

**Sunday, May 01, 2016**  
**Sixth Sunday of Easter**

**John 14:23-29**

<sup>23</sup>Jesus answered [Judas (not Iscariot),] “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. <sup>24</sup>Whoever 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.

<sup>25</sup>“I have said these things to you while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup>But the Advocate, 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. <sup>27</sup>Peace 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. <sup>28</sup>You 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. <sup>29</sup>And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.”

Dear disciples of the Risen Christ.

Grace and peace from God our Father.

Numbers...our lives are filled with numbers. Each year we file our income taxes. Now that's an exercise in numbers to end all numbers games. Pages upon pages of numbers: earned numbers, spent numbers, invested numbers, and saved numbers. When it is finally prepared, we send it off to the Internal Revenue Service with our Social Security number on it. Then the IRS takes all those numbers and puts them into a computer, along with the numbers of thousands and thousands of other people. And to them, we become a number.

The government knows us by our tax number. The state knows us by our driver's license number. The bank knows us by our account number. And when we retire, we'll be remembered by our Social Security number. And it goes on and on. In fact, sometimes I wonder if anybody knows us at all without a number!

And that's why this morning's Gospel reading is so significant, because it tells us that God knows us. He knows us intimately, in fact, better than we know ourselves.

Jesus proves us that he knows us well and wants to share with us the good news that he will always be with us even when he is not physically present any more like he was with his disciples. We are not just a number for Jesus!

Jesus promises that though he is going away, he will come to his disciples in the power of an advocate, the Holy Spirit, and that both he and the Father will make

their home in all who believe. He will live in us and we will be in him but not as a number in a tax return but as in parent-child relationship, that is a family.

That is why the gathering of the faithful assembly to receive Christ's word and sacrament is a foretaste of that New Jerusalem, where God will finally and ultimately be at home with us, even as the Holy Trinity makes a home in the hearts of all who believe.

Into the anxieties and uncertainties of our everyday life we are offered both a vision of a glorious future when God will be at home with us and we will be at home with God, and a living foretaste of that same future: "We will come to them and make our home with them. . . . Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you" (John 14:23b, 27a).<sup>1</sup>

Jesus tells his disciples that though the world will no longer see him, they themselves will see him (John 4:19) because he will reveal himself to them (4:21). When Judas asks: "Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?" (4:22) our passage begins with Jesus' response to this question. Perhaps Judas expects that Jesus will give them some kind of secret knowledge, but that is not what Jesus means.<sup>2</sup>

Earlier Jesus had spoken to his disciples of the "many dwellings" in his Father's house, where he was going to prepare a place for them (John 14:2). Now Jesus says that he and the Father will come and make their dwelling with those who love him and keep his word (14:23). In John's Gospel, "eternal life" begins here and now; it is life in relationship with God through Jesus Christ (17:3). Even

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1 <https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/TextsAndResources/2016-5-1/1691#resources>

2 <http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary>

while Jesus prepares eternal dwellings with the Father, he and the Father will continue to dwell with his disciples in the present.<sup>3</sup>

It is through the Holy Spirit, the Advocate (the Greek word *for Advocate* signifies “called along beside”), that Jesus will continue to be present with his disciples. Jesus says that the Father will send the Holy Spirit to be alongside his disciples, to teach them and remind them of all that Jesus has said to them (John 14:26).

Because Jesus will be present with them through the Holy Spirit, his disciples need not be anxious. John chapter 14 begins with Jesus’ exhortation, “Do not let your hearts be troubled” (John 14:1). Now again Jesus exhorts, “Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid,” after telling his disciples, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives” (14:27).

When Jesus meets his frightened disciples after his resurrection, it will be with a greeting of peace (John 20:19, 21). The word for peace is a translation of the traditional Hebrew greeting *shalom*. *Shalom* signifies more than the absence of conflict; it is a profound and holistic sense of well-being. It is the kind of peace which the world cannot give, but can only come from God. This gift of peace accompanies the gift of the Holy Spirit; which Jesus breathes into his disciples as he sends them out in mission (20:22).<sup>4</sup>

The peace of which Jesus speaks has nothing to do with the absence of warfare, nor with the end of psychological tensions, nor with the sentimental feeling of well being, but it is closer to the truth that it is a gift of salvation. In the gospel of John, the language of peace, truth, light, life and joy are reflect different

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3 Idem.

4 Op. Cit Commentary

facets of the great gift that Jesus has brought from the Father to humankind. Peace is the gift that means that eternal life is coming to you.

Shalom is wholeness, well-being. Shalom describes the ultimate gift from God! Shalom is the absence of conflict not because we contained the conflict or refrained the violence, but because the cause of the conflict is completely deleted and eradicated. There is shalom because there is no reason to be in conflict anymore. The peace of God or the peace of Christ may rule people's hearts, a mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.<sup>5</sup>

When Jesus says:

“<sup>27</sup>Peace 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.” He is inviting his community to trust that even his physical absence is not a cause to be discouraged or afraid of the violence that is menacing its existence. Jesus is affirming that the Kingdom of God is present wherever that they are present and the sign of that presence is that the community enjoys the gift of salvation under the form of peace.

According to Old Testament peace is one of the blessings of the souls of the just who are in the hand of God, but in Johannine realized eschatology peace is enjoyed by Christians even during this life.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, many people think that to rest in peace is to die and that only the dead can rest in peace.

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<sup>5</sup> Harper Collins Bible Dictionary. P 507

<sup>6</sup> The Gospel According to John. Raymond E Brown. Vol. 2 p. 654

But according to John we can rest in peace and enjoy the gift of peace during our life, we have peace as a gift, this gift is salvation and communion with God.

The disciples received the promise that they do not need to die to have peace, and it is very interesting that this promise of peace is directed to a community living under the rule of a violent empire and in times of turbulent social conflicts and social rejection. Christians members of the Johannine community were rejected by the Jewish community and by the pagan Roman society. They were persecuted and killed, they suffered violence, but they had peace, they experienced shalom. Because shalom, peace of God, is a gift of salvation and a sense of transcendence that cannot be destroyed by the violence of the world.

We do not need to wait until somebody writes RIP (Rest in Peace) in our obituary in order to be sure that we will finally enjoy peace, we can proclaim that we LIP (Live in Peace)! Yes, we LIP (Live in Peace) right now! We live in shalom!

But considering the circumstances of persecution that the Joahnne community suffered, “it seems understandable that the disciples would not be in a rejoicing mood upon learning that Jesus would soon be leaving them. Jesus tries to reassure them that he is not simply leaving them, but that there is a purpose in his leaving; he is going to be with the Father. Later in this same discourse, Jesus will tell them that it is to their advantage that he is going away, so that he can send the Advocate, who will bring further understanding and be with them always (16:7).”<sup>7</sup>

I can imagine that the disciples were still not convinced that Jesus’ leaving could be a good thing. Probably it was not the best option for the apostles,

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<sup>7</sup> Working Preacher Commentary

neither for the Joahnnine community and probably neither for us, but Jesus says that he is telling them and us these things now so that when they occur, they will believe.

The promises and words of Jesus related his departure are to strengthen our faith and trust in his ministry and salvation, his absence can be a blessing because we will discover the power of his presence in the experience of shalom.

It is only after the resurrection, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, that the disciples begin to understand and believe the words of Jesus (John 2:22; 12:16) and are finally able to rejoice (20:20). The whole of John's Gospel manifests the fruits of the Spirit's work among the disciples *after* Jesus' death and resurrection in deepening their understanding of Jesus' identity and mission.

Above all else, it is this profound love of God that Jesus has made known to his disciples and that the Holy Spirit continues to make known to us. The Spirit assures us that we are never abandoned, even in the midst of the loss, pain, and sorrow that are part of life in this broken world. The Word who became flesh and lived among us (John 1:14) continues to make his home with us (14:23), even as he prepares our eternal dwelling with God (14:2).

But in the same way that peace is something that we can enjoy here and now, we can proclaim that the eternal dwellings with God are present here and now in the community of disciples, and also in the presence of God in us by the promise of the Holy Spirit.

Real presence is tasted in the sacrament of Holy Communion. Real forgiveness is forged whenever the peace is shared. Because Christ is risen, God's peace is everywhere. In, with, and under our triumphs and traumas, God's Spirit is present, accompanying us, animating us, and advocating for us who are flesh

and blood, so we can rejoice...As Baruch Spinoza suggested, shalom produces “kindness, confidence, and justice.”<sup>8</sup>

I invite for this reason to treasure the peace of God, the divine shalom inside the eternal dwelling that God has planted in you. Yes, God’s dwelling is in you because you are the temple of the living God, now you can experience God’s presence in the shalom that the divine presence is bringing in your life. Not only restraining the conflict but eliminating the source of any conflict. Pray to God that God’s shalom eradicate the source of your conflict, pain, frustration and also that the same shalom can flow from you and touch with God’s peace your family, friends and our world.

We are invited to see the power of the shalom of God living and transforming us now that this shalom is living in us in the dwellings that the Father has build in the heart and soul of each disciple of Jesus. We can say using the words of the 16th century Spanish Mystic Saint Teresa de Ávila:

Nada te turbe, nada te espante, Quien a Dios tiene, nada le falta  
Solo Dios basta.

Let nothing disturb you, nothing frighten you,  
All things are passing. God never changes.  
Whoever has God lacks nothing. God is enough.

Shalom. Peace be with you.

He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!