

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Festival of Pentecost

June 5, 2022

Sermon by Pastor Jon D. Buchholz

***Rest in the peace of Pentecost***

—John 14:25-27

Just over one hundred years ago in the 1920s the world was recovering from World War I. The year 1918 saw the end of what was then called “The Great War.” It was called the war to end all wars. The League of Nations was proposed to ensure that future generations would be spared the scourge of war. Brilliant visionaries promised that the world would enter a new era of lasting, enduring peace. But it was not to be. The Great War turned out to be only the first of two World Wars. Twenty years after it ended, the world was gearing up for World War II. After that there was the Korean Conflict, and Viet Nam and Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan—and those are just the major conflicts that our nation has been involved with. Who can even keep track of the minor skirmishes in Grenada and Panama and Somalia and Bosnia? When Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24 people around the globe were asking, “How can this be happening? This is the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” But it doesn’t matter what century it is; human beings don’t change. We human beings are warlike creatures. We watch the news and think how tragic and senseless it all is. Some of it’s political, some of it’s ideological, some of it’s religious, some of it’s because of jealousy or greed. “If only people could just get along!” But we can’t. And we don’t.

And that is just really unfortunate. Because almost 2,000 years ago, on this day of Pentecost, something happened that changed forever the course of history. 50 days after Jesus rose from the dead, 10 days after he ascended into heaven, on this Festival of Pentecost, God fulfilled the promise of Jesus to send the Comforter, the Spirit of Peace. God poured his Spirit out in power upon the disciples gathered at Jerusalem, causing them to speak in tongues (foreign languages) and proclaim the powerful gospel of Christ, the world’s crucified and risen Savior. And since that time, the message of reconciliation with God and peace in human hearts has spread from Jerusalem to the farthest corners of the earth. It transformed the Roman Empire. It pierced the darkness of pagan religion with the light of truth. The gospel crushed hearts that were hardened and bitter with hatred and hostility and dispensed the gift of peace. And it still goes out today, changing hearts and lives, transcending barriers of race and culture, and offering the most precious commodity that a human being can possess: Peace with God. It’s very simple: If you know Jesus, you know peace. If you have no Jesus, you have no peace.

*“Peace, I leave with you,”* Jesus said. It wasn’t on the day of Pentecost when Jesus spoke these words to his disciples. It was the night Jesus was betrayed. Jesus was sitting with his disciples in the upper room where he had instituted the New Covenant of the Lord’s Supper, and he was telling them what was going to happen to him and to them. He was returning to the Father, but he wouldn’t be leaving them alone. He promised he would send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit; that happened 53 days later, on Pentecost. But in the meantime, he said, *“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 be afraid.”* If you think for a moment what the disciples were going to see in just the next 24 hours, you can understand why Jesus said these words. These apostles would see their Savior and their friend betrayed and seized by the Jewish authorities, put on trial in a kangaroo court, stripped and beaten and mocked, condemned by the Roman governor, and nailed to a cross between two criminals. Previously they had seen Jesus call the dead to life; now they would watch his lifeless body laid in a tomb. Jesus wanted to prepare them in advance for what they would experience, so he said: *Peace I leave with you. . . Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.* And do you know, the first time Jesus came to his disciples three days later, after he had risen from the dead, after the disciples had witnessed all this, do you know what the first thing Jesus said to his disciples was? “Peace be with you” (John 20:19). If you know Jesus, you know peace.

But what is this peace that Jesus gives? It’s more than just a calm, settled feeling. It is a ceasing of hostility between God and man. It’s God’s declaration that the war is over between him and us. Did you know that we were at war with God? Of course! Our sins had separated us from God. The commandments which we’ve broken built an impenetrable barrier of hostility between us and God. Our sinful minds were hostile toward God. That’s why Jesus came into our world: to break down the barrier of sin with his life and suffering and death and connect us with God by declaring peace. No more hostility. The angels said at Jesus’ birth, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests” (Luke 2:14).

The war’s over, folks. If you know Jesus, you know peace. So why do people keep on fighting? Why do they continue in hostility toward God? Why do they keep on fighting with one another? Well, sometimes it’s because people haven’t heard of God’s peace in Christ. It’s like the stories told about the Japanese soldiers left behind on south Pacific islands who never heard that the war had ended, and years after the war was over, they were still fighting on for the glory of their homeland. If you know Jesus, you know peace, but as the Bible says, “How can

they call upon the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Romans 10:14,15) "Who proclaim peace" (Isaiah 52:7).

The other problem is that even when people do hear of God's peace in Christ, sometimes they just want to keep on fighting. I said before that human beings are warlike creatures. The sinful mind is hostile to God (Romans 8:7). Human beings in our natural state want to keep rebelling and shaking puny, arrogant fists against our Maker, and the message of peace falls on deaf ears. God extends the olive branch to the whole world. With open and outstretched arms he says, "Lay down your arms. Set aside your hostility. Repent of your sins, leave behind the deeds of darkness, and walk in the way of peace. Be reconciled! Be at peace through my Son Jesus." But where Jesus is rejected and driven out and crucified anew, there is no peace. No Jesus, no peace.

The peace that Jesus gives, the peace that he gave to his disciples on the night he was betrayed, the peace that was confirmed as the Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost, the peace of Jesus is completely different from what the world commonly calls peace. Jesus says, "*Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.*" In the world, a peace treaty is often only superficial that masks over the seething hostility underneath. The peace treaty after World War I was so harsh in its terms it virtually guaranteed that another World War would follow. They've been signing peace treaties over and over again in the Middle East, and they might not be lobbing grenades and missiles at each other at the moment, but a lot of people over there still hate each other. Peace in this world is only superficial. Jesus' peace is different from worldly peace.

Rest in the peace of Pentecost! The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, speaks peace to your heart. It's the peace of having your sins forgiven. It's the peace of knowing that Jesus has rescued you from hell. It's the peace of knowing God's love. It's the peace of living without fear. It's peace that takes away your anxieties because you know God's in control. Perhaps you find yourself struggling financially, maybe wondering how you're going to pay off your credit card debt or your student loans. Peace! The Lord will provide. Put him first, trust him, follow him, and be at peace. These past weeks we have said good-bye to several of our members whom the Lord has taken home to heaven. Those losses leave huge holes behind in our hearts, but they don't undermine our peace because we look forward to a reunion with our loved ones in heaven. When you're facing surgery, and you're lying on the operating table waiting to go under, isn't it nice to have the peace of Jesus ruling your heart, knowing that no matter what the outcome, it's going to turn out great? Peace! As our congregation looks ahead to a tremendous undertaking with our building project, I'm tempted to be a little apprehensive. Nervous, even. This is a big challenge. But God is bigger than our biggest challenge. Peace! The Lord is near. Don't be anxious about anything, the apostle tells us. The Bible calls it the peace that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7).

Rest in the peace of Pentecost! Peace with God, peace with one another. When Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you," he gave you and me the gift of peaceful Christian homes. Not homes that are characterized by fighting and bitterness and yelling and hostility, but homes where the peace of Christ rules supreme. When Jesus' peace rules your heart you won't get sucked into road rage on the highways, but as the apostle tells us in Romans, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18). You won't be fanning the flames of discord at the office, but you'll remember Jesus' words, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).

It's a shame that human beings still continue to foster wars and rumors of wars, and it's going to be that way until the end of time, but it's still a shame, because 2,000 years ago, the Holy Spirit, the dove of peace was given in power to the disciples. The Comforter, the Spirit of truth has been given to you. Rest in the peace of Pentecost! Amen.