



Liturgical Day: The 23rd Sunday after Pentecost

Date: October 19, 2008

Sermon Title: Peace

Grace to you and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sing this with me, if you will:

May the peace of the Lord be with you; with your friends and your family too. Let it be, let it grow, and everywhere you go, may the peace of the Lord be with you.

Peace now I give you. It's my peace I give to you.

Not as the world gives, do I give to you.

May the peace of the Lord be with you; with your friends and your family too. Let it be, let it grow, and everywhere you go, may the peace of the Lord be with you.

We sing this song at the conclusion of every Catechism gathering at Saint Peter. This is a ministry we offer to Middle School students in our congregation – and their friends are welcome as well. Middle School is a tough time of life. They are going through so many changes and challenges – and many of them find themselves beaten down all week long: at school, in the neighborhood, sometimes even in the home.

Our hope is that if this is true for any of our young people, then at least they can come to this place and be blessed. They can come here, and be at peace; at peace because they don't have to worry about what everybody else is thinking or doing. They can come here and just be themselves. And so at the end of every gathering, we sing these words of Jesus from the fourteenth chapter of John, and we wish for the peace of God that passes all understanding to enter in their hearts and minds, and allow them to be at peace with God, at peace with themselves, and at peace with one another.

We wish that for each of you as well. We wish for you to be at peace with God, at peace with yourselves, and at peace with each other. As I think about that wish this morning, I want to address it from two distinct perspectives.

Peace and Economic & Political Realities

First of all, it is important to acknowledge that we are living in anxious times; times when it is hard to be at peace. We talked about that two weeks ago. National political power is up for grabs this year, and those of us who follow those matters closely can become anxious, as we contemplate the difference between our candidate winning and the other candidate winning. That is an issue every four years, no matter what the circumstances, but this year the financial crisis our country is facing, and the war in Iraq, make these concerns even more significant; even more troubling. I am aware of a great many people who are anxious this year about who will be our next president, or which party will exercise control over the national and state legislatures.

These are important matters. And those of you who know me, know that I have some strong opinions about what would be best for our country. I'm very concerned about how this Fall's elections turn out. So I've been listening to the radio, and reading the newspaper, and tuning in to the evening news much more regularly than I usually do; trying to understand the issues as well as I can, and watching closely to see how my candidates are doing in the polls.

The interesting thing is this: the more I think about these things, the more I become concerned about how things will turn out – and the more I sense my anxiety rising. So the last couple of weeks, I've been trying to spend more

FIRST LESSON

ISAIAH 45:1-7

PSALM

PSALM 96:1-9 [10-13]

SECOND LESSON

THESSALONIANS 1:1-10

GOSPEL LESSON

ST. MATTHEW 22:15-22

STEWARDSHIP TEXT

ST. JOHN 14:25-31

PRAYER OF THE DAY

**SOVEREIGN GOD, RAISE
YOUR THRONE IN OUR
HEARTS. CREATED BY
YOU, LET US LIVE IN YOUR
IMAGE; CREATED FOR
YOU, LET US ACT FOR
YOUR GLORY; REDEEMED
BY YOU, LET US GIVE YOU
WHAT IS YOURS,
THROUGH JESUS CHRIST,
OUR SAVIOR AND LORD.
AMEN.**

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time in prayer and Bible study – trusting that God will help me to keep this all in perspective. And it has been helping. It has been reminding me that my ultimate well-being isn't dependant on whether Democrats or Republicans are in charge of our legislative processes. My ultimate well-being is dependant on God's good grace. What I'm finding is that on the days when I spend more time in devotion than reading political news, I have a stronger sense of peace about my own future.

I want to encourage you to do the same. Do you want to have a sense of peace about our country's future? About your own future? Then spend more time with God's word than you do with the morning newspaper. And even as you take the issues of the day seriously, entrust them to God, and I guarantee you will live with a deeper sense of peace about our world and about our nation. That's the first perspective I want to consider, as I think about the gift of peace that God gives us today.

Peace and Financial Generosity

The second perspective has not to do with our country, but with our own congregation. In the midst of all this uncertainty and anxiety, last week we lifted up for you the call to sacrificial giving; the call to give so much to ministry, that it makes you unable to do other things you might have done instead – other things that people in your own income bracket are able to do. On November 9th, we will all make our personal commitments to support ministry here at Saint Peter in 2009. And we are asking you to be generous this year. We are asking you to increase your support of Saint Peter. We are asking you to provide this congregation with the resources it needs to do excellent ministry.

Now I am entirely aware that some of us will become anxious about that. Some of us have taken some pretty big hits in the market downturn. Some of us may be holding jobs that aren't as secure as we may have once thought they were. Some of us may be looking at the rising costs of fuel and food and wondering how we are going to make ends meet. And certainly one easy way to balance the budget is to cut back the amount of money we invest in Christian ministry.

Despite all of this, I want to invite you to consider increasing your generosity. I do so, not to make you more anxious, but to help relieve your anxiety. That's the way Christian generosity works. I know a lot of people who are stingy givers, and I know a lot of people who are generous givers. And guess what? The generous givers have a much deeper sense of peace about their financial well-being. They don't give more because they are at peace with their finances – they are at peace with their finances, because they give more. They have discovered that putting God at the center of that part of their lives changes everything. As we learn to give more to God, we find that we are less worried about other financial issues. As we learn to trust God more than we trust ourselves, we find that we are trusting in something far more powerful and far more reliable.

It is interesting, isn't it? In the first perspective, the more we think about political and economic realities, the more anxious we become. In the second perspective, the more we think about financial generosity, and the more we become committed to giving sacrificially, the more peaceful we become. Do you want to be at ease, as our world teeters through whatever is coming next? It won't come from a bigger stock portfolio, or a larger checkbook balance. But it will come from a deeper trust in God, and a stronger commitment to being generous with what God has given you.

Peace as Gift from God

So this morning, I am asking you to be especially generous, as you consider the support you will give to Saint Peter and its ministries in 2010. I am asking you to base your giving, not on your estimates of how the economy will go for our country in the next twelve months. Base your giving, instead, on the grace of God that has touched our hearts and filled our lives. Let your giving to Saint Peter become a fitting response to how grateful you are to have Christ as your Savior. And let your giving become a discipleship habit that helps you to trust yourself less... and to trust God more. I won't promise you that you'll have more money, or that something supernatural will make everything easier for you. But I will promise you that as you grow in this spiritual discipline, you will experience a deeper sense of peace. That's the gift God gives to us, as we grow in financial generosity.

Some people say that as we grow in faith, and gradually turn our lives over to God, the last area of our lives that God usually gets is our financial life. I agree with them, and have found that to be true in my life as well. It isn't easy for any of us. But it is important for all of us. And we learn that as we are faithful with our finances, we will find the capacity to live at peace with God, with ourselves, and with one another. Today, that is my deepest wish for you.

Now let's sing that song one more time – this time as a blessing to one another, praying that the peace of God may empower our generosity, and calm us in these anxious times.

*May the peace of the Lord be with you; with your friends and your family too.
Let it be, let it grow, and everywhere you go, may the peace of the Lord be with you.*

*Peace now I give you. It's my peace I give to you.
Not as the world gives, do I give to you.*

*May the peace of the Lord be with you; with your friends and your family too.
Let it be, let it grow, and everywhere you go, may the peace of the Lord be with you.*

Amen.

David J. Risendal, Pastor (October 19, 2008)

This Sunday at Saint Peter, we continue our Fall Stewardship Campaign. The theme is ASPEN, and the focus for this five-week emphasis will be:

Anxiety	10/5	St. Matthew 6:25-34
Sacrifice	10/12	St. Mark 12:41-44
Peace	10/19	St. John 14:25-27
Enthusiasm	10/26	St. Matthew 13:44-50 (Reformation Sunday)
Now	11/2	2nd Corinthians 8:1-16 (All Saints Sunday)

English Text: ⁱ

^{14:25} "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe. ³⁰ I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; ³¹ but 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. ⁱⁱ

Greek Text:

^{14:25} Ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν παρ' ὑμῖν μένων. ²⁶ ὁ δὲ παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ὃ πέμψει ὁ πατὴρ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι μου, ἐκεῖνος ὑμᾶς διδάξει πάντα καὶ ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς πάντα ἃ εἶπον ὑμῖν [ἐγώ]. ²⁷ Εἰρήνην ἀφήμι ὑμῖν, εἰρήνην τὴν ἐμὴν δίδωμι ὑμῖν. οὐ καθὼς ὁ κόσμος δίδωσιν ἐγὼ δίδωμι ὑμῖν. μὴ ταρασσέσθω ὑμῶν ἡ καρδία μηδὲ δειλιάτω. ²⁸ ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἶπον ὑμῖν· ὑπάγω καὶ ἔρχομαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς. εἰ ἠγαπάτε με ἐχάρητε ἂν ὅτι πορεύομαι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, ὅτι ὁ πατὴρ μεῖζων μου ἐστίν. ²⁹ καὶ νῦν εἶρηκα ὑμῖν πρὶν γενέσθαι, ἵνα ὅταν γένηται πιστεύσητε. ³⁰ οὐκέτι πολλὰ λαλήσω μεθ' ὑμῶν, ἔρχεται γὰρ ὁ τοῦ κόσμου ἄρχων· καὶ ἐν ἐμοὶ οὐκ ἔχει οὐδέν, ³¹ ἀλλ' ἵνα γινῶ ὁ κόσμος ὅτι ἀγαπῶ τὸν πατέρα, καὶ καθὼς ἐνετείλατο μοι ὁ πατὴρ, οὕτως ποιῶ. ἐγείρεσθε, ἄγωμεν ἐντεῦθεν. ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ A list of Bible lessons for the coming weeks is available at http://www.elca.org/dcm/worship/church_year/lectionary.html.

ⁱⁱ St. John 14:25-31, New Revised Standard Version Bible (© 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America).

ⁱⁱⁱ St. John 14:25-31, The Greek New Testament, Aland, Kurt, Black, Matthew, Martini, Carlo M., Metzger, Bruce M., and Wikgren, Allen, (© 1983, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart).

