

# My Peace, I Give You

John 14:10–14, 25–27

Lethbridge Mennonite Church

By: Ryan Dueck

November 9, 2025/Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost/Peace Sunday

---

As we've heard, today is Peace Sunday.

On the weekend that is set aside to reflect upon and remember the cost of war, many Anabaptists around the world also talk about the peaceable kingdom and alternatives to the violence that our world is so familiar with.

Peace is, in some ways, what Mennonites are known for. It's our brand.

Historically, this has involved the refusal to take up arms—an insistence that Jesus meant what he said when he said things like, “love your enemies,” “turn the other cheek,” and “do not resist an evildoer.”

Peace is a big part of our story as Mennonites. We have not always practiced or understood it perfectly or consistently. I think at times we still speak of it a bit naively and self-righteously. But peace is indeed central to the gospel.

Peace, like so many good and important words, is a big one. It can encompass everything from global geopolitical realities to our inner states and everything in between (marriages, families, churches, online communities, etc.).

It can refer to the absence of conflict, certainly—and we would often settle for this. Certainly, on this weekend, we remember the cost of peace, and we pray that wars would cease.

But peace is also a deeply personal word, expressing our desires for our everyday lives, in our relationships, our vocations, our own hearts and minds.

Here, too, we long for the absence of conflict, but also for the presence of flourishing. A feeling of contentment, settledness, security, hope.

A relief from the nagging sense that something is always left undone, that something is always coming up around the corner that will throw us off or threaten whatever peace we are experiencing at any given moment in our lives.

It calls to mind getting off the wheel of the restless striving that dominates so much of our lives.

This kind of peace so often feels elusive, doesn't it?

As I sat down on Friday to write this Peace Sunday sermon, I did a quick scan of the people I had encountered just in this past week in all the various domains of my work and life, in person and online.

- a few people were exhausted by their failures and were longing for the strength to make a fresh start in their lives
- one person was going through a mid-life crisis, struggling with meaning, purpose, loneliness
- another person felt undervalued and unappreciated at work, like they've been treated unfairly
- another person is staring down a mid-life career transition, not sure where to go next
- a few people whose spouses' health has declined recently were struggling with the demands of caregiving
- one person is staring down a fairly major health crisis
- there were a few young adults facing un- or under-employment

- a few were frustrated by the political polarization that dominates our media and the violence and injustice that they see everywhere in our world
- one person was bitter about the hand life had dealt them
- a number of people were struggling with their faith... some weren't sure what they believed, or how it fit with the traditions in which they were raised
- several people were grieving in the wake of death, which is always destabilizing and disorienting in all kinds of ways

Each one of these people were, in some form or another, seeking peace. Their experiences were making them restless, agitated, afraid, angry, uncertain, confused.

We wouldn't associate any of those words with the peace that we long for. And yet this is the experience of so many of us.

In our scripture reading this morning, we heard Jesus' words, "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." But our hearts are so easily troubled, aren't they? And fear comes so naturally when there is so much to be afraid of.

\*\*\*

Well, speaking of Jesus—and speaking of Jesus is probably something a sermon should do! —our text from John's gospel also takes place in the context of much that could make hearts troubled and afraid.

Their times, like ours, were stressful ones.

The Roman Empire dominated nearly every element of daily life for the Jewish people. It was a brutal regime that was maintained by violence and fear.

The Jewish religious system was also experienced by many to be oppressive and contentious, with leaders pressing heavy demands upon people, and crippling them with burdensome interpretations of law.

And into this context came Jesus.

Jesus was an enigma. He spoke beautiful words about blessing being found in unexpected places, about the kingdom of God being a welcome for unlikely characters, about the inexhaustible love of God for a weary world.

He also spoke about giving up everything to follow him, leaving family and friends, taking up a cross, counting the cost, being prepared to die for him.

He performed miraculous signs and wonders, healings and feedings, the raising of the dead! He challenged the religious authorities with authority and power. He loved sacrificially and spoke of a forgiveness that knew no limits.

But he also spoke about dying a lot, about laying down his life for his sheep, about how he would be betrayed by those closest to him. Jesus wasn't always easy to figure out.

And now Jesus and his friends are together, one last time—the calm before the coming storm. And Jesus sits down for one last conversation with his disciples.

Those of you who are parents will probably know about the importance of last words. We often call out one last set of instructions before our kids go off to school or on a trip.

Often these are important things that we want them to remember:

- “Don’t forget to call home!”
- “Don’t forget to listen to your teachers!”

- “Don’t forget your passport, your wallet, your phone!”
- “Make good choices.”
- “I love you!”
- “I will be praying for you!”

We want our last words to be the words that stay with our children as they go.

Chapters 14-17 of the Gospel of John, where our text today is taken from, are referred to as Jesus’ “farewell discourse.” These are his last words before leaving—the words he wants ringing in their ears once he is no longer with him.

Jesus does a number of things in these four chapters. He talks about the importance of love and unity, he promises his disciples that the Holy Spirit—the Advocate, the comforter—will come to them and lead them into all truth.

He prays for them—chapter 17 is the longest prayer of Jesus’ in the Bible. He asks the Father for protection and for purity and for truth, both for his disciples and for all who will come after them (i.e., us!).

He also talks a lot about peace. He says these words: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.”

“I do not give to you as the world gives.”

“Do not be afraid. Do not let your hearts be troubled.”

Somehow, the peace Jesus is offering is different than alternative versions of peace. It is deeper, truer, and stronger. It has the capacity to guide and protect our souls through whatever life throws our way.

Jesus is well aware of just how volatile and turbulent the times are and will be for himself and for his followers.

He knows what lies ahead for his disciples—persecution, hardship, poverty, misunderstanding, and, for some, martyrdom.

And yet, he says that his peace is what he leaves with them.

Just a chapter earlier Jesus spoke his famous words about the vine and the branches—about how the key to bearing fruit is remaining in Jesus, obeying his commandments, and in so doing, resting in the love of God.

This is what Jesus wants his disciples to remember after he is gone.

\*\*\*

So, what do we do with these last words of Jesus all these years later? Is this just another item on our already full to-do list?

On top of all the burdens and stresses of modern life, in addition to struggling to stay afloat in the stormy seas of life, are we supposed to add “find inner peace” to our already full plates?

Well, yes.

And no.

First, the yes. Yes, inner peace is possible—even in our stormy times. As we have seen, Jesus’ words were delivered in a context and circumstances at least as stressful as our own, probably more.

Clearly, peace can coexist with difficult circumstances.

Jesus is not saying that the peace he offers will magically transform every unpleasant feature of our lives.

Inner peace cannot be dependent upon circumstances because our circumstances will never be just as we want them.

We will never have the perfect job that is wonderfully fulfilling one hundred percent of the time.

We will never have the perfect marriage where we always say and do the right things, where we never frustrate or step on each other's toes.

We will never be perfect parents or sons or daughters or brothers or sisters or friends.

We will never worship in a perfect church where the theology is exactly right, where the music is just as we like it, and where the people are all wonderfully kind and well-adjusted and thoughtful and ready to do anything and everything to meet our needs.

We will never arrive at that wonderfully healthy and perfectly balanced self-image.

We will never be perfectly safe and free from physical harm.

We will never know as much as we would like to know about God and evil and suffering and the meaning of it all.

This is the world we live in this side of eternity. Jesus knows this.

Jesus is quite honest. Later on in this Farwell Discourse, Jesus says, "In this world *you will have trouble.*" Not ***might*** have trouble. ***Will*** have trouble. But take heart—peace is possible even in the midst of all of this, because *I have overcome the world!*

Now, the no.

No, we are not expected to *attain* peace. Peace is not a state of affairs we are expected to achieve; rather, it is a gift of God that is given to us.

What does Jesus say? Peace I leave with you. My peace *I give* to you.

Not, “here are a set of techniques and principles by which you can actualize the peace that I have demonstrated for you.” Not, “here’s a course you can take.” Not, “here are some therapeutic tools you can refer to when you’re feeling overwhelmed.”

Simply, peace I leave... I give. It is a gift. All you have to *do* is remain in me. Stay connected to the source of peace, of flourishing, of life in its fullness.

\*\*\*

During most of the sermons I preach, I am very aware of the gap between the realities that I am talking about and my own life and my own experience.

This is one of the burdens of preaching, I suppose—we are always pointing beyond our present experience.

As I was preparing the sermon this week, I was even more acutely aware of this. It was a week that seemed somehow fuller than usual of need, so many people going through so many things that I can’t fix or change, much as I want to.

I felt restless, unsettled, frustrated. The burdens of the world, rather than the peace of Christ, dominated my heart and mind.

I need these reminders as much as anyone else.



I need to be reminded that the peace of Christ does not depend on things going perfectly smoothly in the world or in my life or in the lives of those around me.

I need to be reminded of abiding in Christ as the source of all peace.

**And I need to be reminded that the fundamental reality that stands behind any hope for peace in our conflicted times and in our conflicted minds and hearts, is trust.**

If we do not trust that Jesus is telling us the truth about who God is, about the love God has for us—regardless of how well we happen to be “performing!”—and about the possibility of a deep and settled peace no matter what life throws at us... **If we do not believe that God is trustworthy in his promises and that God’s future is secure, then inner peace will be impossible.**

If we cannot trust, we will be forever adrift on the seas of changing circumstances, we will be forever restless and anxious, and scrambling to secure our future for ourselves, desperately seeking peace but never finding it.

When I am struggling to feel peace, I often return to a quote from Yale theologian Miroslav Volf that I encountered back in graduate school and taped inside one of my bibles.

I’ve used this quote before. It comes from his book called *Free of Charge*:

A rich self has a distinct attitude towards the past, the present, and the future. It surveys the **past** with gratitude for what it has received, not with annoyance about what it hasn’t achieved or about how little it has been given. A rich self lives in the **present** with contentment. Rather than never having enough of anything except for the burdens others place on it... it strives out of a satisfied fullness, not out of the

emptiness of craving. A rich self looks toward the **future** with trust. It gives rather than holding things back in fear of coming out too short, because it believes God's promise that God will take care of it.

Finite and endangered, a rich self still gives, because its life is "hidden with Christ" in the infinite, unassailable, and utterly generous God, the Lord of the present, the past, and the future.

I want to be this kind of a "rich self." I long for each one of us to be able to look at our past, our present, and our future in with gratitude, contentment, and trust.

Which is perhaps another way of saying, I long for each person here to have the peace of Christ as an experiential reality.

We cannot make wars cease. We cannot fix our polarized cultural context. We cannot make the turbulent events of our world and our lives still by the sheer force of our wills.

*In this world we will have trouble.*

What we can do, is trust Jesus. We can become people of peace who do our small parts to create more peaceful relationships, families, churches, and communities.

I hope we can all hear the words of Christ spoken to us today:

Do not be afraid. Do not let your hearts be troubled. I have overcome the world with all its manic striving and misplaced loves and loyalties.

I love you. And I give you peace.

Amen.

