

In friendship,

Trevor

Brother Juniper sat on the familiar brick wall between the sidewalk and Triune Mercy Center, the morning sun warming his shoulders through his patched brown robe. Beside him sat James, whose beard held crumbs from breakfast and whose eyes held stories he didn't always speak. María, an undocumented mother of two who cleaned houses by day and hid in shadows by night, stood nearby, her back pressed against the wall, arms crossed but open to the moment. A few others leaned in, drawn by the scent of coffee and the quiet gravity of a person who listened more than he spoke.

Brother Juniper opened the worn Bible he carried in his backpack and read aloud, voice soft but clear.

“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 let them be afraid.” — John 14:27

María looked at him wearily. “Peace? What peace, hermano? Every day I walk with fear — fear of ICE, fear of losing my kids, fear.

James nodded. “They hand us blankets at the shelter and call that peace. They tell us to be quiet, stay clean, stay sober. But what about real peace?”

Brother Juniper smiled gently, closing the Bible and resting it on his lap. “Jesus was talking about a different kind of peace. Not the kind that comes from locks on doors or money in banks. He was talking about the peace of knowing you are beloved. That even when the empire wants you silent or gone, the kingdom of God says, ‘You belong.’”

An older man named Willie, who'd been watching pigeons in the parking lot, turned toward him. "You talkin' about that upside down kingdom again?"

Juniper chuckled. "Yes, Brother Willie. The kingdom where the last are first, where the hungry are filled, and the poor are blessed. The kingdom where an undocumented mother is more honored than a CEO. Where a man sleeping under a bridge is closer to the heart of God than a politician in gold cufflinks."

María's eyes welled up, but she didn't look away. "So what do we do with this peace, Juniper? Just hold it in while the world stays the same?"

"No," he said. "We share it. We practice it. We become peacemakers in a world addicted to power. That's the real revolution. That's the upside down way. Not with fists or walls or fear. But with mercy, welcome, and courage. Even if our hands shake."

A breeze stirred through the trees above Triune. Somewhere, a siren wailed. But here, for a moment, there was stillness.

James reached into his coat and pulled out a half sandwich. "You want some, Brother?"

Juniper accepted it. "Yes, thank you. Let's break bread in peace."

And in that small communion, on that humble brick wall, the upside down kingdom drew near.

Sermon Title: "Peace Not As the World Gives"

Text: John 14:25-27

Preacher: Brother Juniper at Triune Mercy Center, Greenville, SC

Word Count: ~1500 words

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[Scripture Reading: John 14:25–27 (NRSV)]

“I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. 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 let them be afraid.”

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Beloved family of Triune Mercy Center, peace to you. You are God’s child. You are always welcome here.

Today we are together—housed and unhoused, documented and undocumented, Black, brown, and white, queer and straight, rich and poor - on the doorstep of something sacred: Jesus’ final words of love and promise. His voice still echoes in this space, across the sidewalk, above the city buses, and through the heavy stories we carry.

This is a hard passage, because it was spoken in a hard moment. Jesus was about to leave. His friends were about to scatter. The cross was near. And into that heartbreak and confusion, Jesus gave a gift—peace—but not just any peace. He says, “My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.”

Today I want to speak about that unworldly peace. That upside-down peace. That liberating, justice-making, truth-telling, freedom-fighting peace of Jesus. A peace that does not settle for the absence of conflict but demands the presence of justice.

Three points this morning:

The Peace of Jesus is a Disruptive Peace

The Peace of Jesus is a Comforting Companion

The Peace of Jesus is a Call to Action

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1. The Peace of Jesus is a Disruptive Peace

The world gives peace like a landlord gives an eviction notice: paper-thin and full of threat. The world offers peace through militarized borders, gated communities, prison bars, and predatory loans. But Jesus is not handing out that kind of peace.

Jesus says, “Not as the world gives do I give to you.” His peace breaks the world’s mold. His peace topples empire, just like Mary sang when she said, “He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly.” His peace overturns tables in the temple, not just to cause a scene, but to make space for the poor to pray.

John Howard Yoder, the Mennonite theologian who spent his life insisting that Jesus meant what he said in the Sermon on the Mount, calls this kind of peace “revolutionary subordination.” That’s not a peace that rolls over and says nothing. It’s a peace that resists the violence of empire with the endurance of the cross. Yoder says Jesus’ refusal to fight back violently was not passivity—it was a deeper resistance. It’s saying to Caesar: “You can crucify me, but you can’t claim me.”

This is why Black sharecroppers like Fannie Lou Hamer could stand at a mic with trembling voice and thunder in her bones and say, “I am sick and tired of being sick and tired.” She said it in a world that wanted her to be quiet. To go along. To settle for scraps of peace handed out by white supremacy. But she knew the peace of Jesus burns in the bones. It’s a peace that sings freedom spirituals in jail cells and walks dusty roads to voter registration offices.

This disruptive peace says:

It’s not okay for the rich to feast while the poor go hungry.

It’s not okay to lock up fathers and deport mothers.

It’s not okay to pretend racism is a thing of the past.

Jesus’ peace tears the veil off the false peace of comfort and calls out the violence of silence. It disturbs before it heals.

Jesus peace.

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2. The Peace of Jesus is a Comforting Companion

Let me tell you something that might surprise you: Jesus is not handing out peace like a ticket to heaven. He’s giving peace like a friend gives you a blanket on a cold night.

He says, “The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, will teach you... and remind you of what I have said.” In other words, you’re not alone in this struggle. Peace is not a solitary task. It’s a Spirit-filled, community-rooted, long-walk-together kind of thing.

And that’s where the Holy Spirit comes in. Not as a ghostly guest, but as a companion. A reminder. A whisperer of truth when we forget. The Spirit reminds us of Jesus’ words: Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice.

Gustavo Gutiérrez, the father of liberation theology, puts it this way: “The peace of Christ is not the peace of resignation, but of hope.” It is the peace of God walking with the poor in their poverty. It is God in the refugee shelter, in the prison chapel, in the ICE detention center, under the tent on the edge of town. Gutiérrez says that salvation is not an escape from history, but an embrace of it. Peace comes when God accompanies the least and the last.

So when you’re tired of fighting to survive, when your record keeps you from finding a job, when your skin color gets you followed in a store, when your queerness makes your family ashamed of you—hear this: You are not alone.

Peace is not a vacation. It’s a presence. It’s Emmanuel—God with us.

At Triune, peace smells like coffee in the dining hall and sounds like laughter between people who used to be enemies. It’s a volunteer washing feet and someone who slept in the woods reading Scripture. That’s not just kindness. That’s the Spirit at work, teaching us again what Jesus meant.

Jesus peace.

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3. The Peace of Jesus is a Call to Action

Jesus doesn't say, "Here's my peace, now sit still and wait." He says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid." Why would he say that? Because peace isn't just something you feel. It's something you live.

It takes courage to live this kind of peace in a violent world.

The world says, "Mind your business." But peace says, "Stand up when someone's rights are being taken."

The world says, "That's not your problem." But peace says, "If your sibling is hungry, it is your problem."

The world says, "Keep the peace." But Jesus says, "Make the peace. Be a peacemaker."

In the Beatitudes, Jesus blesses the peacemakers—not the peacekeepers. There's a big difference.

Fannie Lou Hamer knew that. She said, "Nobody's free until everybody's free." She wasn't asking for calm. She was demanding justice. That is peacemaking. That is what it means to embody the upside-down kingdom of God.

So what does it look like to answer the call of peace today?

It might mean sheltering someone who has no papers and no protection.

It might mean marching in protest when another Black life is taken.

It might mean confessing privilege, refusing nationalism, and proclaiming the radical hospitality of Jesus.

Yoder calls the church a “political people.” Not partisan, but committed. Our politics are cross-shaped. And in that shape, we say no to domination and yes to solidarity.

Jesus peace.

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Conclusion: Peace Be With You

Let me end with this:

On a brick wall just outside these doors, I often sit with friends who don’t have keys in their pockets or names on mailboxes. And I’ve seen peace there—the real kind.

Peace that passes understanding.

Peace that feeds someone else with the little they have.

Peace that trusts God when the world has offered nothing but pain.

Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you.”

It's not the peace of empire. It's not the peace of indifference. It's not the peace of silence.

It's the peace of a revolutionary rabbi who ate with sinners, touched lepers, wept at graves, and still forgave those who crucified him.

It's the peace of the cross. The peace of resurrection. The peace that says love is stronger than death.

So to you, my beloved family at Triune:

To the one who has no roof tonight—Jesus' peace is for you.

To the one who fears deportation—Jesus' peace is with you.

To the one ashamed of their past—Jesus' peace holds you.

To the one fighting for justice—Jesus' peace empowers you.

Jesus peace.

Do not be troubled.

Do not be afraid.

You are God's child.

And you are always welcome here.

Amen.