippians 4 writes:

- Don't be anxious
- Make all your requests known to God
- And the peace of God which transcends all understanding
- Will guard your heart and mind in Jesus.

Paul defines peace here, as right relationships.

- If we have a right relationship with God
- If we have a right relationship with those around us, we will have peace.

And so receiving this kind of peace again means pressing in..

Going on a conquest, going after that relationship you thought was dead and had no effect on you.

The funny thing about dead relationships is that they're never dead.

They can eat you up inside and rob your peace.

True peace comes when with the power of Jesus we face those relationships in our life that keep us up at night and then pray Jesus to help us press in.

+++++

Jesus demonstrates this breathtaking conquest on the cross.

Notice, Jesus doesn't escape the sin of humanity,

no he deals with it directly on the cross and the result would be peace for the world. In fact,

At the 9th hour, while suffering on the cross Jesus yells out...

My God, MY God, Why have you forsaken me?

It is the anguish of taking all of our broken-ness, all the sins of the world in conquest upon HIMSELF that causes that momentary separation from HIS father.

This spiritual separation was far more horrible than the physical agony of the cross.

So our peace, is not some hokey pokey 60's escapist concept,

It is born from the CONQUEST AND cost of the life of Jesus.

And this is what Jesus meant in Matthew 10 when he says I have come not to bring peace but a sword.

Jesus is saying this conquest to bring peace flies in the face of an avoidance dominated humanity.

Jesus didn't escape the cross, he pressed in and it cost him-

Both His life

Yet our freedom and peace.

Jesus had peace because he had a perfect and confident deep contentment that His Father's provision was enough for Him even in suffering and death.

Do you?

And this makes Peace a great fruit to launch the season of Lent.

Lent itself is the opposite of escape.

Lent is a time of conquest:

- Auditing our lives
- Fasting
- Pruning
- Naming those areas of fear and broken-ness, pressing in.
- Naming our sin within,
- Our grudges
- And fears...

Not to be condemned but to be forgiven and experience true peace!

It's no accident that every Sunday after confession, and forgiveness, I stand and say... The PEACE of the Lord be always with you.

Peace always follows a conquest of confession!

Which is why coming to church every Sunday deepens the sculpting work of Jesus, that through the fruit of the Spirit we would look, live and love more like Jesus as HIS disciple.

+++++

Jesus finishes John 14 by giving us one of the outcomes of peace..

- Let not your hearts be troubled,
 - and do NOT be afraid.
- Let not your hearts be troubled,
 - and do NOT be afraid.

The peace of God, his Shalom is an untroubled heart.

Oswald Chambers gives us a vision of an untroubled heart writing:

- It's an unconstrained confidence
- It covers you completely from the top of your head to the soles of your feet..

So dear friends, when life falls to pieces, ask the Holy Spirit to give you the peace that brings deepest contentment,

Ask him to guide you into conquest.

+++++

There are many St. Michaelites that seem to embody this fruit of peace...one such is Arthur Ravenel, just embodying that fruit of deep contentment.

And this is critical because at the end of the day,

it's my hope that someone would come up to Arthur, and all of us saying:

How can you have peace at such a time as this?

What's your source of peace?

And we say, it's the Holy Spirit.

In fact, at the end of the day the only proof that the Holy Spirit is living in us is when the fruit of the Spirit is seen by those around us.

+++++

It was the Russian Saint Seraphim of Sarov who said something I pray will stick with you today.

This saint said:

“Acquire the Spirit of Peace
and a thousand souls around you will be saved.”

My Friends..

BE PEACE.

Peace rules your life
when Jesus rules your soul,

Which means praying every day, Holy Spirit, puree’ and pour that fruit of peace into my heart!

In doing so, lives will be saved around you.

Let me end with one more:

“Can you imagine waking up” story..

Can you imagine being Horatio Spafford, waking up on July 1st, 1871..

Let me back up..

Horatio Spafford was a successful lawyer and businessman in Chicago with a lovely family — a wife, Anna, and five children.

But their peace is shattered in 1871 as their young son dies of pneumonia.

That same year, their business is lost in the Chicago fire.

2 years later, Spafford puts his wife and now 4 daughters on a French ocean liner to Europe.

He had to stay behind to solve a business problem and would join them the following week.

Four days into the crossing of the Atlantic, the French ship collides with a Scottish vessel, the Loch Earn.

That collision would claim the lives of daughters:

- Annie
- Margaret Lee

- Bessie
- Tanetta
- And 226 others.

Anna the mother was saved when she was picked up by an emergency boat.

That night...

She wires her husband simply writing:

“Saved alone, what shall I do?”

Horatio wakes up the next day in conquest...booking a passage on the next available ship to join his grieving wife.

At some point during His sailing over,

The Captain calls Spafford onto the bridge to tell him they were over the place where his children went down.

It is at that moment, as tears come down the face of this Christian man...as a result of deepest contentment in Jesus...

He writes something that would give peace to millions of people in succeeding generations...

He writes:

“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.

Chorus:
It is well
with my soul,

It is well,
it is well
with my soul

Peace rules your life,
when Jesus rules your soul.