

Easter 6-May 22, 2022

Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish

John 14:23-29

“My Word, My Peace”

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

And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.

Jesus gave his disciples the ultimate test for faith. If someone tells you what they will do and then they carry through every time exactly as they promised that person can be trusted. You can have faith in such a person. You will believe such a person. As the season of Easter is coming to a close, in our scripture for today we learn that the risen Christ's time on earth will also come to an end. If the disciples were beginning to now believe that Jesus did just as he said by suffering, dying, and rising again, they now were faced with more difficult words from Jesus when he said, "I am going away, and I am coming to you." The disciples were again confused and just as afraid as when Jesus appeared to them after he rose from the dead. They were afraid because what Jesus was talking about was yet to happen. They must have wondered, "Why was Jesus leaving again? and "When and how will he return?"

Jesus tells his disciples to rejoice rather than fear that he is leaving. Jesus reminds his disciple that he will be going to his Father and his father is greater than himself. Jesus even gives his father the credit for all the words that he had been speaking to his disciples. Jesus told them that the words that they heard him say were not his, but his father's. Jesus reminds his disciples to always trust in the Lord who always keeps his word, even when we fail to do so.

Jesus does not keep his disciples in suspense by telling them that one day a book will be written recording all the words that he spoke, and they will have to wait until then to believe all the things that he did and spoke came to pass. Jesus reminded his disciples whenever they listened to Jesus speak the words of his father, there was always evidence that followed that agreed with what he said. There is no place in scripture where God's word has missed the mark. Evidence of this begins at the beginning of scripture when God spoke all creation into existence. Whenever God said, "Let there be" it was. Whoever God called to be his leaders and preachers and when they delivered God's word it happened no matter how reluctant the preachers were to speak.

Jonah knew the Lord's track record, so when he was asked to preach a message of forgiveness to the people of Nineveh, he was reluctant to deliver this word because he didn't feel they were worthy of forgiveness, and he feared the Lord would do as he said. Jonah's hesitancy to preach forgiveness had no effect on the effectiveness of the word of God. Moses was another leader who resisted speaking as the Lord instructed him as he considered himself a poor speaker. Again, it was not how the message was delivered, it was the source of the word that mattered. Whenever the word of the Lord is spoken, you can believe it.

Not any word will do what God's word will do. Whenever elections take place, one of the strategies of the opponents for an office attempt to discredit the trust you can have in a candidate by providing evidence that what they have said in the past doesn't always align with their actions or voting record. I don't recall any time when a candidate was praised by their opponent for their perfect track record of keeping their word. No one that gives **his** or **her** word will keep it every single time.

When a community experiences a tragedy, and the community pulls together to provide support for someone who is suffering you often hear someone say that their faith in people has been restored. Hearing such comments confirms that there are times when faith has been lost in our closest neighbors or community. Faith in words other than words from the Lord will fail at one time or another. No one but our heavenly Father's words deliver exactly what they say every single time.

It is this perfect track record that gives us peace. In the same way, when Jesus described the words from his father and not someone else's interpretation of them, when Jesus speaks about his Father's peace, he says that his Father's peace is not the same as the peace that the world gives. The peace that the world gives comes when justice has been served by obedience to the law. Peace in this world often just pleases one side or the other. This is not the peace that our Lord gives. The only peace that takes away all fear is God's word of forgiveness.

In the first reading for today, the apostle Paul had a vision that he should go to Macedonia and help the people there. After seeing the vision, we are told that Paul **immediately** was convinced that God had called him and his fellow preachers to proclaim good news to these people. Paul did not pray about what this vision meant or rely on his instinct of what he should do, Paul relied on the word of God who told him to get up and deliver good news to people who were waiting to hear good news. Paul experienced firsthand God's unconditional words of forgiveness. Paul had been struck blind to clearly see and hear only the words of the Lord. Everything that the Lord told him to do happened exactly as he promised, Paul no longer trusted his instincts and intuitions, but believed in every word of the Lord.

The comforting word that Jesus told his disciples that day and tells us today, was that he was going to be closer to us than he could ever be in bodily form by his Father sending Jesus back to us in the form of the Holy Spirit. In two weeks, we will hear once again the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church. The church that continues to grow today simply by believing that whatever Jesus says comes straight from his father and delivers peace.

There are many other voices in our world that call out to us to have faith in yourself. The word from the world says things like, "Do what you think is best for you." Care for your neighbor after you first care for yourself." These platitudes from Pinterest and philosophers may feel good for a while, but they will never give the peace that God's word delivers. However, the good news is not about what we can do for ourselves. The good news is what God the Father has already done for you by sending his Son to die for your sins and has gone to be with his Father. But we are not left alone, the Father has sent you an Advocate, the Holy Spirit so that you will know God's word.

And now may God's peace guard and keep your minds on his word alone. Amen