

John 14:8-27

Ignorance isn't bliss

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I'm sure you've heard the phrase "ignorance is bliss". Maybe you even know someone who lives as if that's their purpose in life. Sometimes not knowing does make things easier. But listen carefully to two things that Jesus says one after the other. "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you." "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you."

These words are part of Jesus' final promises to his disciples shortly before they step out into the dark time of his arrest and crucifixion. He promises peace. He promises another Advocate, the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father. And the Spirit will teach. The Spirit will remind the disciples of what Jesus has said to them during his time with them. The peace of Jesus and the teaching about Jesus both come together.

Now, we often use the earlier verses of this chapter at funerals, where Jesus promises that he is going to prepare a place for us. And then we have Philip's question about how we can know the way to where Jesus is going. So, what we have in today's reading is then Jesus' reassurance that the way to the place he is going is already accessible. Jesus seeks to comfort the disciples in the face of fear and anxiety about what the future holds. He knows that his journey to the cross to bear the sins of the world will be a difficult time for the twelve.

And so, Jesus gives them a great promise:

The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

This promise wasn't given to completely faithful, courageous disciples, already boldly loving one another, boldly loving the world that hates them, boldly loving even their enemies. No, this promise was given in the midst of confusion and fear. They knew the Pharisees were conspiring against Jesus. They knew the authorities would not react favourably to any signs of unrest. Jesus also says to them, "If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it." Little did they know how much they would need his help in the days to come. And then Jesus also challenged them to love him and to keep his commandments. I'm sure they reacted in the same way we so often do. "Yes, Lord, I do love you and of course I will keep your commandments."

In a few short hours, though, their teacher would be arrested and tried. In a few short hours, his life would be ended, and their lives filled with fear that the same thing would happen to them. In the face of such danger, would they still love him? Could they possibly still keep his commandments? The answer from scripture is a resounding "yes". They, and we, are able to love and keep the commandments because of the Holy Spirit, the Advocate sent by the Father. Jesus declared to them and to us that the Spirit of truth would be with us forever. The Advocate would help us to hear the words of Jesus even after his ascension. "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you." And this is what brings peace.

The peace that Jesus gives that is nothing like this world's peace comes because of the Holy Spirit teaches us and leads us into a greater knowledge of Jesus. Jesus gives us peace by reminding us of everything he has said. He does this through the Spirit, and the Spirit comes to us as we gather as God's people around his Word and Sacrament. Knowing Jesus and knowing the Father go hand in hand. Knowing Jesus and knowing peace go hand in hand. And it's the Holy Spirit, given to the church at Pentecost, that brings us all this as we seek Jesus through his word.

So, if we're looking for more peace, if we're facing fears or anxiety or even despair about the future, the answer, according to John 14, is to study God's word. And you don't have to look far in scripture to see God's great many promises to his people, and to see examples of God being faithful to his promises. It may well be true that ignorance is bliss, but when it comes to the reality of life in this world, knowledge of Jesus Christ is true and lasting peace. If we are to pursue anything, it's to know Jesus more and more.

If we're not sure what the future holds, then we should spend time with the words of the one who holds the future. If we are sure about what the future holds, then we should also spend time with the words of the one who will be with us every step of the way. In Jesus, there is great peace. And this peace is given through the Holy Spirit as we are led into a deeper knowledge of the one who is the way, the truth, and the life.

As our parish enters into some changing times, Jesus and his promises to you remain unchanged. He has called you his own through the waters of baptism. He has placed the Holy Spirit upon you as a guarantee of your eternal inheritance. He promised that we would be with us always, and he is through the sending of another Advocate.

On this Pentecost Sunday let us rejoice that Jesus promised the Holy Spirit and then fulfilled that promise. And may we also rejoice in all the eternal promises of Jesus, knowing that he leads us through life and through death, and that in knowing him we will have peace. Amen.

May God's peace, which passes all human understanding keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus. Amen.