

The Peace

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[0 : 0 0] I would like to turn back the scene for a little while to the passage that we read together from John's Gospel chapter 14. It's on page 901 if you do have the Pute Bible with you.

And it's an ongoing section that we're looking at following on from the rest of chapter 14. Nothing about Jesus Christ for us ought to be ordinary. Nothing about Jesus should be ordinary.

Every sinew of his being should draw us towards worship. We should be in our lives drawn towards worship of Jesus Christ. When we read of him, when we meditate on him, when we think of him, when we learn from him, we should be captivated to worship him because of who he is, because he is God in the flesh. And speaking for myself, and I suspect for some of us also, that we worship him far too little. We worship him far too little in our lives and far too poorly in terms of quality in our understanding and in our returning of thanks and praise and adoration to him for who he is. But as we come to his word, it should always, and we look for it, to inspire change in us. We hope that the word of God that we come together to read and to meditate on should inspire us to be transformed. And we look for the Holy Spirit to fill the reading of Scripture and the preaching of Scripture and the outworking of Scripture in our lives so that we will go from here. We go each time we read his word and we are worshipful in response to who Jesus is and what is revealed about him. He is uniquely great and our battle, our struggle, our fight from day to day and from week to week is to see that. We often are blinded by our own preoccupations, by our own battles and by our own struggles, by our lack of faith, by our sin, by all kinds of things, sometimes by our pride, so that we are unable to see clearly.

But here Jesus, every word is weighed, everything he gives us is significant and he is teaching us hugely significant truths for ourselves. And here he speaks about his peace and he speaks about leaving. Now when somebody you love leaves you, usually that is a reason for being sad. When you part from someone you love, then there is a degree of sadness in that, it can be temporary or obviously in death it can be much more solemn and much more deep seated. But there is usually a sense of sadness when we are broken apart, when we are separated from one another. We regularly go up to Ullapool and to Loch Broome for our holidays because that is where Katrina is from. For the first time, not recently but it was within the last two years, first time having been in Ullapool years and always gone into the village, we visited the Ullapool Museum, the first time that we would ever visit, the little museum, it is an old church that has been transformed into a museum. And it has really mainly got the history of the area and particularly the history of the clearances when many people left from Ullapool from that port to head to America because they were being forced to do so, forced away from their land and poverty. And they have kept a lot of the original letters that were written by those who were leaving, letters that were written when they arrived in the States, letters that were written by others who explained that the people that had gone had died on the journey, many thousands died on the journey.

And they are incredibly sad, these letters that speak of parties, not like today where Amy and Asia are our daughter, we can speak to her every day because she is in Asia because of FaceTime and everything else. It is not, it was not like that and we could not jump on a plane and come back. It was hugely, significantly sad when people were parted from one another and that comes across very much in these letters that would bring you to tears. But yet here, Jesus says completely the opposite. He says something radically different. In verse 28 he says, you heard me saying to you, I am going away and I will come to you. If you loved me you would have rejoiced because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. He is saying something completely different. He is saying I am going away, but it should bring gladness, not sadness. And we know that they were saddened by all the events in the upper room and what was happening. But Jesus is saying, look, I am going away, but it is not an occasion for sadness and tears, it is an occasion for joy and gladness. Is He delusional? He is about to go to the cross. What is He saying?

[5 : 38] And why is He saying that? And what does it mean? Jesus always is so counterintuitive for us and we find here He is saying something that is significantly important. He is leaving them. He is about to be plunged into the darkness of the events of Calvary and to be crucified on the cross. And He says, yet my leaving you is a reason for you to be glad, to rejoice, even to worship. And He says that because He goes on to explain two very important things for the disciples, but also two very important truths for us in our lives. Take them with you. Remember them. Remind yourselves of them, particularly when you are afraid and when you are in trouble. We have been praying about people who are afraid and in trouble.

We may feel very distanced from that. We may be on vacation. We may be having a great time. We have finished our exams. We may have just got a job within a fairly peaceful part of the world. But you may have great internal trouble. You may have a lot of fear in your heart and life. And even if you are not, these are two very significant and important things to remember and which explains why Jesus encourages them to be glad that He is going.

The first is because He leaves behind the gift of all gifts. He leaves behind the gift of all gifts. He leaves behind His peace. Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled. Don't be afraid. So He is leaving behind the gift of all gifts. He is going but He says I am leaving my peace. He says this is my legacy. That is the kind of wording that we have here.

This is my treasure. This is what I am leaving as I go. My peace. That is what He says. That is what He leaves behind. What is that peace? We will look at that just for a few minutes and see what is that peace that He speaks about. It is summarised by an all-encompassing longing in all of us. A longing that we all have. Maybe it is an unexpressed longing or an undefined longing. But it comes, it is within us and yet we are surrounded and also sense a great deal of dis-peace both internally often and externally. It may be guilt, it may be just general dis-peace or it may be external experiences that we go through. That is a surrounding of dis-peace. Now in the world peace, and I think Corrie mentioned this before, in the world peace has a particular meaning or a particular out-working. For some it is just the absence of war. We live in Edinburgh in Scotland, there is no war. It is peace generally. We can maybe ignore the war and the dis-peace that other people are facing.

It may be people look relationally in love terms that they have good relationships with people, good family relationships, good general, good working relationships. Of course that is always imperfect and rather temporary. It might be just general circumstances. I am at peace, things are good. What is happening around me, the bank balance, everything around me is good. Yet again that is unpredictable and it is outward. Or it may be just with the choice of career or the future, the direction of your life. You are at peace with that.

[9 : 30] Again it is not an ultimate peace that has been spoken of. So often our friends, the people we share the gospel with, the people we love who aren't Christians are satisfied with that. They are satisfied with that level of peace, whether it is just relational or jobs or generally in their lives even with their health. But Christ is claiming something entirely different. He says that He is offering a peace which the world cannot give. My peace I leave with you, not as the world gives, do I give to you. So whatever we think of as peace that we can get ourselves, it is not what Christ is offering and it is not what Christ is giving. He is giving something that is entirely appropriate and entirely unique to Him. Now we give gifts also don't we. Sometimes these gifts are wholly inappropriate.

We give completely the wrong gift and it is not really what the person needs or indeed wants. Sometimes they are temporary, they are nice but they only last for a little while maybe like a bunch of flowers. We can also give gifts with mixed motives. We can give gifts in order to be liked. We can give gifts because actually we want to share in them ourselves. Or we can give gifts because we hope that someone will give gifts back to us. There can be a selfish motive in our gifts. But Christ is claiming an entirely different level of gift here, the peace that He offers. It is both appropriate, it is both, it is not temporary and He gives it with no mixed motives whatsoever. He gives His peace to us.

It is nothing that the world can give and His peace is the end, ultimately what He offers to us is the end of hostility with God. So it is a spiritual reality, it is the ending of hostility with God. It is the ultimate belonging that all of the temporary longings we have in our hearts have been made to be fulfilled under. It is knowing and recognising that we are realigned with God through Jesus Christ and through His finished work. Because we have been made, we were created to face that way with God. We are created to be face to face with Him and our sin has turned our backs on Him. But the peace you look for and the peace you need and the peace I need is ultimately that relational peace with God that has come through Jesus Christ. We are made to be one with the Father. We are made to be one with our Creator and our Judge. And it is the antidote for the fear and the trouble that is being evoked by the world we live in and by the brokenness and the division of that world. The atonement in other words, and that is what He is speaking about, because

He is speaking about the peace He is achieving on the cross that He will leave with Him. The atonement is our antidote for fear and trouble. Whatever direction you are facing in life, if you are facing away from Jesus Christ and His atonement, you will never find what you are looking for ultimately in the peace that He offers. The atonement is His perfect, appropriate, love motivated, needed gift for each of us. Not on a one off, not just when we come to faith, every single day as we recognise His claimant, as we recognise Jesus saying, I am the way, Himself. In that relationship with Him we can know the peace of God and that will satisfy your human cravings like nothing else. As we conquer sin and the appetites that take us away from Christ, He offers His peace.

So when you rise in the morning, if there is anything more important than seeking the face of Jesus to recognise that that is the alignment we need for the day, that is the peace that sets us on our way, then we are misguided. If anything is more important than that, on a daily, hourly basis, then we will find ourselves scrabbling around looking for peace in other directions. His peace that He leaves with us is the greatest gift of all gifts and it is given to all who put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. We appropriate it by faith and we live it out by knowing and understanding who He is.

[14 : 30] Okay, so that is the first thing, He leaves the gifts of gift. That is why we can be glad that He returns to the Father because He is leaving this most significant of all gifts.

Can I just unpack that with the second statement He makes? The second reason that they were to rejoice that Jesus was leaving them was because indeed He is going to the Father. If you loved me you would have rejoiced because I am going to the Father for the Father is greater than I. Okay, so what is so good about that? Why is it so important to rejoice and be glad because He is going to the Father? Is that really good news? Absolutely, because here we have Jesus in the upper room and He is declaring the determined purpose of why He has come and He is reminding them that although they are going into darkness of the cross, He is going to return to the Father and that is absolutely significant and a reason to be cheerful, a reason to rejoice. Why? Why is Jesus going back to the Father a reason for them to rejoice? Because He is returning to the Father as our representative. That is why it is so important because He is returning as our representative. He is here as the eternal

Son who has become flesh. He has taken on our humanity, body and soul and He has subordinated Himself out of love for the Father and out of love for His people. He has made Himself, Hebrews 2.9, a little lower than the angels. He has put Himself, Galatians 4.4, under the law into a subservient role. That is why He says here, I am going to return to the Father for the Father is greater than I. Now, obviously this verse has caused a great deal of difficulty for a lot of people who say, well, how can you say the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are triune persons who are all equal? When Jesus clearly states here that the Father is greater than I and many people will take that as being a reason for not believing in the Trinity or in the equality of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

But let us go back very briefly to chapter 10 and verse 30 where Jesus and Yahweh's interpret scripture in light of Scripture, John 10 verse 30, where He says, my Father, who has given them to me, is greater than I, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one. And then He goes on to say in 14 verse 10, which we have looked at already, He says, do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? And there's this recognition that there's equality between Father and Son. They are one. And yet here He's saying the Father is greater than me.

The context is because He is returning in His role as our Redeemer, as our Savior. And in that role, He subordinates Himself to the Father's will. He obeys the Father and He obeys the Father who sends Him to be our Redeemer. He obeys as an obedient child in our place because we don't obey, because we didn't obey, and because we needed a Redeemer who was both God and man, who as God would be powerful enough and as man would be obedient enough to die in our place as our substitute. So as our representative, He returns to the Father in our place bearing our name. That's why it's a reason to be cheerful and a reason to rejoice. He is the way, and He opens that way for us. It's a march of victory that He's going to be doing, and He's doing it as one who is subservient in His role, not in His being, not in His substance, but in His role as the one who has been sent by the Father.

[19:03] And in His humanity, in His perfect, glorious, substitutionary humanity, He enters the Father's presence in my name for me and for you. That's why we rejoice because the Father accepts Him and the Father then declares the peace that we enjoy because Jesus has returned to Him. It's glorious truth. He returns as our representative. That's why we rejoice. He also, we rejoice because as He goes to the Father, He goes, but the powers of darkness have no hold on Him. I think this is probably one of the, for us, one of the greatest verses in the Bible for us. I will, verse 30, I will no longer talk much with you. For the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me. He has no claim on me. So the great, surely one of the greatest verses in the Bible, that our peace depends on this statement.

The statement that Christ as our representative can go back to the Father because Satan, the evil one, the accuser of the saints has no hold on Jesus. It's a huge confidence here is that before He goes to the cross, He's saying the evil one, the Prince of this world, is coming. He's not holding me. He can't hold me down. Now we know divine justice needs to be met. We know that sin needs to be punished for. And yet we know in Jesus there's nothing to accuse Him before Satan. Satan doesn't, he doesn't have any grip on Jesus whatsoever.

There's no lust. There's no temper. There's no pride. There's no jealousy. There's no lies. There's nothing in Jesus so that actually it is impossible for death to take Him. Nothing could make Jesus hide before the Father. He didn't need to hide as Adam did in the garden because Satan had no hold on Him. There was nothing to accuse. No judgment, no separation, no death. The devil had no hold. Death couldn't claim Jesus. He couldn't claim Jesus. Take that and think through that. Death simply couldn't. It had no power to kill Him. Yet Jesus chose. Jesus decided. Jesus went voluntarily to face the wrath. Satan had no hold on Him whatsoever and yet Christ voluntarily walked into the mouth of hell and into the mouth of death. He became sin, our sin, so that we might know peace and know the presence with the Father. Satan could do nothing to stop it. It's not interesting. So one thing, we can't do anything over. Death. It's the one thing that will come to us all. It's the one thing Satan couldn't do anything to stop here was Jesus volunteering himself. He was powerless. Even with all his forces ranged against him. He was powerless. He had no hold on Jesus. That is why the peace that Jesus offers is so powerful. And Satan was silent and defeated through the cry of dereliction on the cross. Justice was met. Christ's people were as it were ripped from his grasp and in Christ we have the answer. Satan had nothing on Christ and Satan has nothing on you and nothing on me as Christians. We spend our lives lurching from guilt complex to guilt complex and sense of failure to sense of failure.

I wonder if Jesus will accept me today. I wonder if I'll do enough because we don't understand the grace of God and the goodness of the gospel and the fact that Satan has no hold. He's the accuser of the saints but he has nothing on us if we have our faith and trust in Jesus. And lastly very briefly in relation to his going to the Father. It's great news because we're reminded that redemption is an act of unimaginable love. I do as the Father has commanded me so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise. Let us go from here. The world may know that I love the Father. Now somehow when you're sharing the gospel as a Christian one of the greatest challenges is getting the world to understand that Jesus loves the Father and the Father loves the Son. That it's not in some brutally ugly way cosmic child abuse for Jesus to send. It got the Father to send the Son to the cross as some would hold today. What the world needs to see is a loving Father and a loving Son and a glorious inter-Trinitarian love that sent Jesus Christ. The world misses that. How often does the world say that God is harsh? Jesus is nice kind of guy, prophet.

But God is harsh. They don't see that and often we don't either. How often do we shake our puny fists at God because we think he's dealing with us harshly and we love the Jesus talk but we're not so keen on the God talk because we don't understand the Trinity and we don't understand theology and the truth of God's word which reminds us that Christ went out of love for the Father voluntarily and it was the Father's perfect will to save his people through Jesus Christ but the Father is in the Son in this divine mission. He's God, there's only one God and he is in the Son in this mission in a mysterious and remarkable way. It's minutely planned. This is God's purpose, God's loving purpose for his people and for the revealing of his own character. The Father sends the Son, the Father and the

[25 : 34] Son send the Spirit, the Son and the Father are in the Spirit who is sent and we have the character of God, the person of God, the reality of divine life in us because of what Jesus has done. That's the peace we get. That's the peace that we strive for and is gifted to us in Jesus Christ and so if you're troubled or if you're afraid please know that the answer to that is in the truth and diving into the truth, delving into the mystery and into the unmistakable glory of the truth which teaches us about the kind of peace we have a divine peace, a peace given by love outworked in the most outstanding way on our behalf.

Amen. Let's pray. Father God we ask and pray that you would teach us your ways and that you would lead us in your truth, that we would understand more about your love and your peace.

Forgive us for so often our peace being circumstantial in our lives, what's happening outside, what's happening with other people's responses to us or reactions or whatever it might be. Forgive us for not seeking on a daily basis that inner spiritual peace that reflects in outward responses and relationships and reactions. Lord God help us to find that great, or know that great peace that comes from you and know that it is the great foundation when the storms of life come and know that in fear and in trouble we can know your life and your peace and your love. May that not be theoretical, may it not be distantly theological, but may it be absolutely powerfully applied by your spirit into our hearts and lives tonight.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.