

**Sermon:** *Peace*  
**Text:** *John 14:15 – 31*  
**Date:** *April 27, 2008 AM*  
**Place:** *Jesup First UMC*

One morning, I was standing with my friends at Hutto Jr. High School, waiting for the bell to ring. And Dale said something that made me as mad as I have ever been in my life. And I got in his face, nose to nose, eyeball to eyeball, and some harsh words were exchanged. And then, I said: “Dale, let me tell you what I’m going to do. I’m going to take my right foot and I’m going to put it on the left side of your face, and there’s nothing you can do about it.” Well, you can imagine what happened next. We started fighting and the crowd started gathering. And one of those people was the Vice-Principal, Lloyd Wilson.

Now, Mr. Wilson was a big, black man. And when I drew back to hit Dale, Mr. Wilson grabbed by with one hand and grabbed Dale by the other and dragged us to his office. And that’s where we sat for the next few hours. And finally, after he had administered some corporal punishment, he said: “Now, young men, you’re supposed to be friends. I want some peace between you. Can you do that?” Well, we both said yes. We shook hands and left Mr. Wilson’s office, but there wasn’t any peace. I was plotting and planning, and burning inside. Dale was plotting and planning, and burning inside. And when we looked at each other, there was no peace. We parted in peace, but we never experienced it.

What exactly is peace anyway? We talk about it! We long for it! We pray for it! But I wonder if we ever really experience it. Is there peace in our relationships with others? Is there peace in our Church? Is there peace in our hearts? Do we know the peace of God when we lay our heads on the pillow at night?

The mood was heavy in the Upper Room that night. Something was happening. The disciples didn’t know what, but there had been warnings before they left Galilee that this would be Jesus’ last trip to Jerusalem. And everything about Jesus’ words and actions was different that night. And so, Jesus said: “I am going away to prepare a place for you. And if I go away and prepare a place for you, I will surely come against and receive you unto myself that where I am, there you may always be.” He said: “I’m not going to leave you alone. I will send the Holy Spirit to you; the Spirit will be with you and will be within you.” And in the midst of His last words to the disciples, Jesus said: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your heart be troubled and do not let them be afraid.”

Now, it seems to me from this passage that there are two different kinds of peace: the peace the world offers and the peace that Jesus offers. But what’s the difference? Well, that’s what I want us to reflect on this morning

## **1. THE WORLD SEEMS TO OFFER US PEACE.**

Jesus said: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give as the world gives.” Well, how does the world give peace?

First, the world offers peace through the absence of conflict. As a Jewish man, Jesus knew the history of Israel. He knew of their battles with the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Amalekites, and the Moabites. He knew about the Assyrian conquest in 721 B.C. and the Babylonian conquest in 586 B.C.! He knew about the Greek invasion and the Roman conquest. In fact, when Jesus spoke these words, the world was in the very heart of the Pax Romano, the peace of Rome. It is said that the size and strength of the Roman Empire brought peace throughout the known world ... but few felt at peace. Every time, they went outside their homes, they were reminded that they were an occupied nation. Like the people in Jesus’ comments, they all cried, “Peace, Peace,” but peace could not be found.

And so it is today, we in the United States like to think we are a peaceful nation, but our nation is at war today. In our history, we have fought many wars, from the Revolutionary War to

the Iraq War. We long for peace and the world keeps promising peace, but where is it? Like Dale and me, from time to time, we may not be fighting with anybody, but that doesn't mean we're at peace. Our nation and our world have never experienced peace through the absence of conflict.

**Second, the world offers peace through the absence of pain and struggle.** It seems we are always seeking ways to make our lives easier. We have developed computers and machines to do some of the hard work for us. And still, where is peace? We have developed medicines to treat or to cure many of our sicknesses and diseases. We have learned to live with cancer instead of dying from it. We have learned to do heart surgery and brain surgery. And still, where is peace? We have never experienced peace through the absence of pain and struggle.

**Third, the world offers peace through the rule of law and order.** We are a country built upon the rule of law. We believe we can have peace in our homes, peace in our neighborhoods, peace in our communities if people will only obey the law and live by the rules. There would be no road rage if people would only obey the rules of the road. There would be no domestic violence, no child abuse or neglect, if only people would obey the law of the land. And most of us do, but still where is peace?

If any civilization lived under the rule of law and order, it was Israel. There were laws built around other laws so that people would be certain not to violate the rules. And some tried very hard. Paul described himself as a zealous keeper of the Law and yet, he had no peace. We have never experienced peace through the rule of law and order.

You see, the world promises peace, but it cannot deliver on its promises, but there is a peace, a peace that passes all understanding, a peace that will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. It is the peace that only God gives.

## **2. CHRIST OFFERS US PEACE AND HE DELIVERS IT.**

Psalm 29:11 says: "*The Lord blesses His people with peace.*" Any sense of peace which you and I experience in life comes from Him. Jesus said: "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled. Do not let them be afraid.*"

Christ offers us peace. First, He offers peace through His death on the cross. Colossians 1:19 says: "*For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things ... by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross.*" How ironic! The cross, that place of suffering and death, that place of ultimate struggle between God and Satan, because the place of peace. The Bible says, we were once at war – with ourselves, with others, and with God – but now, we have been offered peace through Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. Isaiah 53 says: "*The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him.*" He offers us peace through the cross.

**Second, He offers peace through His abiding presence.** In John 14:18, Jesus promised the disciples: "*I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.*" You see, it is more than just a cliché to say: to know Jesus is to know peace. It is a deep, spiritual truth.

All of life's experiences – the celebrations and the challenges – are made easier by His presence. I walked up to the hospital bed to pray with her, to lift her spirits and to comfort her, but it was she who lifted me up. She said: "*Oh Tucker, they're going to take me to surgery, but I'm not scared. I know Jesus is with me and I'm just ready to get it over with.*" That's the peace that His presence brings.

**Third, He offers peace through obedience to His word.** Psalm 119:165 says: "*Those who love your law have great peace.*" And so it is in the same context where Jesus offers His peace to the disciples that He said: "*If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*" There is a connection between obedience to God's Word and living in the peace of God. Peace comes from abiding in the center of God's will and abiding in the center of God's will requires us to live in obedience to God's word.

In November 1984, I entered the Management Training Program with Kmart. I remember walking into my new store that morning and meeting Joan at the door. And I'll never forget what she said; she said: "*You and I will get along just fine if you do what I ask you to do.*" In some ways, that's what Jesus said: "*Your life will be more peaceful, if you keep my commandments.*"

Jesus offers us peace and delivers it. He said: "**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.**"

I wonder: Do you know the peace that passes all understanding? Do you live at peace with God, at peace with others, and at peace with yourself? Have you knelt at the cross? Does His Spirit abide within? Do you live in obedience to His word?

O God, let it be so ... let us pray ...