

## Luke 23:44-46

, Today, we are taking a look at how we are “Guided to Peace” by the cross.

Peace can be hard to come by these days. We are so busy running from one thing to another, and we are surrounded by sounds of people all around us at home or at work or at school. Any quiet moments we have can be instantly interrupted by our phones ringing or a siren blaring or a car honking or a video or some music playing. And our lack of peace may be one reason why meditation and no-technology retreats are becoming more and more popular.

Finding time for silence may be one way that we have been guided toward what the world thinks of peace. But we as Christians know there is a deeper kind of peace that we are craving as human beings. That is peace with God.

We have all sinned in our thoughts, words and deeds. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” St. Paul reminds us in Romans 3:23. There is no getting around that fact.

We are sinners. God knows it, and we know it, and so we have no peace with God.

Then into this broken and divided world, God sent his Son, Jesus, as a little baby, born of a woman, to take on our flesh and blood as a human being. Jesus spent his ministry telling his disciples, and anyone who would listen, that he was the one who would bring the world peace. At the synagogue in his

hometown of Nazareth, the Lord read these words from the prophet Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Isaiah 61:1-2). Then he said, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). But the people there did not believe him and drove him out of town in anger. There seemed to be no peace.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” (Luke 9:22). But they did not listen or pay attention. Peter even took Jesus aside and said, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you” (Matthew 16:22). And, to be honest, we don’t want it to happen to him either.

But Jesus knows his mission is to bring peace to the world: To bring peace between us sinners and God must include the cross. He did not turn away from his mission, even when he was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane and an angry mob moved into that seemingly quiet place where the disciples were sleeping. Jesus said to his disciples, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand” (Mark 14:41-42).

At Jesus' arrest, Peter again did not want Jesus to go down this road of suffering. So he pulled out his sword and cut off the ear of a servant there. But Jesus said, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matthew 26:52). Jesus sought peace even then, in the midst of turmoil.

Ultimately, it was on the cross that peace between us and God finally came. When the crucified Jesus breathed his last, "And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened. (Matthew 27:51-53). They tell us that because of Jesus' death on the cross, we now have access to the Father. Death no longer separates us from God. We have new life in Christ, which will soon be revealed to us more fully on Easter, when Jesus' tomb was open and he himself rose from the dead.

The cross has become a sign of peace for us in our church today. We often make the sign of the cross to acknowledge Christ's presence in worship. We make the sign of the cross on the forehead and on the heart of a baby being baptized to mark them as one redeemed by Christ the crucified. Pastors make the sign of the cross when they speak the blessing over the congregation:

Remember the words of Jesus: shortly before his crucifixion: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled,

neither let them be afraid” (John 14:27).

He is saying to the disciples, and he is saying to you and me, “When you see me on the cross, remember what I said. Remember that what you are witnessing is me bringing lasting, eternal peace—peace that will connect you to God the Father always.”

So be guided to the cross. Be guided to his peace. And live in that peace this Lent and in every season. Peace be with you.

Amen.