

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

Our Lord Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you." He said this during what we call the farewell discourse, not really a last will and testament, but among his last words before his crucifixion.

Brothers and sisters, there's irony in these words of Jesus, he's trying to comfort his disciples as they are beginning anticipatory mourning, mourning Jesus' coming death. Jesus was shortly to die one of the most violent and demeaning deaths known to humanity, and his death was going to cause great fear, mourning, and anxiety in his disciples, more so than they had ever encountered before. "Peace I leave with you."

As I look at our confirmation students, and graduates, I know I am of the same generation, roughly the same age, as your grandparents. And those of us in my generation have seen a lot of violence, incredibly deadly and destructive riots in our own nation, even worse conflict and war in and between other nations. My young friends, you yourselves have lived through some deadly conflict in your time.

Some of this has happened despite the voice of pastors and priests, responsible leaders, as well as everyday citizens, calling for reason, for calm, for peace. So this morning we ask Jesus how can there be peace in the midst of all the violence, destruction, death and everything else that's going on in the world?

Jesus tells us "Peace I leave with you: my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives." This peace from Jesus isn't necessarily the absence of strife, the absence of hostility, because he gives what the world cannot give. Jesus gives peace that finds stability in the midst of instability, peace that can turn what Martin Luther King Jr. called "dark yesterdays into oases of tomorrow."

This peace of Jesus isn't a peace like the world brings, it's not dependent upon prestige or power or possessions or personal pleasure for that matter. It's not a peace that can come from prestige in the social world or material affluence, it's not peace that's derived from the idea that he or she who dies with the most wins. The happiness and or satisfaction that comes from lots of stuff is transient, it doesn't last, to get that illusion of peace back, you need to acquire even more stuff.

And on and on it goes, once you analyze the benefits and liabilities of striving for constant upward mobility, you realize it simply doesn't pay. Even if the world through corporations, advertising and social media says it does pay, that it's worth it.

My young brothers and sisters in Christ, all of my brothers and sisters in Christ, it's time to claim the peace that Jesus gives. "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.” Claim this peace, pray “let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.”

I challenge you to engage in peacemaking, renounce the forces that oppose the kingdom of God, the devil and all his empty promises. Announce in your words and your lives the good news of God in Christ Jesus, Christ is risen, because to announce the good news is to denounce the bad news that world brings. Ask yourself what God requires of you as you go on from this confirmation day, a day when you make for yourself the promises that your parents, godparents, and the congregation made the day you were baptized. What does God require of you? It is to do justice. It is to love and do kindness. It is to walk humbly with our God.

AMEN