

“Love is All That Matters”

Acts 16:9-15, John 14:23-29

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Let me begin my message sharing a background of our second Scripture reading. After Jesus resurrected from the dead, he appeared to his disciples many times and showed them his resurrected body. Then, he told his disciples that he was ready to return back to the heavenly Father. Now, Jesus’ disciples were facing difficulty to continue Christ’s ministry without his presence. Jesus mentioned two things: The Holy Spirit and Peace. After he goes to the Father, God will send the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit will help disciples to understand and remember the love of God. Jesus gives them a special gift of peace. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.” This morning, I would like to invite you to learn more about the promise of the Holy Spirit and peace within us.

God loves us. Jesus’ ministry was to assure people that God loves us no matter who we are. Christian people experienced and witnessed God’s sacrificial act of love **through Jesus Christ’s life, death and resurrection.** Jesus Christ came to us as the incarnation of God’s love. Jesus’ disciples wanted Jesus to stay forever with them. But time was coming for him to leave and go back to the Father. Jesus teaches his disciples and reminded them that the Holy Spirit will come and guide his disciples to understand the love of God and the presence of peace. I can imagine how hard Jesus’ absence affected his disciples and made them feel fearful. Let me share an example. My baby, Jacob sleeps alone in his bedroom. Every morning, he wakes us up calling us like alarm clock. “Mommy! Daddy!” If we do not answer him right away, he keeps crying until we are there for him! He always makes sure that parents are in sight. Some day, there will be a moment that we, parents, leave him, and he has to learn to be independent to live alone! But for now, he also calls us whenever he needs us. Parents’ job is to provide his needs and give him a sense of security. In a similar way, for those who were afraid of the loss of Christ’ presence, he gave them peace. Jesus said, “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 be afraid.”

The Gospel of John emphasizes two important things in his understanding of Christ; Those are love and peace. Love comes out of a solid relationship experience in peace. Without experience of peace, there is no love in our heart. Someone said, **“Breathe in peace, breathe out love.”** Just as the Father God

lives in the Son and the Son Jesus lives in the Father, so the Holy Spirit will continue to live in each of us. The Holy Spirit will continue to keep us and guide us to feel the presence of Jesus Christ through the special gift of peace.

A German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes God's unconditional love for us in his book "Life Together": It is the grace of the Gospel, which is so hard for the pious to understand, that it confronts us with the truth and says: You are a sinner, a great, desperate sinner; now come, as the sinner that you are, to God who loves you.

He wants you as you are. He does not want anything from you, a sacrifice, a work. He wants you alone. God has come to you to save the sinner. Be glad! This message is liberation through truth. You can hide nothing from God. The mask you wear will do you no good before Him. He wants to see you as you are. He wants to be gracious to you. You do not have to continue to lie to yourself and your brothers and sisters, as if you were without sin; you can dare to be a sinner, because God sees us with unconditional love. Thank God for that!

How is your soul? Are you at peace? Recently some of us have experienced the death of a loved one. We are still grieving over the loss of a loved one's departure from our place. And some of us are anxiously praying for our church family and relatives who are struggling with terminal illness. In our life journey, there are so many worries, fears, and anxious thoughts that threaten to take away our peace. We may be restless every night. As Psalm 23 describes, "We feel that we walk through the darkest valley every day. We feel that there is no hope and we may want to give up." But we can also remember the following verses, "The Lord is my shepherd. I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and staff, they comfort me. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life. I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Our Christian faith doesn't say that our house will be void of suffering and difficulties, but reminds us that God's peace will be with us and comfort us in the midst of our suffering and hard times. Our life is full of stresses, sufferings and stumbles. It is not wise to continue our journey without God's peace in our hearts. I hope that you will receive the Holy Spirit and peace that Jesus gives to each of us. God gives us peace to continue to live our lives through the faithful guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit takes away fear and brings us peace. Believe in the promise of the Holy Spirit and you will never be alone on your journey of faith. Amen.