

WE WELCOME JESUS AS THE ONE WHO BRINGS US PEACE.

Midweek Advent Service – December 19, 2018

John 20:19-23. On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.²¹ Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”²² And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.²³ If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

Dear Christian Friends:

In Psalm 32 King David writes, **When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.**

King David is describing the spiritual turbulence he suffered after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba. That sin of adultery eventually led David to another sin—ordering the death of Bathsheba’s husband. After he had committed those sins, David thought that he had covered up his crimes. Nobody had found about his double sin of adultery and murder. Nobody knew. But David knew. David knew he had stained his soul with sin. David felt the weight of guilt crushing his soul and sapping him of all joy and peace.

Now, every sin weighs the same on God's scale of justice. However, to you and me, some sins feel heavier than others. For example, you might say that David's sins of adultery and murder were "one-ton" type of sins. And maybe you have not committed one of these "one-ton" type of sins.

But we all sin. Maybe your sins are the two-pound fib or the three-pound gossip. Maybe you have committed the five-pound taking the Lord's name in vain or the ten-pound sin of substance abuse. Perhaps, for you, it's the fifteen-pound verbal abuse or the twenty-pound sin of theft. No matter what sin you commit, a spiritual mathematics works in your heart and in your conscience. In this spiritual math, one hundred "ten-pound" sins weigh the same as a "one-ton" sin. And the more you let sin dwell in your heart, the more weight those sins gain just by burdening your conscience.

So, whether you sin in big chunks or whether you nickel and dime your sins into a huge debt of guilt, you—and I—every sinner—we can all feel like King David did. **When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.**

The guilt of sin weighing on our soul is a crushing burden. This guilt robs us of sleep. It increases anxiety and fear. It leaves us with no peace of heart, no peace of mind, and no peace for our souls. There is no peace when sin is present. That's because sin is a declaration of war against the holy, almighty God.

But God wants peace between himself and his children. So, God sent us a mediator to announce his terms of peace. God sent us an ambassador to bring us rebels back into his Kingdom. God sent us his Son. Already through Isaiah the prophet, God told his people about his Son. **For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

Jesus came to bring us peace. He came to bring us the purest peace, the most priceless peace. Jesus came to bring peace between us and God. Jesus did that by coming to this earth in human flesh. And in his human flesh Jesus went to war against sin. He attacked sin with the sword of God's true and mighty Word. Jesus battled against sin with his humility, with his love, and with his compassionate miracles of healing. Jesus led the charge against sin by driving out demons and resisting all of Satan's temptations. Jesus swung the death blow against sin when he offered his life on the cross as the once-for-all payment for sin. And when Christ died for sin, he pulverized that mountain of our guilt and shame. By his death, Jesus lifted the groaning load of sin off of our weary, burdened souls.

Then, after Jesus died and sealed sin's fate, he unsealed his tomb. Jesus rose from the dead in victory over sin, death, and Satan. And on that first night after he rose from the dead, Jesus gave to his Church the solution to sin, or should I say, ***the absolution of sin***. Listen again to John's gospel describe what Jesus did on that first Easter evening. **On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this,**

he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

Forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus; forgiveness of sins by the authority of the One who conquered death and hell—forgiveness of sins—that gives peace to sinners disturbed and tormented by the burden of guilt. The forgiveness of sins releases Satan’s hellish grip on our weary hearts and minds. The forgiveness of sins re-establishes peace between you and God. The forgiveness of sins opens the door to heaven. That is peace. The peace of the forgiveness by the blood of Christ is that peace which the world cannot give.

So, on the evening of the day when Christ rose from the dead, on that night when Christ was re-born among the living, he fulfilled what the angels sang on the night when he was born in Bethlehem. The angels said, **“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.**

Or, as our theme verse puts it:

*Sin’s debt that fearful burden, Let not your souls distress;
Your guilt the Lord will pardon And cover by his grace.
He comes for you procuring The peace of sin forgiv’n,
His children thus securing A heritage in heav’n.*

So, how shall we meet our Lord, Jesus Christ? **WE WELCOME JESUS AS THE ONE WHO BRINGS US PEACE. AMEN.**