



Loved to the End

The First Week of Lent

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

John 14:27 (NIV)

Jesus gave His disciples this astonishing command—do not let your hearts be troubled—in the midst of delivering a host of troubling pronouncements. He has just told them that one of them would betray Him, that He was leaving them for a place they couldn't follow. He has made the gutting statement that Simon Peter will deny Him. He goes on to tell them they will be hated and persecuted.

Yet, interwoven with all that bad news is much good news. He tells His disciples that He is preparing a home with the Father for them, that they are loved by God, that they will have His peace, that they will not be left orphaned, and best of all, that He will return.



Nevertheless, things look pretty dire in the immediate future. Even so, He tells them to not let their hearts be troubled. Is that even possible?

Well, yes, it has to be. Because Jesus didn't give commands that could not be followed.

Our lives are chock-full of reasons to be disturbed, from the global issues of war, disease, and natural disasters to the personal woes of difficult jobs, family problems, and health crises. We all face discouragements, trials, and hardships. Yet Jesus tells His modern-day disciples the same thing He told His first-century His followers: "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

Fear is natural; being disturbed in the face of trouble is natural. So how can Jesus expect us, even command us, to go against human nature? He can ask it of us because of what He said first: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you."

We can stand against our trembling, troubled human nature because Jesus gives us the gift of peace. He doesn't zap us with a magic wand and POOF! we never worry again. Jesus holds His peace out before us, but like every gift, we need to receive it. And then we have to remember we have it. We need to keep coming back to Jesus weekly, daily, hourly, even moment by moment, and asking Him to remind our forgetful hearts that He has given us His peace.

And with His peace, our hearts are calm, and we are not afraid.



What fears, trouble, or worries am I facing today?

What can I do right now to remind myself of the peace Jesus has for me?

Exercise:

1. Lift this exercise up to the Lord, asking Him to highlight what He wants you to notice.
2. Read the passage to the right, stopping at any words or phrases that catch your attention. Sit with the word or phrase, meditating on it and asking God to show you why this word or phrase caught your attention. After you've meditated on the thing that caught your attention, continue reading the passage, stopping at any other words or phrases that strike you, and discussing with the Lord what you've noticed.
3. Take a few moments to sit quietly before moving on to the next step.
4. Slowly read the passage a second time, again pausing when something catches your attention. This time ask God to show you what He wants you to know or do in light of the word or phrase that you've noticed. Wait to hear what the Lord may put into your heart or mind. (You may sense a strong impression or just what seems to be a fleeting thought. Don't dismiss anything.)
5. Take a few moments to sit quietly before moving on to the next step.
6. Slowly read the passage a third time, just letting God's Word soak into you.
7. Finally, sit quietly for a bit, and allow God to continue to work in you.

Selections from John 14

¹ "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

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¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

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²⁶ ... the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."