

**A Season of Peace Sermon Series**  
***Finding Peace***  
**Luke 5:12-16**  
**Rev. Joy Laughridge**  
**September 12, 2021**

Brian started us off on our new sermon series last week which is called *A Season of Peace*. As elusive as it may sometimes seem, peace *is* something that Jesus offers to us. It is something that we can have and experience with God, and with others, and within ourselves, and it is also something that the Holy Spirit empowers us to help create and deliver to the world. For Jesus's disciples, pursuing peace is an obedient and faithful thing to try to do, but sometimes it's also very hard work, and it demands a lot from us. Here are at least three ways that I thought of that make it hard to be a peacemaker.

1. When we see places where there are conflicts and problems, peacemakers start to feel agitated. Like if you observe a bully - whether it's a bully nation or a bully at work - it doesn't tend to sit well with us, and we often start feeling less than soothing feelings - things like anger at the aggressor. That kind of "righteous anger" can be positive because it might compel us to act on behalf of someone who is suffering, but even so, it can be exhausting to be feeling agitated and angry. Have you noticed that before in yourself? Or maybe you have observed it in others. There are people who are all for the good causes. They are committed to working for justice and peace, but sometimes they seem like some of the angriest, least peaceful people you've ever come across! A friend told me that he was at one of our denomination's conference centers once, and there was a group of peace activists there at the same time. A well-known spiritual teacher named Mirabai Star was there to address the peacemakers, and because she was well-known, he and some others were invited to sit in on one of her talks. He said that when all of the activists were nice and quiet and ready to hear her tell them how to be more effective, she started by saying, "No one likes an angry peace activist!". She had observed well-meaning peacemakers who had no peace themselves because the agitation and righteous anger had taken over. Being a peacemaker is hard! Even if it's a "good" kind of upset, it's just hard to be constantly upset and troubled *and* to feel calm and peaceful.
2. Here is a second thing that makes being a peacemaker hard. Brian mentioned last week that the things that Jesus says make for peace require putting others and their needs before our own and they often require personal sacrifice. Take forgiveness for example. Extending forgiveness to someone who has wronged you can go a long way toward creating peace,

but that's not easy to do, and the deeper the hurt the harder it is. Self-sacrifice is not generally what comes most naturally to us. I saw an old Calvin and Hobbes cartoon a couple of weeks ago, and I laughed and laughed. Calvin is standing next to Hobbes with his hands in the air and he's saying, "I am the culmination of Creation!" *That* - thinking of ourselves as the most important and putting ourselves first - *that* is what comes naturally to us. So, when being a peacemaker means we might have to forgive someone who has hurt us, or it means choosing to lay down some right that is ours in order to create peace, it's hard because it stirs up a little war within ourselves between the part that wants to follow Jesus and the part that wants to do what is easiest and feels the best. Resisting our selfish nature is hard work.

3. And a third thing that makes being a peacemaker hard, is that it requires wisdom and discernment. I admit that my first thought or idea about how to deal with a conflict and pursue peace – is not always the best one! Situations that require some sort of peacemaking measures can be very complicated and will likely require some thoughtfulness and effort toward finding the answer, and this is true whether we're trying to figure out how to resolve relatively small things like an interpersonal conflict or a divisive issue in a church, or whether we are talking about global conflicts. It is hard work to come up with what seems to be the right way to achieve peace in all of these situations.

You may be able to think of other things that make it hard to be a peacemaker, but those are three that I came up with, and the question then is, how do we do this hard work, and *keep* doing this hard work over the long haul, without becoming angry, or anxious, or exhausted? How can we find and maintain a state of inner peace even when working for peace is not always the most conducive to making us feel peaceful inside?

As we look at the Scripture this morning, we aren't going to find a formula or step-by-step instructions that will tell us how to achieve inner peace while doing the hard work of peacemaking. Instead, what we find in the Scripture this morning is Jesus doing the hard and exhausting work of ministry, and we see an example of what Jesus did to sustain his spiritual life and relationship with God in the midst of that work. Let's look at the passage now from Luke 5:12-16.

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From all of these examples and occasions of Jesus praying, we can draw at least two conclusions - one about Jesus and one for ourselves. What we can conclude about Jesus is that he relied on God to help him and sustain him so he prioritized connecting with God through prayer, and the conclusion that we can draw for ourselves is that if Jesus needed to rely on God and make it a priority to nurture his spiritual life, we probably need to also. This was the advice that the famous spiritual teacher, Mirabai Star gave to all of those peace activists after she told them that no one likes an angry peace activist. After she told them that, she told them that it was essential to cultivate a positive and loving attitude through prayer because peace can never come from an unpeaceful source.

Jesus has promised to give us his peace. In John 14:27 he said to the disciples, **“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.”** Jesus gives us the gift of peace, but we are reminded today that a gift that is given needs to be received. Jesus does call us to follow him in the work of trying to be peacemakers in our relationships, and families, and churches, and communities, but he doesn't ever ask or expect us to do it in our own strength without help from him. He expects, instead, for us to rely on him and to take the gifts that he offers that will help us. If you've been trying to be a peacemaker but

you haven't been feeling peaceful inside, it might be a sign that you have been neglecting to go to Jesus to receive the spiritual nourishment he offers.

Through prayer Jesus received from God what he needed to carry out his mission, and through prayer, or meditation, or Scripture reading, or silence in God's presence or whatever discipline we choose, we can receive Jesus's peace. The spiritual discipline that we practice is not the most essential thing. We're all different and different things work for different people. In recent times, my spiritual life has been nurtured and enriched by using the prayers of others. The Serenity Prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr and the prayers of John Baillie have been especially helpful to me. Some people use art and drawing as a way to help focus their minds and hearts on God in prayer. Exercise can be used as a way to quiet the mind and still oneself before the Lord. You know that there are lots of different practices and methods that we can use, but the important thing is that we pick something and then *do* it and do it regularly. It does, and it will make a difference in the way we feel, in the way we speak, in the way we interact with others, and in the way that we strive to share and build God's kingdom.

Being a peacemaker is hard and it may require some sacrifice on our part, but not the sacrifice of our own inner peace and spiritual strength. God doesn't call us to do God's work without God's help, and if we are trying to do God's work without God's help, we will have a hard time doing it. We need spiritual nourishment from Jesus to sustain us as surely as we need food and water to sustain our bodies. Find the practice that connects you to Jesus and you will find his peace. Amen.

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Jesus has promised to give us his peace. In John 14:27 he said to the disciples, **“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.”** Jesus gives us the gift of peace, but we are reminded today that a gift that is given needs to be received. Jesus does call us to follow him in the work of trying to be peacemakers in our relationships, and families, and churches, and communities, but he doesn't ever ask or expect us to do it in our own strength without help from him. He expects, instead, for us to rely on him and to take the gifts that he offers that will help us. If you've been trying to be a peacemaker but

you haven't been feeling peaceful inside, it might be a sign that you have been neglecting to go to Jesus to receive the spiritual nourishment he offers.

Through prayer Jesus received from God what he needed to carry out his mission, and through prayer, or meditation, or Scripture reading, or silence in God's presence or whatever discipline we choose, we can receive Jesus's peace. The spiritual discipline that we practice is not the most essential thing. We're all different and different things work for different people. In recent times, my spiritual life has been nurtured and enriched by using the prayers of others. The Serenity Prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr and the prayers of John Baillie have been especially helpful to me. Some people use art and drawing as a way to help focus their minds and hearts on God in prayer. Exercise can be used as a way to quiet the mind and still oneself before the Lord. You know that there are lots of different practices and methods that we can use, but the important thing is that we pick something and then *do* it and do it regularly. It does, and it will make a difference in the way we feel, in the way we speak, in the way we interact with others, and in the way that we strive to share and build God's kingdom.

Being a peacemaker is hard and it may require some sacrifice on our part, but not the sacrifice of our own inner peace and spiritual strength. God doesn't call us to do God's work without God's help, and if we are trying to do God's work without God's help, we will have a hard time doing it. We need spiritual nourishment from Jesus to sustain us as surely as we need food and water to sustain our bodies. Find the practice that connects you to Jesus and you will find his peace. Amen.

**A Season of Peace Sermon Series**  
***Finding Peace***  
**Luke 5:12-16**  
**Rev. Joy Laughridge**  
**September 12, 2021**

Brian started us off on our new sermon series last week which is called *A Season of Peace*. As elusive as it may sometimes seem, peace *is* something that Jesus offers to us. It is something that we can have and experience with God, and with others, and within ourselves, and it is also something that the Holy Spirit empowers us to help create and deliver to the world. For Jesus's disciples, pursuing peace is an obedient and faithful thing to try to do, but sometimes it's also very hard work, and it demands a lot from us. Here are at least three ways that I thought of that make it hard to be a peacemaker.

1. When we see places where there are conflicts and problems, peacemakers start to feel agitated. Like if you observe a bully - whether it's a bully nation or a bully at work - it doesn't tend to sit well with us, and we often start feeling less than soothing feelings - things like anger at the aggressor. That kind of "righteous anger" can be positive because it might compel us to act on behalf of someone who is suffering, but even so, it can be exhausting to be feeling agitated and angry. Have you noticed that before in yourself? Or maybe you have observed it in others. There are people who are all for the good causes. They are committed to working for justice and peace, but sometimes they seem like some of the angriest, least peaceful people you've ever come across! A friend told me that he was at one of our denomination's conference centers once, and there was a group of peace activists there at the same time. A well-known spiritual teacher named Mirabai Star was there to address the peacemakers, and because she was well-known, he and some others were invited to sit in on one of her talks. He said that when all of the activists were nice and quiet and ready to hear her tell them how to be more effective, she started by saying, "No one likes an angry peace activist!". She had observed well-meaning peacemakers who had no peace themselves because the agitation and righteous anger had taken over. Being a peacemaker is hard! Even if it's a "good" kind of upset, it's just hard to be constantly upset and troubled *and* to feel calm and peaceful.
2. Here is a second thing that makes being a peacemaker hard. Brian mentioned last week that the things that Jesus says make for peace require putting others and their needs before our own and they often require personal sacrifice. Take forgiveness for example. Extending forgiveness to someone who has wronged you can go a long way toward creating peace,

but that's not easy to do, and the deeper the hurt the harder it is. Self-sacrifice is not generally what comes most naturally to us. I saw an old Calvin and Hobbes cartoon a couple of weeks ago, and I laughed and laughed. Calvin is standing next to Hobbes with his hands in the air and he's saying, "I am the culmination of Creation!" *That* - thinking of ourselves as the most important and putting ourselves first - *that* is what comes naturally to us. So, when being a peacemaker means we might have to forgive someone who has hurt us, or it means choosing to lay down some right that is ours in order to create peace, it's hard because it stirs up a little war within ourselves between the part that wants to follow Jesus and the part that wants to do what is easiest and feels the best. Resisting our selfish nature is hard work.

3. And a third thing that makes being a peacemaker hard, is that it requires wisdom and discernment. I admit that my first thought or idea about how to deal with a conflict and pursue peace – is not always the best one! Situations that require some sort of peacemaking measures can be very complicated and will likely require some thoughtfulness and effort toward finding the answer, and this is true whether we're trying to figure out how to resolve relatively small things like an interpersonal conflict or a divisive issue in a church, or whether we are talking about global conflicts. It is hard work to come up with what seems to be the right way to achieve peace in all of these situations.

You may be able to think of other things that make it hard to be a peacemaker, but those are three that I came up with, and the question then is, how do we do this hard work, and *keep* doing this hard work over the long haul, without becoming angry, or anxious, or exhausted? How can we find and maintain a state of inner peace even when working for peace is not always the most conducive to making us feel peaceful inside?

As we look at the Scripture this morning, we aren't going to find a formula or step-by-step instructions that will tell us how to achieve inner peace while doing the hard work of peacemaking. Instead, what we find in the Scripture this morning is Jesus doing the hard and exhausting work of ministry, and we see an example of what Jesus did to sustain his spiritual life and relationship with God in the midst of that work. Let's look at the passage now from Luke 5:12-16.

**<sup>12</sup> Once, when he was in one of the cities, there was a man covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he bowed with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean." <sup>13</sup> Then Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, "I do choose. Be made clean." Immediately the leprosy<sup>[c]</sup> left him. <sup>14</sup> And he ordered him to tell no**

one. **“Go,” he said, “and show yourself to the priest, and, as Moses commanded, make an offering for your cleansing, for a testimony to them.”** <sup>15</sup> **But now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad; many crowds would gather to hear him and to be cured of their diseases.** <sup>16</sup> **But he would withdraw to deserted places and pray.**

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