

Otherworldly Peace

So the world continues to change. In Illinois we are under stay at home orders. We can go to gas stations, grocery stores, and medical clinics. Yet unnecessary group gatherings are discouraged. Which is why for the this week we have stay at home worship. We hope soon to gather again, but we will honor our government officials. We see business shut down, and we hear of restaurants hanging on. Our family ordered some Lou Malnati's cause we love it and to keep restaurants afloat. We see some schools closing like the state of Kansas where schools are closed for the rest of the year. We see Indiana choosing May 1st for now. In Illinois we are at April 7th for now. The TP crisis is still raging on with shelves still empty. We wonder what this will mean for our country, our jobs, and our lives. But the question I have for you is this? *Where are you going to go for peace?* In the days, the weeks, the months ahead. Where will you find it.

You know one option we could go to is to pin our hope for peace on a cure for the COVID-19. Dr. Fauci and President Trump were discussing if a malaria drug widely available would bring about a cure. Hydroxychloroquine is the drug referenced along with chloroquine. And some say this drug may stop the Coronavirus from entering cells. Some scientists give encouraging test results. If there is a nation that could develop the cure, I think we could be it. We've been the first to build a car, first in flight, first to the moon - we could be the ones first to cure Coronavirus. But is that where you are going to find peace - the possibility of a cure?

Another option we could go to for peace is in our nation's leadership. That right now we are making the correct choices to prevent massive problems. By now you may have seen the bell curve of infection. We need to flatten the curve so that there will be less infected, and our hospitals will not be overrun. We can learn from the countries like South Korea and Japan, and try to avoid the curve of Italy and China. We could have peace knowing we are doing the right thing to flatten that curve.

You could find peace in our power to rebuild. As Governor Pritzker identified after the Great Chicago fire, out of those ashes the city built skyscrapers. At the location where the fire started they began the Chicago Fire academy. We could pin our hopes on all the innovations that will come out of this, and the lessons we will learn. I know churches and business are innovating quickly during this time. We can make a brighter future. We could pin our peace on our future progress.

But can I present another option. If you're tuning in online. We welcome you. If you're not a church person, or don't consider yourself a Christian we are so glad you're here this morning. Maybe this is just playing on the family tv or ipad. And you're eavesdropping in. Welcome we love you and we care for you. But the option I want to present to you is a leader so reliable he never failed or made a wrong choice, of progress so certain nothing can stop it, and of cure more available than hydroxychloroquine. All this comes to us through who we call the Prince of Peace. Jesus Christ. And in our time together we see what he offers.

And that is this. Jesus gives us an *otherworldly* peace. This morning we turn to a section of Scripture that is packed with reasons for peace. Now about the Bible we do believe it was written by eye-witnesses who walked with Jesus. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were his disciples who write their own account of what it was to be with Jesus. There are 1000 of manuscripts of the New Testament that have been preserved, and that we know are reliable. And that is my background studying those authentic manuscripts to check for accuracy. Not only is this all true but God promised we'd have his Word. So we believe that these are Words that God by his power preserved for us. And they are the voice of God for us guiding us and giving us peace. Today we have words that the disciple John recorded.

Now the situation is this. He is in the upper room with his disciples and Judas has already left to betray Jesus. The very next day they would see Jesus handed over to the authorities, tortured, and crucified. And they would have tremendous reasons to be upset and without peace. So hours before this happens he gives them and us reasons why we can be at peace, despite situations that aren't so peaceful. A reading from John 14. If you're at home or around others please tell them. I am not afraid.

Out of all the places to be where is the safest right now? Vietnam seems to be doing ok. The 16 cases of Coronavirus have all been cured. Other parts of the world doing better. Where do you want to be? Right now because the safest place to be is home it is a great time to do home projects. I had relatives who showed me their painting projects, others who recently moved and have chance to put things in order. At our household we rented a carpet cleaner and went to town. Nice to have better looking carpet as we are going to be at home. In the coming weeks we'll have opportunity to stare at every corner of the house and figure out how we like it.

But the safest place to be? What I could promise to take you to a place where there was no COVID-19? What if I could take you to a place that not only was without disease, but was filled with people that you love. And you walk in perfect relationship with all around you. What if told you this is a place so good you never cry, you never are disappointed, you are never in pain. Too good to be true? No. It's exactly the place Jesus is talking about, "In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you." He's not just cleaning the carpets, and painting the walls. He creating all things new. In 6 days he made this world, and for 2000 years he's been working on that one. I tell you when you and I get there it will be the absolute best place to be. Here's a reason for peace. *You can have otherworldly peace, because he has for you an otherworldly place.*

You know this world is broken, no matter how nice your house here is. And because it is there are many disappointments we may face. This past week I was talking to a brother in ministry who was planning a wedding for this weekend, and he had to alter his plans quite a bit. And though there are still many good things, you can imagine the disappointment. Disappointment is a real sensation for many people. Those who planned birthdays out on the town, spring break vacations, and time visiting family. I consider the disappointment of church people who would love to gather as a community, and cannot now and perhaps also in the coming days. But the thing is before COVID-19 there was disappointment wasn't there. And Jesus reminds us, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (16:33)

And he hasn't just overcome this world, he has and is creating a new one. I wonder what your mansion will be like. I wonder what color are the walls in that place. I wonder the goodness he has in store for us. How great to know that this place is so temporary, as COVID-19 will pass so will this place. We are tenting here on earth and our true home is in heaven.

But you may ask how can I be sure to go to that place? Jesus makes us certain. "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (v.6)

You know this reminds me of all the things that seem like the right way. Can we talk about Toilet Paper. Some have labeled this time the Great Toilet Paper Panic, and it has gotten as extreme with at least one armed robbery for tp. This isn't the first time but perhaps the most drastic. In the 70s Johnny Carson made a joke about running out and it did lead to a similiar hoarding. But I was doing some research about why there is hoarding, why do we feel like doing this. I've felt like it too. One article says, "Hoarding also makes people feel secure. This is especially relevant when the world is faced with a novel disease over which all of us have little or no control." (Business Insider) What is it an attempt to do, to regain some control in a world that seems out of control. And so we buy a little more or a lot more than what we need just in case. Seems like the right way, but our leaders are encouraging us that is not the way. Just buy what you need.

Our natural reaction vs the proposed reaction reminds me of this Proverb, "There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death." (14:12) It may seem like the right way to hoard, but no there is a better way.

Spiritual speaking in order to get to heaven there is a way that seems right to all of us. And that is for us to be good. If we are good people or at least better than most than God will allow us to go to the place already described. That mansion in the sky.

But if you investigate what God revealed. He says that isn't the way. You can't be good enough because you're not perfect and that is the expectation. Jesus said be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect. And not a person on earth, not Ghandi, not Mother Thersesa, not myself can claim to be perfect. We all have sin and God says the wages of our sin is not a perfect place, but is death.

But Jesus says I am the way. He also says I am the Only Way. Because there is only one who was perfect. Tempted in everyone just like us but found without sin. Never a loveless thought, word, or deed. And there is only one who could give a sacrifice that would be enough to cover the consequences of our sin. We could not be forgiven through our own sacrifices and good efforts, we could not be saved through our donations of tp, silver or gold, no amount of money could make up for one sin. It could only be through the blood of Jesus. Which he gave out of love for you. Jesus is leaving his disciples in this dialogue, in order to pick up a cross, and win their way, and your way, and my way. And what do we know. *We can have otherworldly peace, because of an otherworldly way.* If this is your first time hearing the message of sins forgiven through Jesus I want you to know this is for you. That all of your guilt and shame can be released because Jesus is your way, and Jesus is your peace.

And it reminds me of the different activities that we could be up to during this time.

I was inspired by a young man in Oregon who was delivering supplies for the elderly. And he got together other young people who were able to deliver much needed supplies to others. I think of churches who are banding together to help out there communities. Just this

past week we heard of ideas to help those in nursing homes. I'm also struck by all the different things you could do during this time. There are virtual musicals, streaming book readings, and musicians all posting online.

I wonder how much God is charging us with a different way. I shared this post earlier in the week but wanted to share it again. Satan says, "I will cause anxiety, fear and panic. I will shut down businesses, schools, places of worship, and sports events. I will cause economic turmoil." Jesus says, "I will bring together neighbors, restore the family unit. I will bring dinner back to the kitchen table. I will help people slow down their lives and appreciate what really matters. I will teach my children to rely on me, and not the world. I will teach my children to trust me and not their material resources. Amen." There's a great opportunity for us to live a different, otherworldly way. We can do this putting the needs of others before our own. As we are a neighbor to one another, not just thinking of our own needs but the needs of others. We can re-prioritize. This can be a time of revival for daily devotions, daily worship, and prayer. I think between the internet and the time you have at home - worship could quickly ramp up from 1 to 2, to 7 to 10 hours per week. How awesome would that be. A silver lining that Jesus might finally through all of this teach us an otherworldly way. A way that wasn't happening before.

You know I wonder if you were one of disciples and you got to walk with him during COVID-19. Let's say it was going on - would you have been afraid? Think of all that they saw him do? They saw him make mud and open the eyes of a blind man. They saw him make a man crippled all his life, lowered from a roof walk again. He went to 10 lepers, talk about infection and death, and he healed them all. He even raised Jairus daughter and Lazarus from the dead. No if you were walking with Jesus who drove out demons and healed the dead you could say I am not afraid of this.

But Jesus ascended back into heaven, and has left his earthly ministry. But he also said this, "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." (14:26) In fact, in other portions of Scripture Jesus said it is better than he goes so we can have this Spirit. And do you know you have through faith the Spirit reigning in you. This is the Spirit of God who made the church come alive after the resurrection of Jesus. Turned Peter from coward to courageous. Gave tongues for the church to speak, and avenues that they couldn't have prepped, trained or planned for. All so the message of Jesus and his peace could be spread. *And we can have otherworldly peace because we have an otherworldly power.* And the name of that power is the Holy Spirit.

It's the Spirit that gives us eyes to see the beauty of our Savior Jesus. It's the Spirit that gives us hearts to hold him, as no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. It's the Spirit that empowers our hands and feet to live for him. The Spirit who can rule our minds by reminding us the promises of Jesus, and ruling our hearts and minds by peace. Perhaps my favorite passage about the Spirit is in 2 Timothy where Paul wrote, "For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline" (1:7) Would you say at home. I have power. I have peace. I am not afraid. Because I have the Spirit of God. It's the Spirit that reminds me God loves me, God is with me, and God is in control. The Spirit as a deposit in my heart reminding me I'm not home, reminding me I have a purpose for this life.

And what if. What if my friends look at the future. What if what starts right now extends into the future. Because God's going to get us through. This too shall pass. And I believe what the Frankfort Chamber posted. Do you believe that day? I just hope it is in time for Easter.

But whenever it happens. What if what started during the stay at home of COVID-19 extends to eternity. What if God is using this time as a wake up call to bring in his children, and to remind them of their true home. What if God sparked a revival in the sleeping giant called the Christian Church in America. And what if it started with us. That we who were promised the Spirit, who is better than Jesus. I didn't say it Jesus did. What if we turned an hour of weekly worship into an hour of daily worship. What if we started talking not to ourselves, but to our God in prayer more often. What if we picked not just the next Netflix season, but the next chapter of our Bibles and dwelled in the Spirit. It is then God's kingdom could come to us and others. It's then we would redeem the disappointments of our changed plans. And it is then that you and I would experience otherworldly peace. Reminded God loves us, he is with us, and he is in control.

Let me pray for us. Lord we pray that you would send your Spirit as you promised. To increase in us, in our country, and across the world - the knowledge and faith in your Son, Jesus. Jesus is the way the truth and the life. Thank you for preparing that place for us. Thank you for keeping that plan, and letting nothing come in the way of us being with you. Grant peace to troubled hearts, let comfort and rest and perspective wash over us. We pray according to your will a quick end to COVID-19, but that ultimately you would have your way and that your Kingdom would come. Amen.