

THE BLESSINGS OF GOD'S WORD!

²³ Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴ Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

²⁵ "All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶ But 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.

²⁸ "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.

Can you imagine if only 17% of the people believed you? There is a fire in an apartment complex. What would happen if only 17% believed you when you warned them about the fire? It means 83% of the people will die. There was a poll taken at the University of Minnesota. 83% of those who took the poll said the world came to be by an evolutionary process, and only 17% believed it happened by creation. How frustrating that must be for God, that 83% of the people call him a liar. And if they don't believe he created the universe, what else don't they believe?

We can muse and philosophize on why this is the case. But Jesus gives us one answer in our text. ²⁴ **Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.** People don't listen to him because they don't love or respect him or the Father. Martin Luther put it so well in his explanation of the Third Commandment. Either you despise preaching and God's Word, or you gladly hear and learn it. Period.

You know that. That is why you are here today. You love God, so you want to listen to him. To show you are not wasting your time, Jesus tells us the blessings of his Word. Through it the love of the Father, the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and the peace of Jesus will be with you always.

I. May the love of the Father be with you always.

"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." The Greek word for "obey" here literally means to guard or keep. We have a fireproof box at home. In it we keep papers we don't want to lose in a fire. We don't keep scraps of junk mail, but important papers. That is what it means to obey here; it means to guard and protect and cherish what is most important to us, God's Word. You don't throw it away as junk mail. You keep it safe in your heart.

And it is through this Word that something special happens: you will see how much the Father loves you. If you didn't listen to the Word, you would know a little about God, as much as creation is willing to tell you, but you would be convinced that God doesn't always love you. If he did, then why does he let there be wars and murders, and why do bad things happen to good people? But God tells us how much he loves us. We don't understand many things, one thing we do know: God's love is always there and is always behind everything. Count on it.

And it means that God lives in you. Look at your house. Imagine who lived there before you. Imagine who will live there after you. There are some homes in town, however, who had occupants who didn't take so good of care of their homes. Imagine moving into a rundown house. Now imagine your bodies, yourselves, like a house. Who lives in you now? God the Father does. For most, he took up residence back in your Baptism and has been slowly improving and maintaining you. Who lived there before? The devil, and how do you think he treats your house? Will the devil sacrifice his Son to save you? No. Will he keep the place spic and span? No. Do you want him living in you? No. So the Lord moves in. He will improve, protect, save you. He does this through his Word. But the Father is not the only one who moves in. He brings the Holy Spirit who now comforts you.

II. May the comfort of the Spirit be with you always!

²⁶ **But 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.**

Who gives you advice on your investments and retirement accounts? Who gives you advice on the Bible and all things spiritual? Pastors and teachers are called to do that. But it is not really us. What we do is take you to the one who is the true advisor. We do this by sharing God's Word and let God the Holy Spirit do his work. Jesus promises us the Holy Spirit whenever and wherever his Word is used. And the Spirit doesn't evaporate once we close the Bible for the evening. He will also remind us of things we have learned and believed from the Bible. Again, in the Greek, the word has the idea of someone walking beside you talking, counseling, teaching you things.

He is the one who created faith even when you were baptized as infants, and he has been with you since. He is like a translator. What God says would be gibberish to the us. We would understand the words, but not believe them. But we can say Jesus is Lord because of the Holy Spirit. And he will go alongside you, teaching, reminding, encouraging you. It says that the fruits of the Spirit are things like patience, joy and kindness. We do these things because he is moving and urging us on to do such things. He is our comforter as these Words of God drive away guilt, fear, loneliness. And when a member feels better after hearing a passage, it is the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Your pastor want to be a big part of your lives. Your Lutheran school teacher or Sunday School teacher want to be a big part of your life. We share, teach, and advise you from the Bible. But the best thing we can do is share the Word and let the Holy Spirit do his work. And where is he leading us? To Jesus and his peace.

III. May the peace of the Savior be with you always!

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.**

The world talks a lot about peace. But the world doesn't really understand peace. One historian has estimated that in about 6000 years of recorded history, around 200 of those years had no wars! The United Nations says that there are 15 wars and 36 other conflicts going on today. There are more wars than that. There are wars at the workplace where employees all compete with each other for that job, or the conflict between management and the workforce. There are wars in every household as a brother or sister gets into a fight or a husband and wife have an argument. There are wars on the road as people cut in front of each other. There is the war between the criminal and law enforcement, the war against drugs, the war against poverty, you name it. If any peace is established at all, it is temporary and is soon broken.

And then there is the war between sinful man and God. The sinful mind is hostile to God. I am bothered by the behavior of so many people around us. But I am not surprised. Dogs will bark, birds will chirp, and sinners will sin, that is, do the opposite of what God wants. The question is, "Am I bothered by the sin I see in my own life?" Sinful man and God are in conflict. They are at war. And who is winning the war against God? Just look at the cemeteries and you have your answer.

But there is a peace. Did you catch it in our text? Two little letters, a simple possessive pronoun. Jesus says, "MY peace." It is a peace only Jesus can give. It is created by forgiveness. If I accidentally ran over your mailbox, and you told me not to worry about it, you just forgave me. You are not going to make me pay for it; but someone has to, and that someone is you. You will go to the store and buy a new mailbox and put it up. That is forgiveness. You don't make the other person pay. You pay it yourself.

Forgiveness comes only when God pays the price, and Jesus is that price when he was condemned and cursed and died in our place. Now there is forgiveness, and because there is forgiveness, there is peace. That peace is real. ²⁷ **Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.** It might better to translate this as, **Peace I leave as an inheritance to you.** When Jesus spoke these words, he was within hours of dying on the cross. He promised to leave peace behind. We have nothing to worry about. Even when Jesus is no longer physically with us, we are at peace. Even if things go from bad to worse, we are at peace. That set back, that disease, that depression does not affect the peace you have nor is it a reflection on God and whether he loves you or not. You are at peace because these will one day go away. I will let Paul illustrate that peace. While in prison, Paul said, **To live is Christ, and to die is gain.** Death was only gain. To go on living was fine, too, because it meant more time to serve God. See what "his" peace does? Bring into the marriage, the family, the workplace. Can you imagine this peace on the roads and highways? Wouldn't it be something to have this peace in government and politics?

Beware, however, not everyone loves God and so not everyone will listen to him. You may have this peace thrown back at you. So be it. We will keep trying because we are at peace with Jesus. And it is a peace that will keep us strong until Christ returns. ²⁸ **"You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.** ²⁹ **I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.** Jesus didn't leave us behind. He is still with us to shepherd us all the way. He is coming back for you. He has left this peace behind to keep afloat at all times while we still live in a broken world.

You are here today because you love God and want to "obey" his teaching. I pray you are not disappointed. In that Word you see the love of the Father, the comfort of the Spirit, and the Peace of Jesus is with you always. Now, depart in peace. Amen.