

## SPIRITUAL FRUIT

### *Peace*

Galatians 5:22-25

Christ Church of **Peace!** Sharing the **peace!** **Peace** be with you! **Peace** like a river! The Prince of **Peace!** Peace is in our church's name, it is a part of our liturgy, it is in our music, and it is a name that is given to the Messiah. And according to Paul, peace is an attribute of our spiritual nature—it is within us! The question is, do we want to access it? Do we want to tap into it? And I would advise us not to answer too casually or too quickly because embracing peace in our life will require the letting go of some ways of thinking and acting that we have become very comfortable with and that we are convinced work to our advantage even when the proof is they do not. Resentment is an example of this. It has been said that resentment is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. It does not work!

The Hebrew word for peace is shalom. Shalom refers to a total well-being, to all that makes life good. To experience shalom a healthy relationship with God and with others is required. The Greek word for peace means harmony. It is very similar to shalom. Therefore, peace as a spiritual fruit, as a spiritual virtue, as being a part of our spiritual nature, refers to a balanced life that is derived from a relationship of harmony with God and with others, and that makes life good for us.

This week when I was doing a web search on peace I was startled when I saw an entry that read, "*Low prices on spiritual peace.*" Immediately I was thinking, peace cannot be bought and if it could certainly not at a low price! The entry went on to read, "*CD music, albums and songs.*" Peace music may be cheap but not spiritual peace that offers harmony and well-being in our human relationships, in our communities, and in the world.

To the church at Philippi Paul wrote that the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard our hearts and our minds (4:7). What does God's peace guard our hearts and our minds from? Fear and anxiety! These are the enemy of peace; the things which prevent us from experiencing peace. God's peace—that is available within—can help us from being fearful and anxious. And friends, I am convinced if there is anything that we need today it is freedom from fear and anxiety. And this is especially true of the GLBT community!

I believe that our fear and our anxiety are symptoms of our past wounds—our emotional and spiritual wounds. I am referring to the wounds that we have received because of our sexual orientation and our gender identity. And unfortunately, instead of healing from the wounds that produce our fear and anxiety we tend to wound others, even our own. I believe the reason that so many GLBT folk are so critical and judgmental of everyone and everything is because we are afraid of being judged and criticized—of being re-wounded. We take everything so seriously because we are anxious about everything. We tend to react from our wounded nature rather than live from our spiritual nature.

Friends, we will never be at peace with each other until we are each at peace with our self. When we become angry at something someone says to us or because of something someone does we need to ask our self why. We need to ask our self why it is that what someone else has said or done is interfering with my peace? And further we need to be asking why we

become so defensive? Why we are so ready to attack? Why we are so critical? Why we are so ready to be resentful? Why we are so ready to snub another person? The answer is right before us but it is not one that we like or even want to believe. We respond in these ways when we are not at peace with our self!

The good news is we can access our spiritual nature; allowing the peace of God to be alive within us and thereby to flow out through us to others. If I am at peace with myself there is nothing that anyone else can do or say to disturb it, because as Paul writes my peace from God will guard my heart and my mind from all fear and anxiety.

Today's lesson on peace is our third in the series *Spiritual Fruit*. The other two spiritual virtues we have already discussed are love and joy; with love being at the head of the list and also influencing the other virtues. So with this understanding I want to share some signs of spiritual peace. These are indicators that we living from our spiritual nature—which is a gift from God.

- A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than **on fears** based on past experience
- An unmistakable ability to **enjoy the moment**
- A loss of interest in **judging other people**
- A loss of interest in **judging self**
- A loss of interest in **interpreting the actions of others**
- An inability to **worry** (this is a very serious sign!)
- Frequent overwhelming episodes of appreciation
- Frequent acts of smiling
- An increased susceptibility to the love extended by others as well as the uncontrollable urge to extend love.<sup>1</sup>

When we are at peace with God and ourselves it will flow through us and it will be evident in our human relationships. Peace is contagious just as is anger, hate and resentment. It is our choice which of these we will live by which of these we choose to feed and nurture. Indira Gandhi said it this way, “*You can't shake hands with a clinched fist.*” And Abraham Lincoln said, “*The best way to destroy an enemy is to make him a friend.*”

My friends, the best way to have peace is to give peace. Spiritual peace begins from within, it then flows outward to others and then comes back again where it grows even stronger and the cycle continues! I can guarantee that the more we allow peace to be present in our lives there will be less and less fear and anxiety. Friends, peace really works if we will give it a chance! People spend a lifetime searching for peace; by chasing idle dreams, through addictions and religions, even through other people, hoping to fill the emptiness that plagues humanity. The irony is the only place we ever need to search for peace is within.<sup>2</sup>

Peace is not cheap—it is highly valued and much sought after. And we possess it; all we have to do is tap into our spiritual nature.

Peace is not cheap—it cost the life of the Prince of Peace. Today, I choose to end my remarks with the words of another person of peace whose life also ended violently—John Lennon. “*Imagine all the people living life in peace. You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will live as one.*”

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<sup>1</sup> Anonymous, Symptoms of Inner Peace

<sup>2</sup> Ramona L. Anderson