

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
December 4, 2016

Peace In Christ

John 14:27

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, neither let them be afraid.

1. We Need Peace

The theme of the second week of Advent is peace. This was taken from the word of Angel in Luke 2:14; “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” That is why the candle lit on the second week of Advent is called “Candle of Angle”.

“Peace” is “Shalom” in Hebrew. In Israel, people greet each other saying “Shalom”. You can use Shalom for “Good morning” “Hello” “Good-Bye” and “Good night”, so it is very useful word.

There are several meanings in “Shalom”. First, it means no contest. The human history has been a history of wars. There were wars anytime, anywhere, between the people, between countries, and among races. Even in the twenty first century, people have never changed. Therefore, “peace” is a serious prayer and wish for those who have escaped from wars, domestic wars, and firearms.

The second meaning of “Shalom” is prosperity. For the ancient people, “Shalom” meant an abundant harvest from the farm, which

was protected from drought and storm, good breeding of cattle, which was protected from diseases. For fishermen, “Shalom” might be for good catch from the ocean. In modern society, there are agriculture businesses, economy, service industries, and entertainment. “Shalom” means that these businesses will prosper and society will become financially rich and stable.

The third meaning of “Shalom” is peace of the heart or mind. This refers to a content condition without any internal conflicts. We, living in the US, are fortunately not involved in the wars or civil wars and we can enjoy material abundance. However, people never take rests and they are never spiritually content. Humans want more when their minimal necessities are satisfied. If it works to improve human nature in a good sense, that is great; however, if people compete with others and steel materials, money, social status, and power, popularity, and honor, then there is no true peace.

The CEOs, artists, whoever climb up to the top of mountains, always worried how long they can maintain their current status. Therefore, in case of private companies, some are involved in window dressing settlement or fabrication of the data; in case of artists, some steal ideas from other artists. These are the things that they should never do. In our ordinary life, we have temptation to show ourselves better and bigger than others, and we have similar anxiety and make similar sins. Even if people have all the necessities, they cannot automatically have peace. Some live in a difficult condition, but never lose hope; some live in a complete satisfaction yet live with anxiety and fear. Spiritual disorders are found in materially rich countries. As the Bible tells us, the inner peace should come from God, otherwise it

will never settle in our heart.

2. Jesus Knows Our Need

The Bible verse for this morning is the words Jesus gave to his disciples. “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, neither let them be afraid.” Jesus said this when he went to Gethsemane after Last Supper. Jesus would be caught in Gethsemane and would be hung on a cross but his disciples felt something unusual and anxiety. Jesus said to his disciples, “Let not your hearts be troubled.” As it says, their hearts were literally “be troubled” at that time.

When you feel anxiety, worried, and feared, some people say “don't worry” or “don't be fear”. Is it possible to change your mind like “Oh let's not worry” or “let's not feel fear”? Probably, no. If they say “don't worry”, then you worry more. If they say “Fear not”, then you feel fear more. This is normal. However, if they understand your anxiety or fear and feel them together, you will be encouraged by their words.

Jesus said to his disciples “Let not your hearts be troubled” but it did not mean Jesus did not know their anxiety. At this moment, Jesus knew that his death was approaching to him and he himself was “troubled”.

“Be troubled” this word is used by Jesus many times. Firstly, John 11:33 When Lazarus, Jesus' best friend, passed away, Jesus visited Bethany to see Lazarus's sisters, Martha and Mary. Mary and other people were mourning for Lazarus's death there. At that time, Jesus' heart was troubled. Jesus mourned over his friend Lazarus's death,

cried, and saw his death over the death of Lazarus. His heart was troubled.

Next, John 12:27 Jesus himself said “Now is my soul troubled”. This was few days before Jesus’ crucifixion. He knew that the death on a cross was waiting for him, and his heart was troubled.

Moreover, the same word is used in John 13:21. At the Last Supper, when Jesus gave notice of Judah’s betrayal. “After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." Jesus himself picked up the twelve disciples, and one of them was about to betray him. Jesus’ heart must be troubled.

Because Jesus himself experienced “his heart was troubled”, he can understand our anxiety and fear. He knew them as not knowledge but as experience. Therefore, he said “my heart also were in troubled” and understands our troubled heart.

According to 1 Corinthians 10:13, “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” In Japanese Bible we see a phrase, “things that people don’t know”. But, it’s “common to man” in original text. This “man” means “people”, but it makes sense if we replace this “man” to “Jesus Christ”. “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to Jesus Christ.” This is true. There is no suffering that Jesus does not know. Jesus experience any sufferings that our hearts were troubled. Loneliness, misunderstanding, slander. Jesus experienced all of them. Jesus understands any sufferings. Therefore, when our hearts were troubled,

we go to Jesus, and then we receive solution and peace.

3. Jesus Fills Our Need

However, why Jesus was “troubled” although He is the Son of God? If He was from God, He might have bravely persevered against the Passion and crucifixion. Surely, if the Passion was only persecution or sufferings, He wouldn’t have been troubled so much as described a few times in the Bible; but what He faced at the time was the power of sin and death itself.

No one properly understands “Sin” and “Death” in present generation; moreover, they might ignore the negative stuffs on purpose. However, regardless of how much our generation progresses, or if knowledge and science of mankind evolve so far away from current status, no one would overcome sin and death and no one would be saved without appropriately facing sin and death through the light of the Bible. Jesus already knew how sinful the people were very well. He knew and detected that the sin separates God and man, destroys the relationship between God and mankind, and brings all of wars and ruins into the world; He understood that death is the separation from God, in addition to the non-functioning of our bodies.

No ones could see the real status of themselves out of the self-philosophy. If you are deeply soaked in the world controlled by sin and death, you don’t see it’s not correct. Yet Jesus, the one without any sin, the Lord of Life, and the Son of God, could detect the truth and the reality of sin and death very clearly, so that Jesus was troubled because of it.

Jesus was also troubled since He understood His mission that saves

all people from sin and death, not only the reality of sin and death that are going to kill Him. He is the Son of God, the powerful one who might be able to totally destroy the sin and death; but it would also vanish all the people and the world. Then, Jesus invoked salvation over elimination of sin, and giving life to mankind over destroying death of people. Furthermore, He chose to die on the cross, shouldering the sin of mankind.

Jesus was crucified in order to let people come back to God again; Jesus made the enemies of God the children of God to be accepted. The true peace comes from this salvation of Jesus.

Nothing can give such peace to people; no insurance gives you the eternal life or resurrections –it only gives you money. This world might give you some “relief,” or just “placebo,” but “Peace” from Jesus Christ gives you the true comfort, enriches our lives, and leads the world to the truly peaceful place, as He said, “Not as the world gives do I give to you.”

Jesus said in John 14:1, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me,” and continued and promised the eternal house for believers in 14:2-3, “In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” Here is the true peace that never molds. People could have the true peace only when believing in God and living in the eternal assurance from Him.

According to the anonymous, it said, “Fear comes into our hearts without permission, loses your passion and energy, and destroy the peace of your heart.” It really is. Even when you are relieved and kept

in safety, anxiety and fear suddenly come in. That feeling can never described in words, or no one might be able to explain such troubles. However, the peace from Jesus Christ still can protect our hearts. It will be given to all the people calling for. Today, let's make it the blessed day, to call for the peace, and receive it now.

(Prayer)

Dear Father, we are very thankful for that Lord Jesus knows our anxious mind and relieves us from such negative feelings, and even from the anxieties and fears that we don't recognize yet. Let us keep calling for the peace Jesus left with us, the peace of Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.