

NEW SERENITY PRAYER
July 17, 2016 –John 14: 25-27
“...my peace I give to you...” v. 27
The Church of the Covenant

I think we are all familiar with what is referred to as The Serenity Prayer, by Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971), the great Reformed Theologian:

God grant me the
SERENITY
To accept the things I cannot change:
COURAGE
To change the things I can:
WISDOM
To know the difference.

This is used in AA meetings but it has a far, far greater use for all of us as we go through times of stress, change, loss in our lives. So where does **serenity** come from in life? Where does peace come from? Where does our happiness and joy abide? It is the question we explore together today...

First, it does not come from outward circumstances. It does not come from other people. As in, “You did this terrible thing to me and therefore I am blaming you for my lack of serenity.” It does not come from other people trying to make you happy; other people can never make you happy. People-pleasers think they can make other people happy if they just try hard enough, but they never can. It doesn’t come from everything going right in your life, as if life and God Himself owes you to make every bump in the road easy. That’s not the way life is. If you rely on outward circumstances and other people to give you peace you will be always disappointed. Serenity does not come from outward circumstances, it comes from within. Serenity does not come from other people; it comes from our own heart and soul.

Second, peace does not come from things, from inanimate objects. The world tries to trick us to believe that happiness, joy and peace and serenity come from things like cars or houses or possessions. We lust after them first in our heart and then acquire them and for one brief and fleeting moment we are happy, only to discover that happiness is immediately gone. The peace is fleeting; here in one second and gone the next. Inanimate objects can never hope to satisfy a spiritual hunger in the soul of every human being, placed there by the God who made us.

Third, there is no gimmickry to serenity. No magic words. No magic wand. No quick fix. No pill to swallow and *voila!* Instant serenity. Perhaps you remember a particular Seinfeld episode, you know, the show about NOTHING. It is where George Constanza, who was always stressed out about everything and always kvetching around about all things, who was the height of a lack of serenity, learned that if you just said “Serenity Now” you would receive it. And of course as the episode unfolded he more and more needed to shout out loud “Serenity NOW!” The more he shouted, the less peace he possessed. Serenity does not come from gimmicks; it comes from the human heart. As human beings, we will try every gimmick and then we will try God...

So where does serenity come from? If not from other people and outward circumstances, if not from our things, our idolatries, our experiences and possessions, if not from some quick fix program or some pill or some self-medicating behavior and these mantras and behaviors repeated over and over again only serve to make it worse...then whence cometh our peace? When in doubt, return to the instruction

book that God has placed there to bless our lives. When in doubt, ask the scriptures to show us whence cometh our peace. So what does the Bible say? Simple. We make it complex; God's burden is light.

Jesus is discussing last things with His disciples and all this is recorded in the 14th chapter of the Gospel of John. These last things are all *important* things; He is emphasizing them to the beloved disciples whom He loves at the very end of His earthly life. Jesus tells them that He is sending the "Counselor", the Holy Spirit to come and to teach them all things. The Bible records Jesus telling that the peace of which He speaks comes from the Holy Spirit. Then He gives them a great and a mighty promise. He promises them: "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you*" (John 14: 27) Jesus promises us peace. And please note He says it is "MY peace" I give you; the peace which Jesus offers is HIS peace; Jesus' peace comes from HIM; Jesus' peace comes from His presence in our life brought to us by the Holy Spirit. The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, comes and brings us the peace of Christ. This is where Jesus' peace comes from. And He is also clear as He says, "*not as the world gives do I give to you (peace)*" (v. 27) His peace doesn't come from outward circumstances; His peace doesn't come from other people; His peace doesn't come from obsessively accumulating things; His peace doesn't come from a pill or a quick fix solution. No, no, no –HIS PEACE, the PEACE of the Prince of PEACE, comes from HIM, through the Holy Spirit. That's what Jesus so clearly states. Then, therefore, you can "*Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*" (John 14: 27) In the midst of the troubles of life we may have peace, because peace doesn't come from the world, our peace comes from Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

So this past Saturday my Dad had been sent home to die under Hospice Care. I had worked so hard to get my home ready to bring both him and Mother home to live with me. Every house I have ever bought I bought with them in mind to bring them home with me. And of course I thought I had more time. We always think we have more time. And it was so clear that it just wasn't going to work the way I had hoped and planned. The stair lift wasn't going in until next week. The son was too slow on the project. When we talked earlier that week I momentarily saw written on Dad's face his disappointment that he wasn't going to come home to live with me. So I was having one of those great Father-Son talks with my Dad. And I was telling him how I had blown it, and I was so hoping he would be able to come home and live with me, and how nothing seemed to be working out the way I had hoped, and how I felt that his son had let him down. And then Dad so tenderly reached up his hand from the hospital bed now in my parent's dining room, and he so tenderly touched my face and he said, "Its OK. I know you love me. You know I love you." And all of the pain and the frustration and pent up emotion all passed away in an instant. I had peace. I had serenity. In a terrible circumstance I had even love and joy. It didn't come from anyone other than Jesus, the peace which passeth understanding, the peace which comes from the Prince of Peace, the peace that comes from within from the Holy Spirit. The NEW SERENITY PRAYER is this...

*God, grant me the
SERENITY
To stop beating myself for not doing things perfectly,
COURAGE
To forgive myself because I'm working on doing better,
WISDOM
To know that YOU (Lord) already love me just the way I am.*

LET NOT YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED, NEITHER LET THEM BE AFRAID, reassures Jesus. Amen and Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, Pennsylvania
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*