

WEDNESDAY PRAYER MEETING [8/30/23]

TITLE: The Fruit of PEACE

SPEAKER: Elder M. Joseph

KEY TEXT: ***“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”*** John 14:27 [NKJV]

As a champion of peace, Paul wrote, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3, NKJV). The Greek word translated “endeavoring” is an imperative, excluding any passivity, any “wait and see” attitude. We must be proactive. If we fight and bicker in our homes, if we fall into factions at church, if we refuse to love and honor others, then we are denying the peace of God in Jesus Christ, which He established on the cross.

How ironic that you have to fight for peace. Eleanor Roosevelt, in a *Voice of America* radio broadcast, said, “It isn’t enough to talk about peace; one must believe in it. And it isn’t enough to believe in it; one must work at it.” The peace that Christ won for us also required effort, hard work, and constant self-examination.

[Questions to meditate]: Have I availed myself of the peace that Jesus won for me on the cross? How can I cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He engrafts that peace into my daily life?

PEACE WITH GOD. ***“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”*** (Rom. 5:1, NKJV). To have peace with God is more than to feel comfortable in His presence. It means that we, who once were *“alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds”* (Col. 1:21 ESV), have been reconciled and restored to fellowship with God. Once we were at war with God, but by His death on the cross, Jesus has made it possible for the hostilities to cease and for us to be God’s friends and not His enemies. Also, the more clearly we see God’s ways and walk in them, the more we appropriate His however to live as His sons and daughters. Ps. 119:165 says, ***“Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble.”*** (NKJV).

Colossians 1:20-22 reveals that sin did not cause God to be merciful and pardoning; rather, it revealed that He has been that way from eternity. The plan of salvation demonstrated that God loved us and was willing to forgive even from the beginning...Phil. 4:7 says...***And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”***

Question: How are we to understand what it means to be guarded by peace?

So far we have seen that because of what Jesus has done, because of His perfect life credited to you by faith, you and I can stand pardoned, forgiven, and accepted before God, regardless of our past.

FINDING PEACE. When we are at peace with God—made possible by His sacrifice, which brought about our reconciliation with Him—we will be at peace with ourselves and those around us. While we are not naturally peaceful, God has given us the means to become peaceful. In Matthew 11:28-29, Jesus makes an invitation....***“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*** Though He doesn’t use the word *peace*, He does use a word that means “to give rest, to refresh, to give one’s self rest, to take a rest.”

“It is the love of self that brings unrest...those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. In perfect acquiescence

[surrender/submission] there is perfect rest. The Lord says, **'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.'** Isa. 26:3. [E.G.W. DA, 330-331].

Question: How does love of self lead to personal unrest and unhappiness?

One thing we must not do is equate peace to a life without problems. Rare is the person, even the most faithful Christian, who goes through life without trials, pain, and suffering. Indeed, some folks have, it seems, more than their share of suffering. Peace, though, has more to do with how you handle these situations than with the situations themselves. Peace has to do with the deepest trust in a loving and caring God who knows what you are going through and has promised not to forsake you, no matter what comes your way.

PEACE AT HOME. Strange as it may seem, the most difficult place to be a Christian is at home. How tragic, when home should be the one place in all the world where we all should have peace. The Word of God says:

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14);

"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18, NKJV);

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." (Matt. 5:9);

"Love each other like brothers and sisters. Give each other more honor than you want for yourselves....Wish good for those who harm you; wish them well and do not curse them. Be happy with those who are happy, and be sad with those who are sad. Live in peace with each other....If someone does wrong to you, do not pay him back by doing wrong to him. Try to do what everyone thinks is right....My friends, do not try to punish others when they wrong you, but wait for God to punish them with His anger....But you should do this: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. Doing this will be like pouring burning coals on his head.' Do not let evil defeat you, but defeat evil by doing good." (Romans 12:10, 14-16a, 17, 19-21; NCV).

Imagine what our homes would be like were we to, indeed, reflect these principles! Imagine what it would be like if we would learn to think of others before ourselves; imagine if we showed others unconditional love, even when folks didn't deserve it. Imagine if we forgave those who hurt us. Imagine if we were as concerned about the well-being of others as we were about our own selves. Though implementing these principles wouldn't solve all our family problems, no doubt they would greatly help!

Question: What does it mean that Jesus calls us to be peacemakers (Matt. 5:9)? How and with whom are we to make peace? [see LB & Message Versions]

PEACE IN THE CHURCH. Matthew 5:23-24 says...**"So if you are about to place your gift on the altar and remember that someone is angry with you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. Make peace with that person, then come back and offer your gift to God."** (CEV). It is evident that Jesus takes more seriously our relationship with one another than we do. It is not uncommon for bitterness and resentment to exist for years between members of a church. Imagine how different things would be if we all followed this teaching [in the passage above].

And how are we to relate with one another as fellow members of the church? Paul gives us three ways in Col. 3:13-15...**"Put up with each other, and forgive anyone who does you wrong, just as Christ has forgiven you. ¹⁴Love is more important than anything else. It is what ties everything completely together. ¹⁵Each one of you is part of the body of Christ, and you were**

chosen to live together in peace. So let the peace that comes from Christ control your thoughts. And be grateful. (CEV).

Think about the last time you had a problem with a fellow church member. Did you follow Christ's words in Matthew 5? If not, analyze the reasons why you chose the "easy" worldly route as opposed to the path that would have required humility and self-denial. How can you learn to do what Jesus calls us to do in such situations?

Francis of Assisi, born in 1181, said it so beautifully:

*Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
And where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much
Seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood, as to understand;
To be loved, as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. AMEN!*