

John 14:27

A young man received a birthday gift from his elderly father. The father was well-to-do, and his son had been hoping for a new sports car. He opened the gift with anticipation, but inside the box was a brand new Bible. In disgust, the young man threw the book into the back of a closet. Years passed and that son never spoke to his father again. After his funeral, he noticed the Bible still in the back of the closet. Opening it, he found a check his father had written many years earlier. It was written out to him in the amount of a new sports car.

I think that you and I often treat God the way that son treated his father. If He doesn't give us what we want, we become disgusted and we tend to blame Him for what is wrong with our life. I'm not exactly sure why you are here today. I'm not sure what you're looking for. Maybe you're just here to make mom happy. But I do know why your Lord is here. He is here to give you peace. "Peace I leave with you," He says, "My peace I give you."

Now there are those among us who may be somewhat disgusted with these words of Jesus, because what they want is for our world to be at peace. They want an "earthly peace," and they want it now. But that's not what Jesus gives. He never promised to end all the fighting and wars in this world. Rather, He said, "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." Jesus never raised a sword in His hand, as far as we know, nor did He ever order a sword to be raised for Him. Yet, in the last 2,000 years much of the blood which has been spilled on the face of the earth has been spilled on account of Christ.

And if tribes and nations have fought each other because of Him, then there's a good chance that you and I have exchanged angry words with someone because of Him also. Members leave the church and refuse to come back because they are angry over the words of Christ which were applied to them. Families split apart because a son or daughter marries outside the Faith. Husbands and wives have strained relationships because one attends church and the other does not. It seems like our lives would have a whole lot more peace if Jesus had never come.

But think of this...what good is a peaceful existence if we die without a Savior? There is simply no amount of peace here on earth which can compare to the peace Jesus gives. Because unlike peace treaties which are made and often broken, the peace He gives will never come to an end—because it's not a treaty of peace that we sign with our hand—it was signed in blood: Jesus' blood for you. And right here and now He gives that peace to you through His Word which comes into your ears.

There were two artists trying to paint pictures describing such peace. One chose to paint a scene of a quiet, deep blue mountain lake. It was somber and made you feel calm and peaceful just by looking at it. The other chose to paint a little cottage sitting in the midst of a raging thunderstorm, and in a window by candlelight, was a father gently rocking his tiny child, holding him close within his arms.

The second painting describes well the peace which Jesus gives. Your life may be one storm after another—troubles, pain, disease. Perhaps you have a storm raging within your own heart and mind, and there is no sign of it letting up. The problems keep coming. The floodwaters keep rising. Where is this peace of which Jesus speaks? Look into the window

of God's Word and see His heart which is at peace with you. See your Heavenly Father holding you close to Him as His dear child—because you are through Holy Baptism. See Him declaring to you within those sacred waters that you are safe, and that no storm can take you away from Him.

You see, friend, Jesus already faced the storms of hell for you. He faced your sins and He claimed them as His own. He took your guilty conscience to be His. He carried your pains and diseases so that they cannot overwhelm you to cause you to despair. Jesus faced your storms and He died. And so He gives you life—His life for you. He gives you hope—eternal hope. He gives you peace, not as the world gives, because whether you feel at peace or not, God is at peace with you. He does not hold your sins against you. He forgives you...every one of you. No matter what storms you are facing; no matter why you are here today, He gives you, now, His word of peace. Your God, for Jesus' sake, is at peace with you.

Not only can the world never give this peace, it cannot even understand it. When treaties are signed, each warring nation agrees to the terms of peace. If England agrees to be at peace with France, then France must agree to be at peace with England. That's not the peace God gives. He does not agree to be at peace with you provided you do something in return. His terms of peace do not rest upon the provision that you are obedient to Him. Rather, His heart is at peace with you no matter what you do. Jesus sealed it with His shed blood for you. No matter how often you break His Commandments, His heart remains at peace with you. No matter how much we fight against Him, He will not ever go to war with you. Because Jesus ended the battle. On the cross He cried, "It is finished!" The war between God and you is over! The only victim is He who was pierced with nails and spear. And because He was, your God declares you forgiven. He is not angry with you and He will never be. All He has in His heart is peace toward you.

That's why, each time you receive Jesus' body and blood at His altar, your pastor tells you what is in God's heart for you. "Depart in peace," he says. And even on those days when the storms are raging; when things are not going well; when everyone seems to be against you, your God is for you. You are still in His arms. He is at peace with you.

Think about that tiny child nestled safely in his father's arms. What reason would he have to be afraid? What reason would he have to fear the raging storm? Even if you don't feel that you are that tiny child, you are. Even if you don't feel safe in God's arms, you are. What you feel in your heart and what you experience in life cannot change who you are—you are God's forgiven child in Christ Jesus. You belong to Him through Holy Baptism. And no matter where you think you are, you are in His strong arms—His arms which mean for you that you can rest in peace every day.

Now I ask you, because this is so...because this peace is yours—for Jesus gives it to you—why would we ever want to offend our God? Why would we ever want to disobey Him? Would that tiny child want to bite the arms of his father who is holding him ever so close to his heart? Never! Then why would you and I want to hurt our God with words and deeds against Him; against what He commands us?

Let us, therefore, live in peace with one another. God is at peace with you...let us strive to be kind to each other. God is at peace with you...let us strive to obey Him. God is at peace

with you...we strive to live, therefore, as His faithful children. But know this always—God's peace is not based upon what you do and how you live. His peace is yours because of what Jesus did for you. Amen.