

Pastor Roy's Sermon from May 5, 2013

Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 5/5/13

Two questions come to my mind when I read this Gospel lesson from John.

What is Jesus' word? What is this word that he receives from God, which is kept by those who love him? What is this word which brings unity between God, Jesus, and his followers? Keep in mind, I'm pretty sure this is not an easily defined simplistic reality, but a way of living that is somewhat open ended, but clearly the way and word of Jesus. What do we know about this word?

v. 21 those who keep commandments are those who truly love Jesus.

v. 22 those who experience the communion/unity of Jesus and the Father and [v. 26ff] the Spirit know this word.

Could this word be an experience rather than a neatly defined concept or idea? [An experience like waiting, trusting, loving?] Could it be a way of life rather than a set of rules or a single answer for all questions?

My second question is "What is this peace which Jesus gives and leaves behind?" They are mentioned almost in the same breath. Jesus' word brings peace. A peace which is profound, not driven by events or emotions, but instead a foundation for hope and joy. Communion which entrusts itself to the Creator and the creation.

So we have Jesus' word and peace. Perhaps they are one in the same. I don't see Jesus being afraid, but rather he is filled with courage and conviction. He doesn't have to prove himself. He is not afraid of whether the laws of the land support his cause. . . .He also is not gathering or mustering support to defeat the opponents who believe and practice the wrong way. . . .

Jesus accepts that some (whom John calls the world) will not accept his word or his peace. When he says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid," he is saying, "Believe in my word and in my peace. Share it with those who seek it. Don't fret about those who do not."

Waiting, trusting, loving, hoping, inviting, listening, being still long enough to hear and know the peace of the Holy Spirit. We see the peace of Christ in our sisters and brothers. We see Christ in our neighbors, we see the Spirit of Christ in life all around us.

Paul demonstrates the word, the peace of Jesus. He has a vision of someone calling to him, "Come help us in Macedonia!" Paul and his companions did not worry about where they were going, or if anybody would listen to them there, or if they would have enough provisions. They immediately headed out and ended up at Philippi. On the Sabbath they gathered by the river at a natural place of prayer and met some women who were seeking the way of Christ. They were very open to their message and received it and were baptized. Lydia offered Paul and his companions a place to stay while they worked to share the word and peace of Jesus in Philippi.

Paul listened to and was open to the Spirit. He allowed himself and his friends to fall into the care of God. He was supported by likeminded faithful friends. Together they continued the work and word of

Christ.

The lesson from Revelation reminds us that the light of God shines regardless. This light always surrounds us with hope and life. This light doesn't need our help, does not depend on things as we know them now. This light simply is. This light of God guides us in our own life and living. There is no darkness or night that overcomes the light of God.

The light is the word of Christ, the peace of Christ—not an emotional state, not a mental state. The light, word, peace of Christ is the way of trusting in the way of Christ. The way of love and compassionate, faithful mercy. A way that takes chances for the sake of others. To show leadership in the way of peace as Paul did and as many around us do today on a daily basis.

When Jesus talks about peace, he is not saying we will not suffer. The foundation, the word, the life of Jesus is peace in our suffering. Paul suffered, but he knew peace in his suffering. The church which received the book of revelation knew intense suffering. John the elder was revealing that it could also know peace in its suffering.

Jesus is not talking about a head game. Peace is not mental. Peace is born of waiting in the presence of God in God's creation, with God's people, with the Holy Spirit. Nobody can tell you about the peace of God. You and I must seek and find this peace in communion with the Spirit inwardly, by listening, by communing outwardly with one another and all of creation--listening and speaking.

Peace is not absence of suffering, or pain, or difficulty—no, it is the presence of God in the unique and shared ways we experience God. Our experience of peace will have common and differing elements according to our gifts. But our peace is founded in the Word of Christ's faithful, compassionate, courageous love.

God give us passion to trust in and wait for this peace, the word of Christ, the light of God.

Thanks be to God.