

*A New World- Week 1*  
*"So You May Have Peace"*  
John 16:19-33 NIV

We're living in an unprecedented time in American history. The likes of which we haven't seen since the civil rights movement of the 1960's, and a pandemic like we haven't seen since the Spanish Flu of the early 1900's. There seems to be this persistent question of "What's next?" What's going to be the next unexpected twist in the unusual year that 2020 is shaping up to be. With all of this anxiety ramped up by the 24- hour news cycle, it's hard to find peace.

As if to make things worse, the very nature of this illness is making peace harder to find. Our comforting routines, even the parts we sometimes don't like, lend a rhythm to the week and to the day. However, for more than two months, everything but the most essential of places were shut down, forcing parents to home school children, often while being expected to work from home, and forcing all of us to embrace a slower and less social way of life. Even churches were shut down, with some churches giving online options and others like Oak Grove giving options to worship from home, we missed being together as the body of Christ.

Even now, not everything is settled. We still have to wear masks to keep ourselves and others safe. In the time we've been gone Reverend Paula has retired and you now have this new guy to get to know. We'd be forgiven for asking "When will anything get back to normal?" That, for me, is the purpose of this series I'm titling "A New World." If everything were to go back to the patterns of "normal" from February, we risk missing some important lessons God has for us from this time, and we'll be all the poorer for it.

It's hard, however, to see the lesson while you're living through the hardship. Often our search for peace ends up looking more like a search for the emergency stop button so we can escape all the stuff that's ruining our peace. This, I believe, is where we find the apostles in today's reading from the book of John. This scene happens on the night of the Passover celebration, just a short time before Jesus is arrested. By this time Jesus had predicted his death and shown them His Godhood several times, but

somehow they're still missing it. However, in typical Jesus fashion, He doesn't make everything clear, bringing out a beautiful metaphor about childbirth that would only make sense to them later. But slowly they begin to understand and in verse 32 Jesus reveals the coming days to them. He tells them what they don't yet believe, that they would scatter and separate, leaving Christ alone with the Father.

Of course, this is what would happen, Christ would be arrested, convicted, and crucified and the authorities were looking, suspiciously at his followers. They, seeing the death of their teacher, scattered.

The days that followed would be hard for the apostles. Many of them had given up everything to follow Jesus and had just watched Him be put to death by the Roman authorities.

Everything has changed in the lives of these people and suddenly, it seemed to be over. Where, they were desperately asking, "Would they find peace?"

The answer is there in that final verse of the chapter. First, He begins by telling them that he'd told them all these things that were to come, so that they may have peace. Let's sit on that one for a moment. 2020 has been an unusually eventful year already. If someone who you trusted told you that America would have an economic collapse in October similar to the one Germany had between the World Wars, would that bring you peace? Of course not! It's not like foreknowledge would allow you to stop it. So Jesus is telling the apostles that everything is about to change, and it's supposed to give them peace?

The secret is what comes next. "In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have overcome the world."

So where did the apostles find their peace? It wasn't from the system that arrested and killed Jesus for preaching peace; it wasn't the world around them that treated the like outsiders.

The secret to their peace would be made clear three days later when that tomb was found empty. Jesus had overcome the world, Jesus had overcome the corrupt systems, Jesus had even overcome the natural process of death.

For the apostles, the world would give them trouble again and again. Many would be jailed or killed for their beliefs. But they had a promise that

was so much bigger than all that. They have a savior that overcame the world and promised His followers a place beside Him and the Father in Heaven.

The promise of peace that comes after the storm.

That, my friends, is the same promise we have today.

If you wait until everything is right in the world to try and find peace, you'll never find it. Covid-19 will pass, but something else will always follow. You will have trouble in this life.

Our peace does not come from a lack of troubles.

Our peace is a Kingdom promise, a promise that there is calm after the storm.

But the kingdom is not only a place we dream of when we ascend to glory. Each week you've prayed the Lord's Prayer together and in it recited "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven." We are called to help bring elements of the kingdom to fruition here on earth.

So how can we bring this Kingdom promise of peace into this chaotic world? By being sowers of peace, agents of mercy, and founts of forgiveness and grace wherever we go.

So how is it with your soul today?

When you look for peace, where do you expect to find it? When others see you, do they see a place of mercy and grace in a world of criticism and easy blame?

In the new world that's rising from this tumultuous year, it's all the more important for us to remember that Christ is our true source of peace and we are called to be agents of His grace, giving a taste of that peace to the world around us.

Amen?

**Discussion/Contemplation Question:**

How can I be a more effective sower of peace this week?

**Benediction:**

And now go, as the Body of Christ and agents of His grace. May you be, wherever you go, a welcome respite from the storms of this world. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen