**Sermon Resource Summer of 2022.  *Rev. Carol Mapa; PMA Administrator***

Nebraska Synod ELCA Fruits of the Spirit: *PEACE*

Primary Preaching Scripture: Galatians 5:22-23

Gospel: John 14:17-27

Psalm: Psalm 62: 1, 5-8

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The Nebraska Synod staff is happy to provide for our congregations of the synod a sermon series based on the scripture text, Galatians 5: [16-21] **22-23.** I chose the Fruit of “peace”. Not because it was the easiest, but one that I have come to understand more, and in my daily life, I feel I have truly experienced a certain peace, both as an individual and in community.

Peace, peace, peace…….everybody wants it…..but where in the world do you find it? Listen/Watch/Stream the news and you know there isn’t much of it in the world today…..or yesterday…..or 10 months ago…..there are not many times in history when, peace, defined as the absence of human conflict or battles existed…or exists. Right now there are no less then eight (8) locations around the world that are actively involved in armed conflicts at a given time. They include: Ukraine, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Myanmar, Syria, Israel & Palestine, and pockets of Islamist extremist attacks throughout all of Africa.

Some people or organizations work towards world peace, some claim to have the answer to peace. I could go on and on and tell stories about how one person works towards peace in the world because they throw starfish back into the sea, or drink Coke-a-cola, or eat only meatless meals, or send a donation off to Doctors without Borders, which are all sorts of noble and legitimate ways of making the world a better place. Send those in conflict prayers; please note this is not a bad idea, but be honest, don’t you wonder why those prayers aren’t answered? In addition to the before noted “actions”, I could even sing songs about peace and to top the list I bet I could get a ukulele band to play a concert and the donations be donated to Lutheran World Relief or Lutheran Disaster Teams….all tangible, all do-able, all action oriented……

We hear in the reading from Galatians 5 that “peace” is one of the “fruits of the Spirit” through which we are able to live as followers of Jesus. Paul reminds us that “*there is no law against such things*”. That is reassuring!

But what does one do? How does one “live out a fruit of the Spirit, and in particular peace?

What if I share with you this morning, that the good news we hear in our scripture readings point to this advice about peace. That advice is: “do nothing but one thing……stop-be still-listen-act in community.”

First, I think it is important to look at the context of our focus text: Galatians 5: [16-21], 22-23.

We can translate or understand what “peace” is several ways. The original language of Greek translates this peace as the absence of worry, quiet rest, a surrendering of one’s self to a quiet rest. Think of a baby sleeping; care-free and quiet, content, no worries. The other understanding would be the absence of conflict between human beings and countries.

The writer of Galatians, the Apostle Paul, is speaking to the church in Galatia. There is conflict in the church community and Paul wants to nip it in the bud. Earlier in the book, Paul points out that there is “a different gospel” that the people are being enticed by due to the influence of people who are offering a “better deal” a different message about Jesus Christ. The focus of this “better deal” is that the people making trouble are saying that people must DO SOMETHING in order to be part of the church. Such examples include: getting circumcised, keep the laws, observe specific customs and ritual practices. By “doing” these things, then the certainty of their salvation and being right with God. The emphasis in on what they do, not what God has done and continues to do. Living the fruits of the Spirit is in contrast to what the “world” demands them to “do”. Paul reminds the community that the fruits of the Spirit are inspired by the Holy Spirit and that placing complete trust in God is the “correct” practice of the fruits of the Spirit.

As followers of Christ, we are called to live “in contrast” to what the world or other voices would have us believe or follow. Yes, even regarding peace.

I said earlier that I had experienced a certain kind of peace, which I understand to be the peace of the heart, an inner sense of wellbeing; one that rests and trusts in God. When I was 48 years old, I had a heart attack. That evening, when I was waiting for a neighbor to take me to the hospital, it dawned on me what was really happening. It was out of my control. Nothing I could do would change the situation. I just sat on my couch and said: “Ok, I give this up to you totally God because I have no where to go, I trust you with the outcome.” I was awash with the deepest sense of “peace” and well-being I had ever sensed. Surrender wasn’t really in my vocabulary, but that is what I did.

In addition, to this physical experience I had back those 17 years ago, I have been practicing several Spiritual Practices that allow me to trust deeper, and grow in my relationship with God. I believe as Paul was stating there are fruits of the Spirit that are “in contrast” to our self-indulgent ways that turn us away from being carriers of the “fruits of the Spirit.” There are ways of practice within faith communities, that can strengthen and promote peace for the benefit of the world. I truly believe we are able to stop-be still-listen-and finally, act in community.” For the sake of the peace of the world.

Remember how I said I practiced a spiritual discipline that provides me with a sense of peace? I relax, I worry less, I empty myself of my wants and needs and open myself up to the Spirit of God. I do this through being intentional about the time I spend with God. Each day I set aside anywhere from 15-30 minutes and I: Stop, I am still, and I listen to God through the Holy Spirit.

In closing, the peace we desire is to live in a world void of conflict where there is violence put upon other human beings *by* human beings. It is difficult because it is out of our control and we feel powerless. However, that peace of which Jesus speaks of through the Apostle Paul and the peace that Jesus promises for us in the witness of the Gospel of John chapter 14:27: “*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.”*

Is real. It is gift. It is fruit of our faith. It is the fruit of the Spirit: peace.

Please listen while I pray the beautiful prayer by St. Francis:

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let us sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is discord, union;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.
Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

**SCRIPTURE READINGS**

## Psalm 62: 1-2, 5-6, 8

1 For God alone my soul waits in silence;
   from him comes *my salvation.*
2 He alone is my rock and my salvation,
   my fortress; I shall never be shaken.

5 For God alone my soul waits in silence,
   for *my hope* is from him.
6 He alone is my rock and my salvation,
   my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

8 *Trust* in him at all times, O people;
   pour out your *heart* before him;
   God is a refuge for us.

**Galatians 5:22-23**

[Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. 18But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. 19Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, 20idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, 21envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.]

*22By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.*

**John 14: 27**

27Peace 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.”