

Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid,” says Jesus.

If that were a commandment, then surely it would be the most broken of commandment of all time. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.

Many of us can spend half our lives troubled, concerned or worried!

I sort of think that everyone has doubts and worries, anxieties and self-doubts of at least if you don't then I am on my own with my worries and anxieties.

I think in all honesty we are frequently afraid; afraid that we'll never make it, that we'll never be good enough, that the odds are stacked against us, that things will go wrong, we worry about things that we can control, and we worry about things that we can't control.

Last week in his final address to the disciples, given at the last supper, Jesus said “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

And this morning's offering is also part of the final discourse and a personal encouragement for them – “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.” “Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid.”

I would suggest that peace and untroubled hearts were the last thing that the disciples would have had at this time. He has just told them he is going away – he is leaving them – he actually says – if you loved me you would rejoice that I am going to the father – but I am sure they were not in rejoicing mood and anxiety would be just about off the charts, I should imagine that peace was that last thing that the disciples were feeling.

They have travelled the highways and byways with Jesus as he healed, taught, and changed the world. Now they are staring at a future without him, a future that they will be expected to carry on his work – they must have been beside themselves with uncertainty.

In 2016 Forbes dot com ran a survey and asked people – what do you most want – above all else what do you want?

The top 4 things were Happiness, Money, Freedom and Peace the other 6 were Joy, balance fulfillment Confidence Stability and passion.

I was interested that Love did not feature in the top 10 – maybe it was number 11.

Of the top 4 I can see the desire for happiness – everyone wants to be happy and money – we could send a whole program of sermons on money but I do understand why it is is the top 4.

Freedom – I don't know what the definition of freedom was in this case – freedom from oppression, freedom from health issues, money issues, it is certainly something that should feature in the top 4..

Now peace. I think that truth be told peace probably trumps them all. If they were told to choose 1 and not 10 peace would be neck and neck with happiness. After all who doesn't want peace in all its various forms "Peace and tranquillity." "Inner Peace." "World peace." Maybe "Just a bit of peace and quiet." And at the end we all want to, "Rest in peace."

But peace is often a rather difficult concept.

The professional peace negotiators who work tirelessly in the world's trouble spots will tell you that the name of the game is to try and come to an agreement between the parties where neither feel they have sold out and lost face.

Most often, all that is achieved is an uneasy truce, a fragile peace, which is about winners and losers, victors and victims. But the bitterness remains to erupt another day. divorce lawyers, political negotiators and Human resource specialists will tell us the same thing – in our quest for peace everyone wants peace but no one wants to lose out, not get their fare share, we want peace but on our terms.

This makes Jesus' words very poignant "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you, but not as the world gives," there is clearly an acknowledgement that

we hunger for something better than the fragile peace of a worldly agreement.

What we crave is real peace. Peace without bitterness and humiliation. Peace without casualties and victims. Peace that does not come through the sacrificing of someone's integrity, interests and dignity. Peace that doesn't just look good to others; but feels good to be part of.

Jesus says, "My peace I give you; not as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." Peace without troubled hearts or fear. Absolutely that's what we are hungering for.

If Jesus had just left it at that – I offer you peace in fact I give you peace – one could think great but how does that happen – it is almost offered peace without the action to go with it.

Jesus in this final speech tells them – I have said these things to you while I am still with you – 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.

The English word Advocate is used but the Greek word that would have been originally written is "paraclete"

Paraclete, when it has been translated is akin to "comforter", or "counsellor", or "advocate".

Christ says "Let not your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid," for "the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send on my authority, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said"

Jesus was going but the Holy Spirit was coming and it is the Holy Spirit that will be our comforter, that will calm our hearts in times of trouble, it is the Holy Spirit that will comfort when we are afraid.

## SERMON

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JOHN 14:23 – 29 – PEACE

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But of course for most of us, the hardest thing is to let go and trust the advocate, the Holy Spirit. We have great trouble getting out of the way and not interfering.

And when we begin to listen regularly to that voice of the Holy Spirit, and trust the advocate, the Holy Spirit, to allow the Holy Spirit to bring us to our full potential to set us free from our worldly worries and concerns, to allow us the true peace that is offered from God then it is on that basis that Jesus says to us, “Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid

Peace is a commodity we sorely need in our world and is absent for far too many, but Jesus reassures the disciples, that they will not be left alone and bestows peace on them.

The Aramaic word for peace is shalem and is equivalent to the Hebrew word shalom. Shalom signifies more than the absence of conflict; it represents 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.

Jesus gives us shalem, gives us the gift of peace accompanied with the gift of the Holy Spirit, he says Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid.