

Peace

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[0 : 00] A little film clip for you from one of my favorite films, Grand Torino. What was it like to kill a man?

You don't want to know. Tao and Sue are never going to find peace in this world, as long as that gang's around. What are you going to do, Walt? Whatever it is, they won't have a chance. We're talking about peace. It's interesting, isn't it? I love film and media, and you know that genre, don't you, where you've paid for your popcorn, you've paid a lot of money for your popcorn. And you go there, and you sit, and what do you want to see? I want to see retribution. I want to see the good guy. I want to see the other person shrink.

I want to see justice done. And then I can walk out and think, that was a good film. And peace will reign. No. I thought it was really easy in this, thinking about our reading this morning, the scripture that Paul advocates.

[1 : 16] And when you think of actually Paul himself, where Paul had come from, Saul, to have written this scripture. Because here is Saul, who was the person who was meeting out this retribution.

That's what he was doing, day by day, week on week, as there were just persecuting Christians. And so he's on his way to Emmaus to deal out a bit of summary justice to some Christians, when all of a sudden he gets this amazing, life-transforming, peace-filled experience in the power of the Holy Spirit.

You can't get any more change and start than that. And Paul has dramatically changed from something that is a gangster into a man who is so passionate about Jesus that he can't wait to tell everybody and live it out.

Do you know, and I bet there were people that knew Saul, not as they knew Emmaus, Paul, when they met him, using that word, what a hypocrite.

Because I knew you. I know your life. And how can you change? But Paul did. And I want to encourage us this morning, in part of our series in this fruitful living, is to how we can change and maybe get rid of some of this stuff that has held us back from living in this peaceful life.

[2 : 50] I want peace in my life. But what I want to tell you is it's certainly not an absence of conflict. Because conflict will always be with us.

Whatever we do, life gives us conflict. I've been on a few retreats in my life and I have sat around with people who, in this room where we all sort of concentrate, I nearly use the word constipate, because actually there's that sense of we all are sitting around, like trying to squeeze this peace into this place, knowing that two hours later you're going to step outside into the same life that you left.

And the question is, how are we going to be transformed to live in that life where conflict is there and ever present? And I think that's what Paul is talking about and Jesus exhorts to us when he gives us this scripture.

In Psalm 119 it says, great peace have those who love your law and nothing can make them stumble. And there is something about living in that peace.

I want this peace. I cannot give peace to myself. If you have tried and you have gained and you've paid a lot of money for it, well done.

[4 : 26] But believe you me, I have tried. The peace we are talking about this morning is not about my relationship with myself. It's about my relationship with God.

And the word peace is about harmonious relationship restored. And I think that's a really important thing. Harmonious relationship restored. I have to ask the question, what is our relationship like with God this morning?

Our true relationship with God. God. Because that's what we're talking about. What is that thing that can bring us as the prince and giver of peace? What does that look like for us?

And Paul says it's about righteousness that brings peace and allows joy, as Russ said last week, allows joy to actually break out. The only way we're going to find peace is to be truly reconciled with the Father.

Paul knows the Romans that he's talking to because he is a Roman. That's he knows the culture in which he's speaking into. And he says later, therefore, since we've been justified through faith, meaning made right with God, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[5 : 39] We can have that peace. And I don't know about you, I long for that. I long for that in the conflict that I live in and the relationships that I encounter and I see.

I long to see peace come in to those situations. Bring peace. It's being right with God. And he says about abiding, abide in my love, be in that place.

It was last year that I found myself suddenly whisked into hospital with chest pain.

I thought, here we go, this is it. And I found myself in this side ward. It was very quiet and it was totally still.

And if that's where you're looking for peace, bless you. Because in that place, there was anything but peace in my heart.

[6 : 50] It was going through my mind, my goodness, who's going to preach on Sunday? Does Mandy know where my will is? Worse still, does she know how much I'm worth dead?

Anything but peace. And as an aside, my heart was fine, but my anxiety wasn't.

And sometimes we need to hand this over to God to actually give us that peace, which we will hear later the world cannot give. When the Lord turns his face towards you, we experience that faith.

And I sense that peace that we want. It says, the Lord turns his face towards you and gives you peace. I don't know what you're like when the Lord's face turns towards you.

Because my experience so often is, Lord, don't turn your face towards me because you'll actually see who I am. And that thing of, we turn our face away from God because we are ashamed.

[8 : 02] But actually, the truth is, he knows who we are already and actually longs to bring us that peace, which he longs to bring. And, you know, the thing the Lord doesn't turn towards us with his face and say, oh, look, you've really messed up.

I mean, we know that already. And the Lord turns his face towards you and says, it's okay, I love you. And I want to bring you a peace in this situation, which you may never have experienced before.

And I know you want. You know, I sense this thing that peace is not escaping from the reality of this world's issues.

And each one of us will know what that looks like in our own lives at this time. So I want to encourage you this morning that we can find that peace.

As a police officer, you used to turn up at a situation, whatever it was. It was an accident. It may well be it was a fight.

[9 : 05] A breach of the peace, as they used to say. And what were people looking to you towards? They're looking towards you to bring order into the chaos of that situation.

And as the Lord turns his face towards us and empowers us as his people, blessed are the peacemakers for us to bring order into the chaos of this world through us and into our own lives.

And I guess the world may be looking at you and me as Christians for that. So how do these Christians behave in stressful situations? How are they?

Do they argue amongst themselves? Do they fall out? Do they exude bitterness? Or do they exude love? And there is a sense of peace in what they are doing and in how they react.

It's about whatever I'm called to do. And the Lord says in Scripture, I do not leave you as orphans.

That verse really struck out to me as I was looking at this this week because I think I'd lived with an orphan heart for ages.

[10 : 16] I think I'd lived without actually knowing what the Father's love actually was for me and the peace that that could come from knowing him. And there is something about an orphaned heart and I get that.

And yet, to be filled with that peace which the world cannot give restores in many ways that beautiful relationship that he longs to have with us.

I think that thing is, I don't know whether any of you have found yourself in the mud at Western Supermare. I remember trying to retrieve my dog once and she, being a puppy, bounced more and more further out and out.

I could see her going deeper and deeper and I knew as soon as I stepped, you know, you step into that, the more you panic, the more you will sink. The more you are calm, the less you will go down. And I stood and I waited and I prayed and thought, come back. Come back from there. Come back to a solid place. Fortunately, she did.

[11:27] But it says in John 14, but the advocate of the Holy Spirit and the Father will send in my name will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

And I don't know in that place of panic, we forget time and time again in that place of panic, we forget again and again what God is saying to us and has said to us down the years.

And I don't know about you, I do that for myself. My goodness, Lord, why am I in that place? And then in verse 27, it follows and said, peace I leave with you.

my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives because we know that's a cheap peace. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

I do not give as the world gives. What does the world give to you and to me? What's it giving to you at the moment in your life?

[12:36] Anxiety, stress, pain, depression, mental health awareness week, distress, failure.

You know, the world just backs its truck up, doesn't it? Into my backyard of my life and dumps this stuff on me. And Jesus says, do not let your heart be troubled and do not be afraid.

How can you say that, Jesus? You don't know my life. Yeah, I do. I know your life better than you know it, Clive. My peace I give to you.

my peace I leave with you in the power of my Holy Spirit. We're going to learn to live in this peace when the storm comes.

Where do we access that? Where we go back again and again, my peace I give to you, my peace I leave with you. Here is the Prince of Peace and the Giver of Hope offering to give us that peace.

[13:56] If we are to be disciples and I believe if we are to be game changers and I believe many of us are being called to be that in our society, in our settings, in our community, I think we need to look at this seriously.

Because if I live in fear I wouldn't get out of bed in the morning. In fact, I probably wouldn't get into bed at night if we live in fear.

And yet his perfect peace it says drives out fear. Peace drives out fear. That hymn is it is well with my soul.

Have you ever sang that hymn? It is well with my soul. That deep sense of peace. It's okay. I am at one. His face is turned towards me.

I am at one. It is okay. I know that the world's going to chuck stuff at me, Lord, but it is okay. In Hebrews 12 it says, make every effort to be at peace with all men, I'll add in, and women as well.

[15:03] Check all your relationships are harmoniously reconciled. ouch. Do you ever have trouble with people? You know, I can live at peace with people unless, you know, I can't live at peace with people unless I have that deep sense of peace.

And as church we are a people, one people unto God. Do you know what robs me of peace? I'll tell you what my room 101 is.

It's not gender specific, but here it is. It's the number of people that have chosen the largest trolley in the supermarket and put the fewest number of items in it and then choose to lean.

Trolley leaners. Have you encountered them? And why is it they're always in the center of the aisle? I'm just here for the day.

It's time to no worry. Love the things that rob me of peace. You will have them all, I am sure.

[16:21] Lord, give me peace. Still my soul. It says to be at peace with all people, even the trolley leaners.

be at peace with all people wherever possible. And if you haven't figured out yet, and I have to admit that in a place where we feel this peace, I have to admit as a man that sometimes I am wrong.

It is a confession. As a man, I realize that I am at fault when Mandy points out to me that I am at fault, and I realize that I am wholly, unequivocally, and utterly at fault.

And if you were to browse my text messages, you will find texts that say, I am sorry, XXX.

And yet by the time I have walked from home to Christchurch of a morning, that we may have had some words before we left.

[17 : 34] And yet by the time of war, there would be no surprise to you that all is not well with my soul. It is not well with my soul, because I am not at peace with myself, because I am not at peace with those who God has brought around me, people, to love.

you know that something is not right in your soul. And a nudge says, you better get sorry, Clive, because you're not going to find that peace today until you're right with me.

Honestly, there will be those here who maybe didn't do that thing of saying sorry minutes ago, yesterday, a month ago.

and years ago. Did it cling to you, maybe as it cling to me, for years and years, and I couldn't find that peace in my soul, which the Lord wanted to give me so freely.

It's transformational, I'll tell you, it brings freedom. In any room like this, 90% of people will need to do some forgiving.

[18 : 54] the other 10%, you're either missed, you probably just don't care about upsetting people, but 90% of people have something in which they need to put right with other people.

And in a moment, we're going to ask him for that peace, that peace which the world cannot give, that is beyond our understanding. thing. But like you, I don't want this to be temporary.

I don't want this to be where we've got together this morning and then we've walked out the door and suddenly we know the moment we walk out that door that conflict's going to hit us again, that we're going to go back into settings, we're going to go back into our homes, we're going to go back to our workplace tomorrow, we're going to go to school and this will have made no difference at all. This I want for us to be lasting and transformational. About five years ago we were in Harrogate, we were at a New Wine Leaders meeting and the speaker said, well this is what I thought I heard her say, this is what I thought my heart heard her say, is if you want peace in all its fullness you have to release the resentment you hold towards others.

Now I don't know how long my list was, but the Lord did. And stuff that had stuck to me, stuff that I had hung on to, and in this big convention hall I was really pleased that I wasn't the only one.

[20 : 32] Because as she said, would you like to just come and receive that peace which the world cannot give, but also at the same time I'm not asking you to phone somebody, I'm not asking you to write a letter, I'm not asking you to go on bended knee, I just want you between you and me Clyde, between me and God to just sort this and let it go.

There's your line, because I want you to get rid of that stuff so that place can be filled with my peace which the world cannot give. love. I'm not going to tell you how long my list was, but my goodness was it mightier than I ever thought.

The Lord brought me places, faces, situations where I was not at peace. I walked out of that convention hall transformed and changed.

I know where to find peace. I know where my rock of peace is now. I will not be shaken and when the storm comes I know to that place where I go to where I find that peace which the world cannot give.

I'm just going to invite the team back up again. The disciples, those who are going to be game changers, those who are the ones that the Lord was going to call to transform this world.

[21 : 59] If I had a mirror here I'm going to turn it around as you beautiful people. People that were going to change the world, they were in a room, they were locked away, they were afraid, they had let Jesus down, they had let each other down, they didn't think that he was going to do anything for them, they were despondent, they were in fear, they were anxious, they thought that Jesus had abandoned them, they had thought they had been left alone to sort it out, and then Jesus steps in and says to them, what a bunch of losers, no, because that's what you and I, the world says to us, and Jesus steps into that place and says to them, my peace I give to you after all this happened, and my peace I leave with you.

the doors were locked in fear of what was happening, Jesus walks in and says peace be with you, why?

Because I am sending you, I am sending you, and he breathed the Holy Spirit on them and said receive my spirit, I sense that there's many here this morning like me at Harrogate who need us to hear this message this morning in order to receive that peace, that peace which the world cannot give, and as Jesus came, here he is now in the power of the spirit to say peace I leave with you, my

peace I give to you, not as the world gives, do not let your heart be troubled, I'm going to invite you now to receive that peace, to receive that peace which the world cannot give, you may be going over in your mind now and thinking there's things, there's people I can't forgive, there's situations for me that I have to, it's become part of my significance, this is who I am, I have to be angry about this, yeah, that's fine, but the Lord meets us where we are, in that anger, in that disillusionment, in that fear, whatever that might be and says as he did with the disciples, my peace I give you, my peace I leave with you.