

Christmas Eve Year A 2019
Homily on Peace
St Peter's Lutheran Church Elizabeth
Greg Bensted

Grace, peace, and mercy are yours from the Triune God. Amen.

What do we mean when we talk about peace and where does peace come from? You could say you are peaceful when your boyfriend, girlfriend or spouse isn't in "one of those moods"; when your boss gives you enough praise; when you are sure that none of your friends are unhappy with you; when your teenager or young adult child is making all the right decisions; when you just completely isolate yourself from others and that way they can never hurt you.

By definition, you might say that peace is the absence of war, disease, anxiety, hatred, fear, hell, strife, or anything else that rattles your cage.

But it's not helpful to make other people or circumstances the source of our peace.

You see, Jesus ushered in a different kind of kingdom than we would usher in. And in Jesus' kingdom, there is a source of peace that is not other people. To be clear, the source of peace in the kingdom of God is also not our feelings or our spiritual practices. Peace in the kingdom of God does not come from achieving a personal feeling of total well-being. You might feel awesome and there is nothing wrong with that, but when troubles come, when relationships are fractured, then no matter what, I know I can't manage to maintain a peaceful "feeling".

Peace is that place where everything is generous and open; where the virtues of the gospel – mercy and forgiveness and love and justice – are the core and guide for living life. This peace is a gift, and it is something that God longs to give to us.

So, peace is less of a feeling and more a way of being and doing that originates from God.

God and God alone is our real source. That's not just religious jargon... I mean it quite literally. You came from the very breath of God. There is that within you, the Imago Dei, the very image of God that can't be hurt by rejection. Which means that when Jesus says he has given us authority over the powers of evil and nothing will harm us, it doesn't mean that the rejection that happens in our lives won't hurt. It means it can't hurt what matters.

Genesis tells us that 'the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being' [Genesis 2:7]; thus, creating humanity. So, it's not your boss, your lover, your friends, your parents or the High Court of Australia; nor is it the absence of war, disease, anxiety, hatred, fear, hell, strife, or anything else that rattles your cage that defines or is the source of peace. The animating breath of God is the source of your life and your peace.

Thankfully, this animating breath of God, this source of life and peace, this antidote to the struggles we face in this life, has a very understanding, compassionate, loving and human presence - Jesus Christ; God incarnate; God made flesh. Jesus Christ is peace personified.

Ultimately, peace is found not in others, not in external circumstances, meditation techniques or feelings, but in the life-giving power of Christ according to his gracious disposition and intense love for you.

Jesus Christ is peace, so, go in peace. Because Christ is with you and within you. Peace be with you this Christmas and always as Christ the Living Lord blesses your life. Amen.