

Meditation on John 14:23-29
,My peace I give to you!'

::: ONE :::

My dear sisters and brothers,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [Phil 1,2]

Now, this is my first meditation to give here at Peace church. What a special moment this is for me.

And I assume it is a very special moment for you as well.

What will she have to say, our new Christine? Who is actually not a she, and his name is not Christine but Alex, and he has never given a sermon in English right to this very day.

And yes, that's true – I may have written hundreds of minutes and papers in English, but I haven't had a single occasion to *preach* in English.

In this sense, this is an absolute premiere for me.

So, something absolutely unprecedented is happening here in front of your eyes and ears.

::: TWO :::

But it is nothing – compared to what Jesus announced with his words in the reading for today, which you have just heard.

Could you hear it?

Did you hear these words – speaking of something unprecedented... ?

*²⁷ 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.*

Can we really trust our ears here?

‘Peace I leave with you’

Don’t these words sound like sarcasm to our ears?

Just a day’s car drive away we can find ourselves right in the middle of a war – Russia against the Ukraine, at war now for almost 3 months.

But we only need to look at Peace Church – and of course other welcoming churches near and far.

There is war in so many countries all over our planet – home countries to some of you –, causing people to find shelter in places far away from home, far away from family and friends – with only a vague idea of a little more positive future that may lie ahead.

So what does this mean
“Peace I leave with you”?

::: THREE :::

Yes “Peace I leave with you” may sound like sarcasm. But actually it is referring to another biblical text, to be found in the book of the prophet Jeremiah, chapter 6 (Verse 13-14):

*¹³ For from the least to the greatest of them,
everyone is greedy for unjust gain;
and from prophet to priest,
everyone deals falsely.*

*¹⁴ They have treated the wound
of my people carelessly,
saying,
“Peace, peace,”
when there is no peace.*

Jesus distinguishes not merely the existing peace on earth and a divine kind of peace, he rather refers to how people address peace in their everyday life.

When he says: “my peace I give to you”, then this is not about a figure of speech. It is not like he said: “I wish you peace”, in a sense like saying “I wish you all the best.”

When Jesus says, “my peace I give to you”, he prepares his people for the coming of the divine Spirit – the Spirit of Peace.

::: FOUR :::

By announcing “my peace I give to you”, Jesus declares that with his coming, in his words and through his acting, a new era has begun. An era of peace.

With his coming into the world, with his preaching, acting, his death on the cross and resurrection, his going to the father, he assures all of his disciple that they no longer live in opposition to God, the Father – but that he, the Father, lives in peace with them.

So that they are to live in peace with him.
A whole new era has begun.

No more reason for the heart to be troubled, no more reason to be afraid.

Jesus has brought peace between God and humanity –
... for all of those who are in Jesus,
... for all of those, following him in his footsteps.

::: FIVE :::

So often I think, that us humans are caught in a world where peace seems to be out absolutely of reach in so many places, in so many circumstances...

And basically , if I say peace here, I only mean: people not shooting at each other, beating each other up, knocking each others heads.

Yet, Jesus speaks about much more than that.
Jesus, as a Jew, speaks about Shalom.

Shalom is not the silence of weapons. Shalom is:
the creation resting in tranquility because ‘all
things are good’.

When Jesus says, “my peace I give to you”, he en-
ables us to live in harmony with the creator who
looks at his creation and says, “indeed, it is very
good”.

::: SIX :::

Can you hear these words?

It is important to hear them, because they are
words he speaks to you – yes, exactly to you:
“You are my creation, and you are very good.”

Jesus, through his coming into the world,
with his preaching, acting,
his death on the cross and resurrection,
his going to the father,
he assures you that you no longer live in opposi-
tion to God, the Father – but that he, the Father,
lives in peace with you.

Jesus says,

*“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.”*

Now, live as a peaceful disciple of Jesus.
Live in peace, because Jesus has restored peace
between the father and you.

*“Do not let your heart be troubled,
and do not let it be afraid.”*

::: SEVEN :::

Now, of course we realize that our world has not
simply become a place of peace – although we
are disciples of the Prince of Peace who has re-
stored peace between the Father and us.

But we are called as his disciples, as members of
his Church of Peace, to let the world know, that
God’s idea for this world is not suffering, violence
and killing.

The creators idea is a world
where peace will supersede violence and war,
where love will overtrump hate and falseness.

And we are ambassadors of this creator's idea.

Now I am not a fool – at least I don't think I am.
But I might be wrong. Even if so, the fool is very
often not the worst role to play.

In a war time like ours it may appear to be foolish
to believe that peace could be achieved other
than through brave fighting and delivering appropriate
weapons for counter strikes.

And who am I?

I never had to flee,
I never had to fight,
I never had to fear someone taking my life or my
beloved ones.

I am just one conscientious objector.

But let me, the fool, just remind us of Jesus' word:

*“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.”*

Sometimes I want to say,

I know we need to fight for justice, for the right to
live, for equality and against racism.

But please let us not forget,
that the road to peace is peace,
and that Jesus has given his life
and not taken others lives,
so that we can have peace
in our hearts, our souls – and our hands!

*“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.”*

Amen.