

July 9, 2017
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Peace in Chaos
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from John 14:27.

1. What causes our hearts to be agitated?
2. What does **heartfelt** agitation feel like and look like?
3. How does God expect His people to stop the agitation?
4. If absence of heat is cold and absence of light is darkness, what happens when there is absence of peace?
5. Where do we find the peace that Jesus offers?

TRUE PEACE THROUGH TRUSTING JESUS **John 14:27**

In an article titled *A Blind Eye to Addiction* that appeared in www.usnews.com, Lloyd Sederer contended that “Addiction is America’s most neglected disease.” He quoted a Columbia University study that concluded that “40 million Americans age 12 and over meet the clinical criteria for addiction involving nicotine, alcohol or other drugs. That’s more Americans than those with heart disease, diabetes or cancer. An estimated additional 80 million people in this country are ‘risky substance users,’ meaning that while not addicted, they ‘use tobacco, alcohol and other drugs in ways that threaten public health and safety.’”

Sederer also pointed out that “Over 38,000 people died of drug overdoses in the U.S. in 2010, greater than the deaths attributed to

motor vehicle accidents, homicides and suicides. Overdose deaths from opioids (narcotic pills like Oxycontin, Percodan and Methadone as well as heroin) have become the fastest growing drug problem throughout the U.S., and not just in large urban settings.”

Why has this become such a problem at this point in our culture’s history? One would think that because of our extreme wealth as a nation, wealth that allows us to buy almost anything we want and to engage in extreme levels of pleasure and leisure, that we would all be happy, carefree people.

That might be just the point. It should strike us as odd that the problem of out-of-control addictions did not occur during our war for independence, or the Civil War, or WWI, or the Great Depression, or World War II. In fact, those very trying times matured our nation and toughened our culture. Instead, in an age of pleasure and extreme materialism, fewer people experience true peace in their hearts than at any time previous in our history.

This is the fruit of the teaching of the religion of Humanism. Humanism teaches that life is about me. It has been the acceptable religion taught in our schools for about three generations now. As a result, our society as a whole is permeated with narcissism, arrogance, and self-centeredness. The most important issue in the minds of most Millennials and Generation Zs is that they feel good about themselves, that their pleasures be met. The older generations have learned that the goal of self-pleasure always ends up in a pit of despair and self-pity. As a result of humanistic practice, in an effort to escape the consequences of narcissism, a large portion of our culture has become addicted to substances and activities in an attempt to escape reality.

The reality is very simple. The world is infected with the sin principle. Sin always results in chaos leading to despair. If you find yourself in an endless vortex of futility trying to find peace, you know how elusive escape can be. Maybe you are trapped by an addiction, or maybe you know and love someone who is. They long for peace, cry out for peace, but only sink deeper into despair. There is still hope. There is good news for all of us.

The only real and lasting antidote to the consequences of the sin principle as well as personal sins is Jesus Christ. His sacrifice on the cross provided the means for sins to be forgiven. His blood shed

opened the way for us to be made right with our Creator. Real peace is found in fellowship with God who created us to have fellowship with Him. His plan is a simple plan that makes a lot of sense.

To that end Jesus taught: *“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me” (John 14:1)*. He made this statement to His disciples as He was informing them that He was about to return to the Heavenly Father and leave them behind in this very troubled world. As we might expect, the disciples were troubled about this. To them and to us, Jesus gave this important command with an amazing promise attached. *“Stop letting your hearts be troubled. Believe what I told you and you will experience supernatural peace.”*

Do Not Allow Your Heart to be Agitated.

When Jesus taught, *“Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (v.27b)*, He clearly implied that agitation happens. We affirm that implication regularly in our experiences. It is not unusual for our hearts to be troubled or fearful. What does it look like? It’s not the same for everyone, but the general idea of agitation is plain enough.

It is a hot summer day and your pallet desires a bit of refreshing. So you go the refrigerator, get out some strawberries, some milk and also a little ice from the freezer. You put the ice, milk, and berries into a blender, push the button on the blender, and watch as the machine stirs all the ingredients into a refreshing strawberry smoothie. You take one sip and say, *“Ahhh, that is really good.”* Yes, but how do the strawberries feel after being whipped and crushed and disturbed and thrown into confusion?

That is what the word translated *troubled* in our text means. To be troubled is to be stirred up, disturbed, unsettled, thrown into confusion. Sometimes life feels like strawberries in a blender. Trouble is a universal experience. No one is exempt. Everyone tries to escape it through various means. But trouble is inescapable because trouble and fear are the ramifications of sin and everyone is subject to the sin principle. The sin principle has been around since Adam and Eve chose not to trust God. Sin disrupted God’s norm for

creation. The result was obvious right away as Cain became jealous of his brother Abel and murdered him. That is what trouble looks like.

But there are also the ramifications of personal sin. Much of the disruption that a person must deal with is the result of personal sin. We rebel against God’s law. The result of rebellion puts us at odds with other people, at odds with the laws of the land, or even at odds with the laws of physics and common sense. For example, here is a person who decides that the laws regarding theft do not apply to him. He is in a position at work to control large sums of money. He decides that he can get away with skimming just a little off the top week after week. He can’t get away with it, his theft catches up with him, and his life is disturbed, in upheaval.

Much trouble in life is more subtle and often is simply a matter of a guilty conscience before God. Regardless of the extent of agitation or the source of agitation, according to Jesus’ teaching, we each are responsible to stop the process. Quite literally Jesus said to the disciples and to us, *You stop letting your heart be agitated*. Jesus told us to stop allowing the agitation. The Greek syntax expresses an ongoing action that needs to come to an end. It looks like this: trouble and agitation is happening. It keeps almost everyone unsettled. And Jesus told us, His followers, that we are responsible to stop the process.

This is a command, not a recommendation. More than that, it is a present tense command. Our Lord expects us who name His name to refuse to allow our hearts to be agitated. That really seems like an impossibility. But we must admit that He who loves us, who created us, knows what is best for us. The typical human response to such a command is to find someone or something to blame. If we can just blame the problem on someone or something (like unfair circumstances, or a rotten family, or past trauma) maybe we can feel better. But we don’t. The solution to outside agitation lies within ourselves.

The problem is in our hearts. Jesus didn’t say, *“Stop letting your body be agitated.”* He told us to stop allowing our hearts to be agitated. The heart speaks of the center of a person, the real person that simply resides in a body. It is the seat of the intellect, the place where we think and reason. It is the center of our will, the place

where we make decisions. It is the source of our emotions, where we feel. So Jesus said, “Stop allowing outside stuff to agitate you in your thinking process, your decision making, and how you feel.”

Now that the Lord’s command is clear, we might be a bit perplexed—at least if we are honest. How do we obey Jesus on this matter? The natural response is to find a passing solution to trouble and agitation. We run to the doctor and ask him to prescribe medicine in an attempt to cover reality. Or as the opening illustration revealed, many people turn to illicit drugs or alcohol. A very common attempt to escape agitation is comfort eating, addiction to nicotine, or even shopping, or sex, or binge video gaming or movie watching. All of those things seem to make people feel good until they come back to reality. In reality the victims realize what they have done and are plagued by their conscience because they feel defeated and know they have wasted time or money. The same kind of escape is sought through co-dependant relationships. But those passing solutions only mask the problem without solving the problem. Jesus recommends a permanent solution.

Rest in the Peace Jesus Gives.

The peace Jesus gives is unique peace. He said, *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you (John 14:27)*. It should strike us as remarkable that Jesus Himself personally offers us peace. When He spoke of peace, the disciples had some idea what Jesus was talking about. They lived in a world of turmoil. They were Israelites without a nation. Because of the overall sinfulness, doubt, and rejection of God by the nation, they were under God’s judgment. Instead of being an independent nation or society, they were under the authority of the powerful Romans. Garrisons of soldiers were stationed throughout their land. Most annoying was that a legion of Roman soldiers were housed in Jerusalem in order to minimize riots. There were uprisings, skirmishes, and attempts to throw off Roman control. Added to these unique agitations were the common everyday crimes every society experiences.

The disciples’ world was not much different from ours. Because of mass media, we are aware of turmoil and conflicts all over the world. Added to that stress is the ideological conflict and societal

breakdown in our nation. We might even attempt to deny the world’s problems by refusing to read or listen to the news. But then we still have to deal with all the personal problems and conflicts we all experience daily.

Yes, like the disciples a couple millennia ago, we are very interested in peace. But interest notwithstanding, we don’t really know peace based on our experience. We might have enjoyed a few fleeting times of relative peace in our lives. So what are we thinking about when we hear Jesus say, “My peace I leave with you”? Maybe our minds try to imagine the peace our first parents experienced in the Garden of Eden. That was true and genuine peace, not the relative peace we might experience on occasion. In paradise, before Satan tricked Eve and Adam into sinning, there was perfect peace, the absence of all strife and conflict. There was not a shred of a guilty conscience that robbed Adam and Eve of peace. They lived in perfect harmony with their Creator moment by moment.

All of that changed when sin destroyed harmony between the Creator and His creation. Now we can only try to imagine a life without trouble, turmoil, and conflict in our souls caused by guilt. But, here was the Prince of Peace offering peace. Isaiah introduced us to the Prince of Peace when he promised the Messiah who is God in the flesh. God the Son, Jesus Christ, is not just the ruler who brings peace. He is the author of peace, the initiator of peace, because true peace is His essential character. Because sin is the opposite of peace and causes peace to disappear, He who is sinless is also fully peaceful.

We have been taught that absolute cold is -460° F. At that temperature all matter becomes inert and incapable of reaction. However, cold is really not an accurate description of that condition. Cold is simply a word that we have invented to describe absence of heat. It is possible to study or observe substances only because they transmit energy. Energy transmitted is heat. We call the absence of heat cold.

The same is true concerning darkness. There really is no such thing as darkness. Darkness is the absence of light. In the beginning before anything existed God said, “Let there be light.” At that moment the default condition of the creation was “light.” Any absence of light is darkness.

And so it is with peace. Because God created all things good, peace was the default condition. But when Satan deceived humanity into sinning, the resulting condition was the absence of peace. Now the whole creation groans under the absence of peace. We worry, fret, and experience anxious upheaval when there is the absence of peace. Jesus, the author and originator of peace, comes to us and offers that amazing peace that is His own character.

The peace that Jesus offers is not like any peace the world can offer. The world offers temporary peace. As we touched on previously, the world offers temporary escape from the reality of trouble through drugs or alcohol that always wear off and leave the troubled person still without peace. Or it regularly offers distractions, entertainment, or sideshows that take our minds off the trouble at hand, but still we have to return to reality. The world can offer only a band-aid for an incurable wound as troubled people find a little peace in modern conveniences and materialism.

The world offers pseudo-peace. Throughout history, powerful leaders and powerful nations have overtaken other peoples and enforced peace. Even the best of leaders, like President Regan, offered peace through strength. A lot of us thought that was some pretty sound reasoning—as long as we are the strong ones enforcing the peace. But the victims of the show of strength feel a lot like the strawberries in the blender. That is not real peace. So we conclude that the world actually offers no peace.

The real need is to get back to a peaceful fellowship with our Creator. We are born in a sinful condition. Our sin causes the absence of peace which is trouble and conflict. The only means for removing that conflict is for God to forgive our offenses. The only means for forgiveness is the blood of Christ which God the Father accepts as the price to pay for sin. Therefore, faith in Christ alone is the way to peace with God. No person or religion in the world can legitimately make that offer. There have been many false Christs, many false prophets who have claimed to be able to lead their followers to peace. There have been thousands of religions, ideologies, philosophies, or methodologies that have promised peace. At best those things are temporary, because the individual is still left at odds with the Prince of Peace.

But Jesus was talking to His followers. They already believed He was the Messiah. They already trusted Jesus. Likewise, we have already expressed faith in Jesus Christ's finished work. Yet we still long for that amazing peace that supercedes anything the world offers. We still desire to have calm confidence and assurance even in the blender of life.

Okay, we are about to “bust.” “Jesus, tell us how we can get this peace that You offer!” The peace Jesus gives is found in the things He has spoken. Jesus has spoken “these things.” Hear His words of promise: *“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you”* (v.25). Oh. Real peace, the unique peace that Jesus offers, is found in the things He has said. What has He said? The statement has to refer most precisely to the things He had just said in the context of this lesson. Those things alone are sufficient to give us peace.

Jesus promised eternal life. *“In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also”* (vv.2-3). He promised that He alone is the only way to eternal life because He alone is the way to right fellowship with God the Father. *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”* (v.6).

In direct conflict with nearly all manmade religions, Jesus taught that to know Him intimately is equivalent to knowing God the Father. *“If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him”* (v.7). *“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father”* (v.9b).

Jesus taught that His words are Scripture, they are eternally settled in heaven because He taught the Father's words. *“Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works”* (vv.10-11).

Jesus promised that God hears and answers prayer that is offered in His name in conformity to His will. *“Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”*

Oh! We have the amazing peace that Jesus offers when we believe what He taught enough to practice it. Real love for Jesus is

demonstrated through real obedience. Notice that twice in this lesson Jesus connected obedience to Him with love for Him. He said, *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments”* (v.15). He also said, *“Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him”* (v.21).

But how do I know what Jesus commands and how do I know if I am doing these things? If we back up and look at Jesus’ amazing promise of peace, we discover that it falls within the larger context of Jesus teaching about the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we conclude that we know what Jesus taught because the Holy Spirit teaches us the things Jesus has spoken. Jesus promised, *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you”* (v.26).

This truth fits very well with Jesus’ promise that He would request the Father to send the Holy Spirit to those who trust Him. *“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him (vv.16-17a)*. This is the amazing promise that the Father sends the Holy Spirit to indwell true believers. Jesus said, *“You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you”* (v.17b). At the moment a sinner confesses sin and trusts Christ, the Holy Spirit miraculously enters his or her heart. In fact, Paul pointed out that where the Holy Spirit is absent, there is no salvation. *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him (Romans 8:9)*.

We are able to stop being agitated by the effects of sin because the Holy Spirit teaches us what is already written. This simple statement is a reminder that God is not giving any new revelation. I always get a little nervous when a person says, “God told me, or the Holy Spirit said to me.” God often leads His people through His arranging of circumstances. Sometimes God leads through freedom of conscience (heart) or a constraining of the heart. But God primarily teaches us His will through the Bible that He has already written. God does not give any new revelation.

Therefore, we conclude from Jesus’ teaching in this text that the peace that He gives reigns in our hearts when we learn and obey what Christ says. That being true, we also conclude that the first step to stop being disturbed is to **trust Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins**. The second step is to **open the Bible and read**. The third step is to **ask the Holy Spirit to teach us as we read**. The fourth step is to **obey what we read**. The peace that Christ gives is found and we enjoy Christ’s peace.