

Easter 6C 2010
John 14:23-29
Sermon for Advent LC
May 9th, 2010

“Peace: Strength for the Struggle”

Dear sisters and brothers, grace to you and peace from God the Father and our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

There's a neat website called www.1stheadlines.com that I frequent when I am interested in whatever is going on in the world. Yesterday, while thinking about today and the message I clicked it open on my computer and these headlines were some of the top ones: “Video Showing Police Stomping On Robbery Suspect Prompts Probe”, “Stock Market Record Fall Thursday Still Not Figured Out”, “Hundreds Mourn Murdered Lacrosse Star”, “Pakistan Tests Two Missiles; Want Nuke Recognition”, “Violence in Thailand Kills 2, Injures 8”, “Churches Feel Impact of Poor Economy”, “Teen Pregnancy Rate Inching Higher and Higher”, and finally “War, Will There Ever Be Peace?”. Uplifting stuff eh? It's truly a sad testimony to our World when these are the headlines, these are the things- violence, financial crisis, war, etc. that are being reported. Now, obviously media reports what they think will sell, but we don't have to look too hard to realize that these headlines are an accurate portrayal of our world, which often can be a scary, sad, dark place that continues to battle against the Word of God- that continues to pull us away from the promises that we hear in scripture that we hear from one another that we hear from Jesus. It seems to me that it would be easy to lose hope in the face of a world that offers us little alternative. Are we a hope-less people? Are we a people that will be overcome by the powerful dark news and reality that surrounds us? Are we a people that will simply say “well I guess the world stinks and there's not much we can do about it...I guess I'll just turn in on myself?” Is that who we are- I don't think so and I am pretty sure you agree with me- and I know that Jesus calls us to not be- Jesus the one who calls us to be his followers who gave his all for us- sends us into that reality, the reality of crisis and darkness with the promise that he is with us, that we have him...and he gives us peace to face it all. Friends, we have Christ with us- though the world shakes around us- we have Jesus- we must cling to him, and make his reality our reality and face the world and its harsh reality with the hope of a Savior that loves us.

It's amazing to me that the issue of losing hope and the issue of fear that seems to be around us- I hear it from some of you, I hear it on the news, I hear it in conversation- is the same issue that faced those earliest disciples while they looked at their life and their future. Now sure, things have changed- the situation was quite different but the heart of the issue- the fear that we are alone, that our world as we know it is going to collapse around us, and the fear that God is distant was shared by all those who walked with Christ as they tried to make sense of their world. Our Gospel today picks up on that and as Jesus is talking to his disciples and preparing them for when he goes, he senses this fear, this concern, this anxiety and he addresses it then and he addresses it now. He uses language that is hope-filled as he promises to continue to be with them through the presence of the Spirit- the Advocate- which literally is the world paraclete- best translated as one who walks along side with- so the promise is that you are not alone- that you have this advocate, this Spirit, this presence of Christ

and through that you have the strength to face whatever it is you face. But his word of hope does not end there- he then uses language of Peace- "peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." Friends in Christ- that is who we are- a people of hope, a people called to not fear, a people called to live in the midst of chaos with a peace that calls us to not be afraid. We have Jesus and Jesus loves us and then calls us to bring that peace forward.

"Peace?" you might be wondering -sounds good from the mouth of the Lord but let's be real- the world around me, my life, everything I see has the very opposite of Peace. You are right- Peace is not a reality that we see much of- the headlines I read earlier demonstrate the fact that peace is so far off for so many so how do we reconcile then this word from Jesus and this promise that I believe really matters? Well...a couple things we must consider- first of all- Jesus never said that he will take away hurt and pain and reality and suffering if you follow him- he provides hope, and at the foot of the cross we can all meet and in community we can support one another- but Jesus is not a get out of pain card. Life is hard often- that's reality. But secondly and most important what we hear from Jesus- this promise of Peace is very true and very important- The peace given to us- the ultimate peace of God from Jesus is not the absence of struggle and conflict and pain but rather the ability to engage in the struggle and conflict and pain. This peace equals power and hope to meet your fears, your concerns, your world. This peace is what we heard from Ed and what he has found in you who belong to this community- you are the ones given this peace and called to share it through your very being. Ultimate peace comes from Christ in the words "this is my body, this is my blood given for you" and then that peace is what must go through you to the world that is oppressed by the false hope of a world that is out of control with fear and sadness, darkness and conflict. Dear friends you have Jesus, he loves you and nothing can change that- in fact nothing can ever stop that rather Christ will only continue to be with you and give you peace. You have Jesus, you have the promise of Peace- and that peace is begging you to allow it to give you hope and strength so that together you, this community, this church can get to the business of being signs of peace in the world.

So be real friends...think long and hard about what causes you to lack peace- and hear Jesus as he says- do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid- those words friends are words for you to live by and words that you are called to share with a peace-less world.

God loves you and so do I. Amen.