

# Advent 2017: Second Sunday - Peace

12/4/2017

Isaiah 26:3

*You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!*

This is the second week of Advent when we consider Peace. I've been asking myself, "What is peace; where is peace?" We encounter many kinds of peace in our lives: peace of mind, peace of body; we pray for world peace, and seek peace within our own relationships and our very souls.

Some say we must look at peace, as with all things, from more than one perspective to truly understand it. We can look at it from 'out there' and from 'in here'. We can look at it as it relates to 'us and them', or 'them and them', or 'me and you'.

'Out there' is easy to see; it is what our minds know. Peace, we are told in dictionaries, is a state of harmony characterized by the lack of conflict. This lack of conflict can apply to interpersonal relationships as well as international relationships on a global level. From this perspective, peace is easy to measure: are we, or are we not, in conflict with someone or something?

The inner experience is more difficult to observe. Culturally, we seek peace through our religions. Personally, we perceive peace as we enter our 'inner chamber' and listen for that 'still small voice' and abandon the earthly conflicts.

But generally speaking, whether it is from an inner or outer perspective, most people's idea of peace is an absence of its opposite – conflict. We define peace by contrasting it to discord and this is where we enter into difficulties.

By our very definition, how can there be peace without chaos of some sort? When we are at last feeling calm and tranquil, it is only because we remember how we earlier felt – agitated and stressed. Peace, as most of us understand it, cannot be known without its opposite.

This is true with most opposites in life. When we look at the night skies, we see the bright stars against a background of the black space. The stars cannot be seen without the contrast. Yet they exist.

We can understand all of this. But then Christ tells us of a peace “that passes all understanding”. I believe what he is referring to is true peace, not just the absence of conflict, strife and stress, but what he teaches in the Gospel of St. Thomas, one of the books of the Apocrypha:

*They said to Him: Shall we then, being children, enter the Kingdom? Jesus said to them: When you make the two one, and when you make the inner as the outer and the outer as the inner and the above as the below, and when you make the male and the female into a single one, so that the male will not be male and the female will not be female, then shall you enter the Kingdom.*

True peace is a precursor to finding the Kingdom of Heaven. A person who sees through the illusion of opposites is called 'liberated'. When we see past the manmade sense of opposite pairs, we no longer try to manipulate them and are freed of their conflict and warring natures. Our thinking and consciousness rises above them both; beyond their influence.

When we are free from the boundaries of peace and conflict, we recognize that our definitions are wrong. True peace is not attained by being in what we normally think of as peaceful state, nor is it attained from a state devoid of stress. The peace of Christ is the peace of being in the presence of God...of being a Child of God...of simply being.

Despite the circumstances we are in, chaotic or calm, when we are engulfed within the presence of God, we are at peace; we are peace.

In the Presence of God there are no boundaries; there are no dividing lines. There are only joining lines, uniting lines. There is no separation between the water and the land. The shoreline is an amalgamation, or a fusion, where the ocean touches the land. There are no boundaries between countries or states, but only a line on a map or other manmade demarcation indicating where they touch; where they connect.

This is what Jesus spoke about in the verse from St. Thomas – when all we can see is union around us, when we can experience harmony in everything that we perceive, and when we discover the oneness of all, which transcends and includes the opposites that our minds want to create, then we have

found the Kingdom of Heaven. “Thy Kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven.”

I believe God has been teaching this lesson through all the great teachers.

From the Hindu holy text Bhagavad Gita we read:

Content with getting what arrives of itself  
Passed beyond the pairs, free from envy,  
Not attached to success or failure,  
Even acting, he is not bound.  
He is to be recognized as eternally free  
Who neither loathes nor craves;  
For he that is free from the pairs,  
Is easily freed from conflict.

We are free, at peace, when we are ‘free from the pairs’, free from the conflict of the opposites.

From the Buddhist text of Lankavatara Sutra we read:

False-imagination teaches that such things as light and shade, long and short, black and white are different and are to be discriminated; but they are not independent of each other; they are only different aspects of the same thing, they are terms of relation, not of reality. Conditions of existence are not of a mutually exclusive character; in essence things are not two but one.

There is only God, only the One Presence. This is one of the wonderful things that Jesus came to teach us. When seen through the eyes of God there are no opposites, there are no boundaries.

We can have peace at any time. “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” [Matthew 11:28] To me he is saying, “I will give you rest from the burdens of the conflict within your mind. I will remove the contradictions and confusion of the opposites as you rise above them in your thinking and dwell in me.”

We have but to turn to the Christ within us, go inside, be still, raise our awareness of God, and release our insistence that the world is as our minds see it ‘out there’.

In John 14:27 Jesus says, “I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.”

Christ gives as a gift of peace that the world cannot give. In the world, we can attain transitory peace as we free ourselves from conflict and disorder. But despite how orderly our world becomes there will be times when it becomes discordant again. If our peace is dependent upon what happens ‘out there’ we will constantly be fluctuating between peace and stress.

This does not mean that we ignore the conflicts, turn our backs, and not engage or help when we can. No, this just means that any conflicts we perceive in this world have no control over us; they do not define us or have power over us.

Christ said in John 16:33: *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

Through Christ, we too can ‘overcome the world’; overcome the mind’s propensity toward creating duality. “For everyone born of God overcomes the world.” Everyone who turns to the God within, the Christ Spirit within, and allows it to express through them and surrenders to that Spirit overcomes the world.

And finally, when I consider what peace is, I come to think that peace is simply ‘being’ right. It’s not having things ‘out there’ orderly and calm, but rather it is an inner knowing that I am right where I am supposed to be, loved by God and willingly expressing Christ through me into Creation.

Peace is available, true peace is available to us all. It is not found in the absence of stress and conflict, but by embracing God as the One and Only. Then we can rise above and see beyond the conflicts of our world and human existence. This is one of the powerful lessons the birth of Christ brings.

Let us pray....