



Sunday, June 8, 2025  
John 14:15-19, 25-27 (Pentecost Sunday)

Ascension Lutheran Church  
Pastor Tony Acompanado

Last weekend I took a little road trip through Minneapolis on my way to run a few races in none other than *Fargo, North Dakota*. Now I know it's not the exotic destination one might think of when choosing a race location, but, I have some friends who live there that wanted to run a race together and it offered both the opportunity to catch up with these friends and also fit in a little extra training time for some bigger races I have coming up later this summer and fall.

Aside from running a race on Friday night and then another one on Saturday morning, we didn't have any overly exciting plans besides catching up over coffee and meals, worshipping together, going to support a friend's fundraiser, and scouting out a couple hotels and restaurants in Minneapolis for the next Youth Gathering.

On Monday when I returned home, I volunteered at Kai's school blasting kids with a leaf blower as they finished a fun run covered in colored powder. The rest of the week was otherwise pretty low key – I had a few hours in the car with the other two pastors when we went to Lambeau with our Young at Heart group, I spread a ridiculous amount of mulch around our yard, played games outside with my family, went for take-out and ice cream, did some laundry, and caught up on a few tv shows I've fallen behind on. I don't know about you but in my world, these are things that bring me peace.

At least, I like to think of them as peaceful moments in life. When all seems right with the world. When a sense of calm fills your heart and mind. When you're *not* stressed about everything you have to do or everything going on in your life.

Peaceful moments that sometimes come at odd times and in odd places. Maybe it's having a conversation with a friend or perhaps it's just staring at the summer sky and watching the clouds as you drink a cool glass of lemonade. Whatever they are I think we can all agree that peaceful moments are sometimes few and far between. Peaceful moments that are shattered by our worries, arguments, and all that causes us to lie awake at night. Life has a funny way of thrusting us back into reality.

So, this makes me wonder – *what is it that troubles you?* The stress and demands of life? Every unfinished task on your list? Is someone you love sick or suffering? Maybe it's the fear and anxiety of an uncertain future? Or is it your job, a relationship, or the state of the world that's bothering you? Whatever it is, it can be overwhelming at times. And then I wonder, where do *you* go to get away from it all? Because far too often people go to all the wrong places.

The bottom of a bottle, pills on a shelf, or an inappropriate website. Maybe it's online shopping or gambling that helps you feel better? And while you may find a temporary fix – relief for a time, it won't be long before you're searching again. Always seeking but never finding. And too often these things leave us feeling even more shame, guilt, and regret. So where do you go then to find true and everlasting peace?

Well, this week's gospel couldn't have come at a more perfect time because lately with the growing divide in politics, the ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia, the news of yet another racially motivated act of violence, the escalating tension in the battle of immigration and human rights, and so much more – I've been thinking a lot about peace and what it means to me and what it means for all of us.

The words of this morning's gospel were spoken by Jesus on the eve of his crucifixion and Jesus has just told the disciples that he's leaving, and that they can't follow him. Then he says, "*Do not let your hearts be troubled.*" And I'm guessing their reaction was the first century equivalent of, "*you're kidding me, right?!*" Don't be troubled? Don't be afraid? What delusional world was Jesus living in?



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Look around! Division, conflict, economic struggle, people out of work, people without food, political fights over immigration, health care, racial and gender equality. And we're not supposed to be troubled? Jesus, are you serious?

This is what makes Jesus' promise of peace so difficult to take. It feels like *peace* is precisely what's missing right now. Peace, after all, would bring a stop to all this conflict and an end to all this chaos – the conclusion of all our waiting and wanting and worrying. *Right?*

Typically, I've thought of peace as the absence of something negative – the absence of war, disagreement, fear, sadness, anger. And the first definition that comes up in an online search seems to support this, "peace is freedom from disturbance."

But it occurs to me after re-reading Jesus' words to the disciples that maybe I've got it wrong. Maybe peace isn't an absence of something but instead it's something all on its own. Maybe it creates something positive, makes something wonderful possible, not just reduces something negative. Maybe this is what Jesus means when he says, "*My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.*" And I wonder then if this is why Jesus tells the disciples and us that God gifts us the Advocate.

But I also wonder if we misunderstand the presence of the Advocate. Given not so much to stand with us – interceding on our behalf, pleading our case before God and try to persuade God to forgive, love, or accept us. What if the Advocate's role is the opposite of what we've thought? What if the Advocate doesn't represent *us before God*, but instead represents *God before us*? After all, in today's gospel Jesus said, "*The Advocate...will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I said to you.*"

*"Do not let your hearts be troubled."* *"I am the bread of life."* *"I am the good shepherd."* *"I am the light of the world."* *"Do not be afraid."* *"My peace I give you, my peace I leave with you."* *"I am with you always, to the end of the age."* *"Love your neighbor as yourself."* *"Love your enemy."* *"Do not judge, so that you may not be judged."* *"I desire mercy not sacrifice."* *Forgive "not seven times, but I tell you, seventy-seven times."* *"Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."* *"Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."* *"Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."*

We all need an Advocate. We all need to be reminded, especially when the future is uncertain, life has been turned upside down, and we're afraid or overwhelmed. We need to be reminded when we're angry or frustrated. We need to be reminded when we're sad and grieving. We need to be reminded when we're busy, successful, and self-sufficient. We need to be reminded when we're lost and don't know the way. We need to be reminded when we feel like an orphan – alone and lonely, on our own, having to look out and fend for ourselves. We all need God's advocacy and reminding.

And this Advocate – the Holy Spirit that he promises comes bearing God to us. The one who will not leave our side during trouble. When we understand the gift of the Advocate in this way then there's nothing about Jesus' words that would suggest either that he's promising us an end to problems or that he's inviting us to ignore them. Rather, he promises peace – not merely the end of difficulty but instead a confident expectation and hope about the future in spite of it.

Martin Luther was once asked what he would do if he thought the world would end tomorrow, and he replied, "*I would plant a tree today.*" That's not optimism; that's hope, and not simply a lack of fear, but courage; not only the absence of difficulty, but peace – Jesus' peace, a peace the world cannot give.



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Peace in the Bible is an all-inclusive, all-encompassing word. In the Hebrew Old Testament, *shalom* means wholeness of a person; of the human race; of the whole of creation. It means well-being, social and political justice, right relationships with God and other human beings.

In the Greek New Testament, peace also means the unconditional, eternal gift of Jesus to his followers in every time and place. That's why he doesn't give peace to us as the world does, because for the world peace is often conditional, fragile, temporary, and frequently reduced to mean only the absence of struggle. Worldly peace is never a gift – there are always some kind of strings attached. And there are certainly no promises that worldly peace will last forever.

However, with the peace of Christ there are no strings; and there *is* the promise that it will last forever. Peace, in the New Testament sense, also means salvation, forgiveness and reconciliation between God and humankind as well as between each other – whether black, brown, or white, male, female or other gender, rich or poor, republican or democrat, citizen or immigrant.

Above all else, it is this profound love of God that Jesus has made known to his disciples and that the Holy Spirit – the Advocate continues to make known to us. The gifts of contentment, wholeness, security, friendship, reconciliation, and love belong to each one of us thanks to Jesus. Thanks to his gift of peace.

It is because of this divine peace that we can go into the future assured that we are never abandoned; trusting that the peace of Jesus will always be with us as a gift to reassure us and give us confidence in our times of struggle and chaos, and amid painful loss and grief.

My friends, Jesus has already given us his peace. And on this Pentecost day and every day to come, the Advocate continues the tireless work of uniting us with God and one another – reminding us to not let our hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid.

May the peace of Christ be with you now and always.

Thanks be to God. Amen!