

Sunday, July 24, 2022

This is the sixteenth in a series of sermons on John 13-17 (“The Farewell Discourse”).

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| 1. Jesus Loves His own (13:1) [7/5/2020] | 11. Friends of Christ (15:12-17) [11/21/2021] |
| 2. Foot Washing (13:2-17) [8/30/2020] | 12. The Hatred of the World (15:18- 16:4a) [1/9/2022] |
| 3. Identifying the Traitor (13:18-30) [10/18/2020] | 13. The Work of the Holy Spirit (16:4b-15) [2/27/2022] |
| 4. Christ’s Glory and How We Are To Live In His Temporary Absence (13:31-38) [12/6/2020] | 14. Your Sorrow Shall Be Turned into Joy (16:16-24) [4/17/2022] |
| 5. Preparing a Place (14:1-4) [1/31/2021] | 15. Direct Access to the Father (16:25-32) [6/12/2022] |
| 6. The Only Way to the Father (14:5-7) [3/21/2021] | 16. He’s Spoken That You Might Have Peace (16:33)
<i>The High Priestly Prayer (Intercessory Prayer)</i> |
| 7. Seeing God (14:8-14) [5/9/2021] | 17. Jesus Prays for Himself (17:1-5) |
| 8. Peace and Comfort (14:15-27) [6/27/2021] | 18. Jesus Prays for His Present People (17:6-19) |
| 9. Loving God (14:28-31) [8/15/2021] | 19. Jesus Prays for His Future People (17:20-26) |
| 10. Abiding in Christ, the True Vine (15:1-11) [10/3/2021] | |

We have now reached the conclusion of what we could call the “discourse proper” (which runs from John 13:31 to John 16:33). Today’s passage consists of only one verse, and in a lot of ways, it is a summary statement of everything that our Lord Jesus has been talking about – the overarching purpose of the whole discourse has been so we can have a transcendent peace while we make our way through an evil, persecuting world. If we consider these last several chapters to be a sermon, He is at the end of the sermon, and the next thing He will do is lift up His eyes to heaven and pray. He will then enter the Garden of Gethsemane, where He will be betrayed by Judas into the hands of an angry “band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees” who had come there “with lanterns and torches and weapons.” (John 18:3).

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

Although this is only one verse, I’d like to break it down into three sections: “Peace,” “Tribulation,” and “Overcoming.”

Peace

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace.” (John 16:33a)

In preparing for this sermon, I thought it might be a good idea to do a historical survey of peace treaties that men have been involved in, and there are a lot. The country of France alone has been involved in no less than 81 peace treaties (16 of which happened between 1795 and 1802 during the French Revolutionary Wars). My personal favorites are a couple peace treaties signed between the Byzantine Empire and the Empire of Iranians. The first was

called the “Perpetual Peace,” signed in 532AD to end the Iberian War. It lasted eight years. They then signed the more realistically named “Fifty-Year Peace” in 562AD. It lasted ten. Looking through scores of historical peace treaties, I can tell you that the main thing that they have in common is that they’ve all been broken (or will be broken, if they haven’t been yet). Then I thought, “why only look at history? Why not look at today’s headlines?” So I opened the AP wire, and they organize stuff under headings. The top four headings on the day I looked were: “*Gun Violence*,” “*Abortion*,” “*Russia-Ukraine War*” and “*Jan. 6 Hearings*.” Then I searched for the word “peace” and the top two stories were: “*Sri Lanka acting president declares emergency amid protests*” and “*Explosion of violence in South Sudan threatens peace pact*.” Beloved, this is what the world has to offer us – lots of talk and promises about “peace” but no lasting peace. And I think we know this to be true from the highest level of international wars to the lowest level of interactions between individuals, because this is a characteristic of fallen humanity. James tells us that these wars and fightings come from “your lusts that war in your members.” (James 4:1). Even in times of “peace” when people put their happy faces on, it always seems to be uneasy and full of angst, like there are always hostilities and contempt roiling just under the surface. Yes, this is the fleeting, uncertain and elusive “peace” you get when you deal with human beings.

But this isn’t the case with Jesus. Peace in Him is permanent. Everything He has said on this evening has been with the goal of us having a secure and lasting peace in Him – loving one another, believing in Him, reminders of His second coming to “receive you unto myself,” seeing the Father, the love of God for us, the glory of God, loving Him, obeying Him, answered prayer, the coming of the Comforter, us abiding in Jesus, each member of the Trinity abiding with us, being His friends, the doctrine of election (“ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you”), the hatred of the world, the joy that no man can take from you, etc. Go back and reread it when you have a moment. Each word is carefully crafted with this end: “that in me ye might have peace.” Pay attention to that “in me.” There is no real peace outside of Christ. He has procured it for us by shedding His blood, and we experience it as a result of everything He’s been talking about. And if I could look at it from a slightly different angle, if your life is not characterized by obeying and meditating on the things He’s been talking about in these chapters, then you have no reason to expect peace.

So, what is this peace that we have in Him? Well, first and foremost, it is peace with God. It is peace with the One against whom we have sinned and rebelled. It is peace with the One who has every right to dispatch you immediately to Hell. Isn’t that amazing? You were His enemy, and now you are reconciled to Him by the death of His Son (Romans 5:10). In your meditations, it would do everyone in this place a lot of good to spend some time on the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man. Only then will you understand why it is that you needed to be reconciled in the first place. And I’ll tell you this – in my experience, this

understanding is something that is progressive. That is, the further I move along in life, the more I understand God's holiness, the more I understand just how bad sin really is (after all, it required the death of His Son to deal with it), and the more I marvel at His grace. Here are just a few examples of the many verses that talk about this peace in Christ:

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Romans 5:1-2)

“For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.” (Colossians 1:19-22)

This is a peace that transcends all circumstances. It doesn't matter what's going on around me, I can be at peace in my heart because I know that I've been reconciled to God, and nobody can take that away from me (“no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.” – John 10:29). This is a peace that comes from me knowing that my sins are forgiven and that I am justified in His sight. It's the peace that we experience as a result of believing in Him, obeying Him, abiding in Him, and so forth. This is the peace that we have in Christ, and only those who are in Christ have this peace.

“And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever...But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed... I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him.” (Isaiah 32:17, 53:5, 57:19)

There's a lot to be said about this peace in Christ, but let's focus on one more passage:

“For he is our peace, who hath made both [that is, Jews and Gentiles] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” (Ephesians 2:14-18)

You see here that Jesus Himself is our peace (similar to Micah 5:5 – “And this *man* shall be the peace”). Just as He is “the way, the truth and the life” He doesn’t merely point us to a way to acquire peace – it is through Him that we get the peace. He is the author of our peace. He is the one who, by His death, reconciled both Jews and Gentiles unto God in one body. The quickest way for you to lose your sense of peace is to complicate matters and turn away from the simplicity that is in Christ (i.e., wholeheartedness and singlemindedness towards Christ), which Paul warned about in 2 Corinthians 11:3 – “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” There was a preacher named Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813-1843) who said: “*Learn much of the Lord Jesus. For every look at yourself — take ten looks at Christ. He is altogether lovely.*” So, I say again, the quickest way for you to lose your sense of peace is to turn away from the simplicity that is in Christ. You won’t find peace anywhere else.

Additionally, He has made us “peacemakers” - “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9). It doesn’t mean that we go around and try to get worldlings to be nice to one another. The peacemakers are those who preach the gospel of peace (Romans 10:15, Ephesians 6:15), and tell sinners how to be reconciled to God. And it certainly includes fostering peace among our brothers and sisters in Christ, “endeavouring [i.e. laboring, hastening, giving diligence] to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:3). Through our sins, there are a lot of ways that we can stir up strife and disrupt the peace in the body of Christ (gossip, talebearing, and slander; hatred or contempt for one another; anger and wrath; pride; selfishness; discontentment; covetousness, etc.). “I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel...do: and the God of peace shall be with you.” (Philippians 4:2-3, 9).

One final note is that this peace in Christ is one of the many things that separates the children of God from the children of the devil. What does the scripture tell us about the peace that the worldling can expect? Here are a few points:

- It is the natural state of every human to not know the way of peace. “The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.” (Isaiah 59:8). Paul references this verse when he is making the case that every human is totally depraved – “the way of peace have they not known.” (Romans 3:17)
- It’s something that people want, so it’s a favorite promise of the lying false prophets of the world. They do this by encouraging people to continue in their sins. “I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his

wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah...They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.” (Jeremiah 23:14,17)

- It’s a thing they feel entitled to, but it’s elusive to them. “We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble!” (Jeremiah 8:15)
- In summary: “There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.” (Isaiah 48:22)

Tribulation

“In the world ye shall have tribulation...” (John 16:33b)

The comparison here is “in me” vs. “in the world.” In Christ, we have peace. In the world, we have tribulation. He’s already spent quite a bit of time fleshing out what kind of tribulation we will have, so I’m not going to rehash all of that. But His point is that even in the midst of this tribulation, we will still have peace in Him. This peace in Christ, as defined in the Bible, does not mean “absence of conflict.” Our peace is based on Him, not on our circumstances on earth. Otherwise, our peace would come and go with the vicissitudes of life.

Tribulation is not an anomaly in the life of a child of God. It is the norm. It is necessary. Paul and Barnabas taught the disciples that “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:22). We should expect it. Bone-crushing, heart-rending, back-bending tribulations. I said this a few sermons ago, and I’ll say it again: when you believe on the Lord Jesus, that’s not the end of your problems in this world – your problems have only just begun. You become a special target of Satan. But in Christ, you may still have peace.

I want to take a few minutes to clear up some verses that may cause some confusion for us:

**“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”
(Luke 2:13-14)**

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.” (Matthew 10:34-36)

“Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against

three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.” (Luke 12:51-53)

We have the whole heavenly host glorifying God because peace is on earth. And then we have Jesus saying that He did not come to send (or, give) peace on earth. I think the context makes it clear. The mission of Jesus Christ was not “world peace.” It was not to get people to get along with one another. It was not to mend broken family ties. Rather, “the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10). And part of that is to give peace to those who are faithful. This is why we frequently see Jesus saying things like, “thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.” (Luke 7:50). In fact, some suggest that the words “on earth peace, good will toward men” could be translated as something like, “on earth peace for men towards whom He has good will.” That would make a lot of sense. The peace that He came to bring is not for everybody, but only for those in whom He has pleasure.

In fact, He was so far from bringing peace between God’s elect and proud sinners that He brought a sword and division – even (and especially) when the two groups live in the same house. The very thing that brings peace to His loved ones brings all-out war from the world towards His loved ones. So yes, Jesus did come to bring peace to His people – He is the Prince of Peace, and He has made peace between us and God, and between those who are in Christ. But He did not come to bring peace between us and the world. Instead, we get tribulation. (cf. Proverbs 16:7 – “When a man’s ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.” JFB: “*Persecutions, of course, excepted.*”)

Overcoming

“...but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33c)

Even though we will face tribulation in the world, He says: “but be of good cheer.” This isn’t a suggestion – it’s a command. Upon first blush, you might think it means “to be cheerful” but the underlying words really have the idea of “to be courageous” or “to be confident.” And the reason we can be courageous in the face of everything that the world has to throw at us is because “I have overcome the world.” When we hear the word “overcome,” that might sound a bit mild to our ears. But it is a very strong word. It means “to conquer, to get the victory, to prevail, to vanquish.” It comes from a root word that we are probably all familiar with: *nike*.

We can be of good cheer because we know that the victory has already been obtained. It’s a done deal. We’re on the “winning team,” as it were. We have only to await its consummation at the return of Christ. It is a victory over the world. This includes all of our spiritual foes that

we have to face while we're here – Satan, Satan's children, sin, death, the evil world itself. It's captured beautifully in the following verses:

“Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” (Ephesians 4:8)

“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” (Colossians 2:15)

The allusion here is to a Roman Triumph. This was a special honor bestowed by the Roman Senate upon certain Roman generals who had been victorious in battle. Titus, for example, was given a Triumph after he led the military campaign to destroy Jerusalem in 70AD. The victor would be paraded down the crowd-lined main thoroughfare, riding in a chariot, decked out in honorable attire. As part of the procession, the vanquished foes would be shackled and marched before the crowd, for their humiliation and open shame. So, picture this in your mind's eye – all our enemies (Satan, sin, the world, etc.), defeated, bound, and put on display to the whole world in humiliation. This is what happened when Jesus died, resurrected, and ascended to heaven. He didn't just obtain this victory for Himself – He obtained it for us. He did it on our behalf. He is the victor, so anyone who abides in Him is also the victor.

**“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
(1 Corinthians 15:57)**

“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world...For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 4:4, 5:4-5)

But you may ask, if Jesus has already secured the victory, why do I still have to deal with sin? Why does Satan still accost me? Why does the world still lure me? That is a big topic. But consider Romans 6. It is describing the person who has been saved by Jesus Christ. Such people are “dead to sin,” “walk in newness of life,” and are “freed from sin.”

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” (Romans 6:11-14)

The idea there is that we are delivered from the dominion of sin. As long as we are alive on this earth, sin will still be there, but we are no longer under its dominion. We've been freed from its tyranny. We don't have to obey it. We're commanded to "reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin." Jesus has overcome the world – we don't have to respond to its lures and temptations. Jesus has vanquished and cast out the prince of this world – we don't have to obey him. This is the freedom that Jesus has given us – not the freedom to sin with abandon, but the freedom to obey Him. And lest anyone think I'm moving towards the heresy of "sinless perfection," turn the page to Romans 7, where Paul describes that condition of the old man being at war with the new man, which every saved person is intimately familiar with:

**"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."
(Romans 7:21-23)**

For an unregenerate person, though, they are "under sin," just as we all have been at some point in our lives (Romans 3:9). It's in their nature to love to sin. They have not been freed from it. It has dominion over them. They are described as those who are in "the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Timothy 2:26) and "the servant of sin" (John 8:34). Considering such, as vexing as they are, this should elicit pity and compassion for them.

So, we started just over two years ago with Jesus loving us unto the end (John 13:1), and we're ending this week on a note of victory. He's obtained the victory for us, and His overcoming the world is foundational to everything that we are. Lord willing, next time, I'll be able to begin John 17, which is the so-called "High Priestly Prayer." I'd like to leave you with a favorite passage out of Romans 8, which encapsulates a lot of what we've been going over today.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:31-39)