

Wesley United Methodist Church

May 1, 2016

“Peace of Mind and Heart.”

John 14:23-29

A commercial airline pilot on one occasion made a particular bad landing. The wheels of the big jet hit the runway with a jarring thud. Afterward, since the airline had a policy, that required that the pilot stand at the door while passengers exited, he, too, was to give each of them a smile and say, “Thanks for flying with us today.” In light of this bad landing, he had a hard time looking the passengers in the eye, thinking that someone would have a smart comment, but no one seemed annoyed.

Finally everyone had gotten off except for one little old lady walking with a cane. She approached the pilot and asked, “Sonny, mind if I ask you a question?” “Why, no Ma’am, what is it?” said the pilot. “Did we land, or were we shot down?”

Maybe you’ve had days like that—days when it felt like you were shot down. Even worse, maybe things aren’t going quite well for you, really. Your friends and your family tell you how fortunate you are. But you don’t feel fortunate. In fact, your life is somewhat tortured by a nagging fear that you cannot even define.

Jesus was about to leave his disciples. Already they were meeting behind closed doors for fear of their lives. Jesus knew what lay in store for them: persecution, imprisonment, even martyrdom. He also knew what they really needed most—the assurance from him that things were going to be okay. And so he says to them, “I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart! And the peace I give isn’t fragile like the peace the world gives. So don’t be troubled or afraid.” Yeah, right!

Christ did not promise his disciples a life free from problems. Problems are a part of life. Roofs leak, cars don’t start, people get mad, feelings get hurt, we get rejected, overlooked, unappreciated. We get sick, tired and sometimes victimized. All this goes with being human. As someone said, “Sometimes we get the gold mine—sometimes the shaft.” Some of the problems we face are life-shattering, others are just a painful nuisance.

The secret of successful living is to have such an inner sense of peace that we can manage the problems that come to us no matter how severe. Obstacles are to be overcome and won with the promise of the Holy Spirit. They are won first in our hearts and minds. Jesus wasn’t worried about the obstacles his disciples would face, but the inner strength and discipline with which they would face them. Would they be worriers or would they be warriors? And so he promised them that even though he must leave them physically, he would not leave them spiritually. He promised them the gift of the Holy Spirit to give them courage and comfort in the difficult days ahead.

Courage and comfort. Are these not the prerequisites for being a Christian? Think of the courage that followers of Christ needed to endure after he left them. Most were persecuted because they would not renounce their faith. But still they persevered. How could they do it without God’s spirit within? People of courage are a rare breed, but what would the world do without such people?

Courage is a rare commodity in today’s world. The early followers of Jesus gained their courage from the presence of Christ’s Spirit within them. And that’s good news for us. There are times when you and I need to be courageous—to stand up for those things that are right and good and lasting. They received courage and they received comfort. The same is available to us. Just be receptive to the Holy Spirit; let it wash over you.

Jesus did not tell his disciples that they would not have problems. In fact, their problems would dwarf most of our problems. What he did promise was peace of mind. He would send upon them the gift of the Holy Spirit to give them courage and comfort. And they would be warriors and not worriers. That is the same promise Christ offers us today. Perhaps you have come here today seeking the assurance from someone that things are going to be okay. I can give you that assurance. God’s Holy Spirit is here to give you both courage and comfort and peace of heart and mind.