

PRAISE INTERNATIONAL

IMAGINE

JOHN 14:25-27 OT READING PSALM 67

Good morning - welcome Jack and Luis back to Indiana!

I want to talk with you about Peace;

in these weeks that follow Easter and we celebrate the reality of Jesus - risen from the dead and revealing life as it was intended to be - centered on the love of the Father - here is the one commandment I give you **Love one another**. Here is what I want us to see – **He did not give us this invitation in a void.**

- Its the end of the school year and we sent our daughter on a field trip - when she got up her cloths were laid out - Denise had prepared a lunch on the counter.
- The point being that we want to sent her prepared for a long day out of town.
- Jesus knowing He is not just sending out His friends for a day but for a lifetime - John 14-16 - you will not be alone - the Holy Spirit is coming to you.
- Then deeply aware of the atmosphere that His friends dwelt in - John 14:25-27 - I love the way the Message translation handles this text:
“I’m telling you these things while I’m still living with you. The Friend, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send at my request, will make everything plain to you. He will remind you of all the things I have told you. I’m leaving you well and whole. That’s my parting gift to you. Peace. I don’t leave you the way you’re used to being left—feeling abandoned, bereft. So don’t be upset. Don’t be distraught.”
- **I know what you are facing and the atmosphere you live in - here is what I am leaving - Peace!** Beloved I am convinced we need a fresh imagination as it pertains to Peace.

Almost 50 years ago a song with a simple but haunting lyric was released inviting us to a fresh vision of our world around us.....the curious thing is that this song still strikes at the heart level with the simple invitation - Imagine.....

- Imagine all the people living life in Peace.....you may say I’m a dreamer...but I’m not the only one....and we are invited to imagine an near utopian world. And then to awake from the 3 minutes of chords to reality...again!

Last week I talked with you about Jesus greatest commandment and why it matters how we posture our heart - to live in and from the place of voluntary love to God and one another. The closer people got to Jesus they were drawn even more to who He was and is the perfect representation of the Lover of the Father. Beloved we must have this settled that the center of the Christian life is not our list of things we know and do but the Love of God revealed in Jesus Christ!

I was just a young pup out of High School when I heard an appeal that made sense to me. Why is it that we as a nation seem to be led by the Vocal Minority and we the Majority say nothing? This was followed by an appeal that sounded something like this - what if we the Moral Majority stood up for what we believe? What if we told our law makers that we would no longer be silent what if we ‘demanded’ to be heard? And out of this came what was known at that time as the Moral Majority.

- A group of people whose imagination was captured by the idea that we could secure what would give us what we cared about if we took a stand!

***And the secret is simply this Christ in you!
Yes, Christ in you bringing with Him the hope of all the glorious things to come.
Col 1:27b JB Phillips***

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- So the highest ideal of living righteous lives was to take a 'stand' against those who were not!
- And there is no lack of finding issues and people to 'stand' against. So in this mind set the highest imagination the work of righteousness....was to 'stand' against something or someone.

Now obviously this becomes problematic pretty quickly.....especially if we consider that the scripture declares...*that the Work of Righteousness (Isaiah 32:17) is Peace.*

- The Kingdom is not a matter of our deeds but Righteousness Peace and Joy in the Holy Spirit Romans 14:17.

To be clear this kind of 'Stand' is all about 'force'.

- As cool as it sounded - we are going to make Washington listen - funny thing is that this is NOT the Jesus Style.
- He lives under Roman Occupation and said remarkably little about it! But He said a LOT about Peace. My Peace I leave you.....not as the world gives....

1 - You see the worlds system of Peace is Peace by Force!

- You want Peace you build a Palace - You want Peace you build a fortress....
- Peace by Force beloved is NOT Peace - its a Truce!
- I submit that at the core of our lack of Imagination about Peace is our lack of revelation about what Peace actually looks like.
- Our English word for Peace is the Latin word Pax = to Pacify = absence of conflict – unfortunate for us is where it often ends.

So we had a President in the 80's who coined the term Peace through strength!

- Truth is this view of Peace is actually Devil Worship.....
 - Jesus is tempted by Satan to meet His calling and Destiny in His own strength....
 - By Power and Coercion..and He could have!
 - And by the way its all most of us have known apart from the Cross!

Beloved that is not Peace - that is a forced Truce!

- If Isaiah 54:10, Ezekiel 24:25 and Malachi 2:5 God says among other things....
- My covenant with you is a Covenant of Peace....
- This is not God saying....I am going to show you I am stronger than you....

The Hebrew word for Peace is Shalom:

- Wholeness - Completeness

Simply put - One Reformed Theologian said it like this;

Shalom - Peace is the way things ought to be....

Our best picture is a Garden and man in relationship without a sword or army.

Beloved Biblical Peace is NOT about Force - Peace is the most non force word in the World.

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Shalom – wholeness – completeness – I was reading Isaiah 25 look at this imagery....

- Vs 1-5 this is how you think about Peace....a truce
- Vs 6-8 is how God thinks about Peace.....a table - a table of abundance!

**At the Table....Peace refuses to create an ‘other’ out of the people with whom I may disagree!
A Table is not about Force but rather Fellowship.**

2. The Peace of Jesus - is a More like Thanksgiving than an election night...

- Shalom Peace - Wholeness - life as God intended it to be...
- Connected to God and others in a relationship of Love and representing that love to others!

Not one of us that has not been affected by the opposite of Shalom....

- Sin that has broken - marred - wounded - the truth is almost every honest soul would say....
- This brokenness of man and mans kingdoms and efforts to live**is NOT the way its supposed to be....!**

As I was praying into Isaiah 25 this past week my prayer was simple;

- God give me a fresh imagination....for what Peace - the Peace you gave us - looks like in real time.
 - Oh how we chase peace in people, places and provision...but your the source of peace.
 - What does human DNA living in peace look like?
 - Looks like Jesus!

Not some Utopian idea of the mind....actual life lived for others.

The reality of Jesus life was a life lived open – now look at Isaiah 25

*‘a defense for the helpless
a defense for the needy in his distress
a refuge from the storm,
a shade from the heat....
‘...a lavish banquet for all peoples...’*

Beloved I have been praying about what this looks like....

**The Table is the Face of Shalom - wholeness.....the Way things ought to be....
in the face of ‘the ways things ought not to be....;**

Augustine said it this way

So let Peace be our beloved ... that we choose to share life with

How do we do that?

1 - Be at Peace with you...

- Jesus said ***My peace I give not as the world gives....***He knows that all of us have been deeply touched and affected by a world that is Not as it should be.

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- **How can I become at peace with me?**

The answer is to know that God has made Peace where I could not....and He offers it freely.

Romans 5:1-5

- *'By entering through faith into what God has always wanted to do for us—set us right with him, make us fit for him' (the Msg)*
- *'...having been justified by faith, we have peace with God....'*

Biggest lie to the human heart.....God is mad at you!

- He loves you - He likes you and has removed every hindrance to our hearts being at Peace with Him!

**Being at Peace with you....is not about saying - oh this is who I am....its resting who He says I am!
Knowing I have nothing to earn or to prove....but an invitation to receive His love freely!**

2 - Allow Peace to rule my heart -

Augustine said it this way - *to sit on the chaste couch with Peace....what?*

- Old world picture of a person who had chosen to open their life to another....and only them.

The scripture says it this way Col. 3:15

- *Let the Peace of Christ Rule in your hearts.....(rule = arbitrate or act as an umpire).*

The umpire 'calls' it the way it is!

- You are forgiven - You are loved - You are not alone - You have a future - You are incredibly valuable - worthy of the blood of Gods own Son!

Hear me - not one of us gets out of this experience of humanity without wounds and scars.

- Those wounds are intended to steal - kill and destroy you.
- They become the entrance of hells war on the heart!
- **They do NOT have to define us**
- We all need an umpire to tell the truth and receive it!

The only way wounds heal is to allow Peace to tell the Truth and that friend might take a minute!

3. Become a Peacemaker...

Partnering with God at the very core of redemption...is to become what He is a Peacemaker!

- This is not about 'skill' this is about knowing the Source of Peace who has chosen above every other location of the universe your heart to dwell in....
- Now may the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13
- As I am settled in His Peace in me....I can choose Romans 12:18
 - as much as it depends on me to be at peace with all men....

Do not hear what the scripture does not say - I cannot be at peace with everyone.

- But I can live in trust in the posture of Jesus - not reaching for 'power and strength' to secure Peace. But to rest in person of Peace - Jesus - and live from His posture - not a fortress but a table an open life.

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Peace Shalom is a Person living in you and Me who invites us to join Him at a table.....

- a real table and real place.....

Horatio Spafford was a successful attorney in Chicago, an elder in his church and an active supporter and a close friend of a young evangelist by the name of Dwight Moody. He and his wife Anna had 5 children - one son and 4 girls. His son died of scarlet fever shortly before the great Chicago fire of 1871 saw most of his real estate investments lost. For the next two years he and his family gave themselves to helping the survivors of the Great fire. Finally he decided that they needed a break and knowing that their friend Dwight Moody was preaching in England choose to take a much needed holiday. His business dealings kept him from accompanying his wife and 4 girls for the crossing to England. On the crossing the steamship that Anna and the girls were aboard was struck in rough seas by a British Iron sailing and sank in less that twelve minutes. Anna was found unconscious on a piece of floating debris one of 27 survivors. On her arrival to Cardiff England she sent a telegram to her husband. **“saved alone what shall I do”**

Horatio left immediately to go to his wife.

As this ship crossed that Atlantic the ships captain informed Horatio when they came to the place where the Ville du Havre sank under nearly three miles of ocean. He first wrote this to his half sister Rachel

“On Thursday last we passed over the spot where she went down, in mid-ocean, the waters three miles deep. But I do not think of our dear ones there. They are safe, folded, the dear lambs.”

But then Horatio retreated to his cabin and began to write.....’ *When Peace like a river attendeth my soul - when sorrows like sea billows role - whatever my lot - thou hast taught me to say - it is well it is well with my soul’*

After Horatio and Anna returned to Chicago they began having prayer meetings in their home. They had 3 more children a son and 2 daughters - the son died of scarlet fever at age 4. After his death Horatio Anna and their girls left their comfortable lake front property to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem - *‘Jerusalem is where my Lord lived, suffered and conquered, and I, too, wish to learn how to live, suffer and, especially, to conquer.’*

In a single home just outside the city they opened their lives up to Christian, Jew and Muslim sharing what they had to help as they could in famine, plague and war to simply demonstrate the Love of Jesus. After Horatio and Anna passed their daughters carried on the work that continues by their descendants to this day just outside Jerusalem known today as the Spafford Children’s Home.

Beloved we need a fresh imagination for what Peace on Earth looks like - a fresh embracing of Peace as a Table that invites men women boys and girls into a vision of Shalom - the way things ought to be.

Closing Prayer

Jesus, You shared peace
around a table of anxiety,
peace with the bread, peace with the wine,
peace in the face of the uncertain,
peace in the place of pain.
May we share tables of peace

in places of pain,
sharing food and friendship
and words and life.
Because You came to a fearful world
and found your place
around those tables. Amen

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