

John 14:25-27
Pentecost/Confirmation
May 20, 2018

What are you afraid of? Last Thursday evening, as I stood out in the middle of the aisle here at church asking questions to the Confirmation Class of St. Paul's, I saw fear. I could see it in your eyes, on your face and in your voices. Even if you didn't show that fear, I think, I could safely say that every single one of you had a bit of anxiety in your mind that evening. As I asked the last question, I could see a sense of relief come over every one of you.

Fear. We all have them. Some of the common fears that people have are fears of spiders, of snakes, of heights, of flying and of tight spaces. Some of the fears that people have are not so common: fear of ducks, of frogs, of cotton balls and the fear of buttons. They all have a different name attached to it. Fear is very real for every single one of us here this morning.

The world is good at making us afraid. The world is not very good at giving us peace. This world wants us to think that we can have political peace, but it isn't very good at giving it. The New York Times reported a few years back that over the past 3,400 years of recorded history, humans have been at peace for only 268 of those years, or just about 8 percent of them. It is estimated that in just the twentieth century alone there have been 108 million people killed in wars. Estimates for the total number of people killed in wars throughout all of human history could be as many as 100 billion people.

If that isn't depressing enough, think of the fears that you have in your heart right now. You may fear for your job. You fear for your health. You fear for your kids. You fear for your grandkids. You fear that you may not be able to please someone in your life. We have fears all around us and within us. If you think about, this world stinks at giving people any kind of real peace. So, where do we find peace?

Where were Jesus' disciples going to find peace? He wanted them to know that he is the only one who could give them any kind of peace. These words of Jesus are part of John's account of what happened in that upper room on the night before his death. In fact, almost ¼ of the Gospel of John are Jesus' words spoken on that Maundy Thursday evening. Jesus knew what was about to happen to both himself and his disciples. They didn't understand what was all going to happen. Jesus loved and cared for his disciples. He didn't want them to look to the world for peace after he was no longer with them. So, he tells them: **"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."**

How about you? Where do you look for peace? This world says: *If only you have a little more money, you would have peace. If you lose some weight and go on a diet, you will have peace. If only you can get your family all on the same page, you can once again have peace in your home. If you read this book or watch this video, you will have peace.* These things are not necessarily bad things. They are good things, but they can only bring temporary peace.

So, how do we get this peace? **"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."** Jesus' disciples would soon appreciate Christ's peace. This is not some shallow, temporary peace of this world. It's the perfect peace with God. This peace is completely different from this world's peace. God himself would make sure that peace became the disciples and become our peace. The Holy Spirit himself would teach them. The Holy Spirit himself would work the faith to trust every word and action of Jesus. The Holy Spirit himself would continue to strengthen them and us in that faith.

Today, we celebrate the day that God fulfilled his promise of pouring out the Holy Spirit on His Church. Today, we celebrate that the Holy Spirit has worked in the hearts of the 15 young men and women who stand here before the Lord's Altar and make a promise to God himself to remain faithful to God for the rest of their life. That promise can only be made through the work of the Holy Spirit. You can't keep that promise by yourself. Satan wants to rip that promise right out of your hands and your hearts. He will stop at nothing.

The Good News is that you have a peace that cannot be taken away from you. You have a peace that Jesus himself has given you. Your sins are forgiven. Jesus has taken all of those sins and thrown them away. They are gone because of his work on the cross.

Remember Job? The man who lost everything to test his faith. In the book of Job, he speaks about what God has done with his sins. **“Surely then you will count my steps but not keep track of my sin. My offenses will be sealed up in a bag; you will cover over my sin.”** (Job 14:16-17) God takes all that rotten stinky sin and puts it into a bag and throws it away at the foot of the cross. Your God says to you that your sins are sealed up and thrown away. You are a forgiven child of God.

That’s the peace that God gives us through Jesus. That’s the peace that the Holy Spirit has placed into your heart. That’s the peace that the Holy Spirit strengthens in you through his Word and His Sacrament. Today is a special day for our confirmands. It is not an end, it is a beginning. It’s all about the relationship that your God wants with you forever. Listen to the words of Jesus. Treasure the words of your Savior. **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”** Amen.