

Finding Peace

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. -- John 14:27 NRSV

The gift of peace is one of Jesus's great promises to us. Peace is something we all long for. In our modern understanding, peace is the absence of war, problems, conflict and strife. The word peace also speaks to that still center when we are at peace, when we are blissfully content. Most of us want to find a little "peace and quiet" after a long, stress-filled day, yet peace is more than what we long for, peace is what we need. When Jesus spoke these words from John 14, he didn't use the English word "peace". He likely used the Hebrew word "shalom". Today in modern Israel and in other places we hear Shalom used as both "hello" and "goodbye". Shalom is not only a greeting, but it is a wonderful place to begin and to end. For shalom is not a state of affairs, rather shalom is a blessing and a prayer for divine grace.

The Hebrew word for peace, shalom, is derived from a root meaning wholeness or completeness, and its frame of reference throughout Jewish literature is bound up with the notion of perfection. So, for us Methodists, who dwell in the Wesleyan understanding of divine grace and strive to perfectly love Jesus, we find shalom in the divine blessing of Christ. For the Christian, we find wholeness and completeness in shalom. Shalom represents the presence of Jesus in the midst of our problems. Jesus gave us his peace, his blessing, and his prayer for us.

Here in John 14, Jesus gives us his peace... his shalom. Clearly the understanding of a Jewish Rabbi is that offering his peace to us is to give us a completeness unlike what the world gives or what we are able to give one another. The shalom of Jesus is a completing peace: a peace that brings us wholeness and wellness.

The great Christian, Corrie ten Boone, once said: "When I look at the world, I get distressed. When I look at myself, I get depressed. But when I look at Jesus, I am at rest."

Jesus gives us his shalom. I pray that his shalom dwells in each of us.

Shalom,

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