

Peace

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Preacher: Jesse Kincer

[0 : 00] So let's continue on in our Fruit of the Spirit series, and if you are new to us, we've been in this for a few weeks now, and you may be wondering, what is the fruit of the Spirit? And really, what that means is it's talking about the character of God, the very nature of God.

And it not only brings us into a deeper understanding of who God is, it actually explains who God calls us to become as followers of Jesus.

It's great to know that God is love, joy, and peace, and patience, and long-suffering, and gentleness, and goodness, and all that. But it's also important to know that actually He wants all those characteristics to be manifest more and more in our lives, so we begin to look more and more like Jesus.

And so today, we are going to look at the fruit of the Spirit, peace. That is what we're looking at today, peace. So first, let's establish what peace is. What is peace?

Well, I think here is a good definition that we can all relate to. Peace is what we experience when our present state is such that everything is as it ought to be.

[1 : 09] And that speaks to both what is happening within you and what is happening around you. So think about this. Peace is an absence of negative things like fear, or conflict, or enmity, or strife, or anxiety, or envy, or jealousy, or abuse, or any of those things.

But peace isn't just the absence of things. It's also possessing certain good qualities or certain things as well. Peace is serenity. It is calm.

It's contentment. It is feeling satisfied, having a sense of satisfaction. It's joy. It's love. It's goodness. It's harmony. It's unity. It's all of these things.

And perhaps that's why when we think of this, like, man, we have to have the absence of all those things and the presence of all those things. It's probably why peace is so elusive to us. Because our environments, our relationships, our own desires even, our emotions within us can have both negative qualities and positive qualities all at the same time.

Now, I want to say this. Everything I've defined peace as so far is the kind of peace that the world can offer to us. And, but that kind of peace, it's contingent on our ability to curate and control our environments, our relationships, our own desires, and our emotions within us.

[2 : 29] Which is why peace that the world gives us is so evasive and elusive. It's like a fleeting mist, right? Like having the absence of all those things and have the presence of all those things.

It's like for a microsecond, we'd be like, there it is. And then it goes, you know? It's like a, it's there and gone very quickly. I mean, it would be nice to live in the kind of Corona commercial where you get away from the crowds and all you're alone on a white sandy beach with the waves crashing and the breeze blowing in your face and you're sitting at a round back chair.

And apparently there's nobody else that exists in the world but you and this beautiful nature. And you can pull that off if you're a billionaire, I guess. But like for the rest of us, like, hey, what do we got? Well, how can we get this peace that the world has to offer?

And is that the only peace on offer that is out there? Well, enter Jesus. John 14 verses 18 to 27. Jesus is speaking to his disciples.

He says, I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you. Yet a little while in the world will see me no more, but you will see me because I live.

[3 : 34] Because I live, you also will live. In that day, you will know that I am in the father and you and me and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.

And he who loves me will be loved by my father. And I will love him and manifest myself to him.

Judas, not Iscariot. You can imagine Judas, not Iscariot, saying, hey, John, can you please make it clear that I'm not the bad guy, the bad Judas?

I'm like, there's another one out here. So Judas said to him, not Iscariot. Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world?

Jesus answered him, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my father will love him. And we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine, but the father's who sent me. These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you, but the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

[4 : 43] Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives, do I give it to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

This is God's word. These are the words of our Lord to his 12 disciples. Hours before his betrayal, hours before his trial, hours before his crucifixion, would begin.

Now, if you're his disciple, you've been with Jesus for three years by now. You've walked around, you've seen him do amazing things. Heal the sick, raise the dead, preach the best sermons, go toe-to-toe with the Pharisees, and expose like how they're wrong and he's right.

I mean, if you want to think about it this way, it's like being a child on the playground, but your dad's like Dwayne Johnson, right? And if you don't know who Dwayne Johnson is, he's the rock. If you don't know who the rock is, I don't know how to help you.

But they're walking around with Jesus and they got like, man, everything that he's got, they got swagger because of him. They're like, dude, this is our rabbi.

[5 : 54] This is the dude we're following. He's our guy and we're his. They're feeling invincible, right? And now Jesus drops this really unwelcome bomb. He's like, hey guys, it's nice being with you.

I'm going away. And Jesus knows this is going to erode their peace in their soul. So he tells them, hey guys, I'm going, I'm leaving, but I'm not leaving at the same time.

What? What does he say? He's going to send the Holy Spirit to dwell with them, to teach them, to remind them, basically to do all the things that would continue their participation with the person of Jesus.

They needed to know that. But we need to know that too. The point Jesus is making to them and to us is this. God's peace comes from remaining in and responding to God's presence.

When we think of peace of being the state of things, how they ought to be, man, think about this.

This thing, this God's presence and being in his presence and responding to it as disciples of Jesus, this is primal.

[7 : 02] This is first order of things of how things ought to be. And here's what we have to realize, friends. The world can't give you and I that. That's not a peace it has in its arsenal.

It cannot do that. Only God can do that. And that tells us something. It makes us quickly realize that you can't earn this kind of peace. You can't earn your way into getting it from God.

It starts with God's grace. It starts with his favor and his kindness and his mercy to desire to do that, to give it to you. And so you have to simply receive it. But you also have to believe that this is what God wants to do.

You know, it's one thing to know that. It's one thing to know that Jesus has sent this amazing gift to us, the very presence of God, to abide with us and be with us. And he's never, ever going to remove it.

It's one thing to know that. And to believe it, it's another to live that out, to live in it. And to quote Ellendale in the Rings of Power, and if you don't know who he is, I am so sorry for you. Like, if you're not a Rings of Power person, like, hey, just like rethink your life choices.

[8 : 04] All right? You should get into it. He is the father of Isildur, and that probably means nothing to anybody but five people in the room right now. But here is what Ellendale says at some point in the Rings of Power.

Faith is not faith if it is not lived. Faith is not faith if it is not lived. So then how do we live out this faith in the way that we begin to experience this peace that God has on offer to us?

Well, we can look to Jesus himself and learn from the Master. Here's a cool little story that Peter captured in his Gospel. In the Gospel of Mark, chapter 4, it says this.

On that day when evening had come, he said to them, let us go across to the other side. And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was, and other boats were with him.

And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But Jesus, he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion.

[9 : 10] And they woke him and said to him, teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? And he awoke, and he rebuked the wind and said to the sea, peace, be still.

And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said to them, why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith? And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, who then is this that even the wind and sea obey him?

So, in this story, you have Jesus. Like, apparently, he got the cushion on the boat, and he's like in the back, and he's asleep.

He's like, you see him, and then you have the fishermen who know this lake. They've been on this lake their whole lives. They know what's going on. They know how boats work, and they are freaking out.

They're going across this lake, and this storm's getting so bad, it's turned from like, hey, it's really hard making any headway here, to, okay, the ship is about to go down.

[10 : 13] We are going to drown. And they look over, and Jesus, on the one nice cushion, sleep in the boat, chill vibes. They're going crazy.

What are we to make all of this? What are they to make of all of this? Seeing Jesus that way, what are we to make all of this? Well, kind of an obvious takeaway, and sometimes the obvious thing is the good thing we need to take away from stuff.

Jesus isn't rattled by the storms that we are in because he knows who God is. For him in that moment, despite the storm raging around them, for him, for Jesus, on the one good cushion, asleep in the stern of the boat, everything was still as it ought to be.

He had peace. And there is peace knowing that God is Lord over the storm and that he is in it with us. Sometimes he might purposefully bring us into storms, bring us into trials, and he does that in order that we grow up a little bit more to strengthen our faith.

And he tells, he actually tells his disciples at the end of this, like, hey, you have no faith. Which, man, it feels like a bit of an exaggeration for Jesus to say that.

[11 : 29] Surely by now he would have recognized they had some faith in him. I mean, they were believing in him rightly. Surely Jesus can even understand why their faith wasn't, like, perfect in that circumstance, why they might have had some doubts.

Like, come on, Jesus, can they catch a break? Like, so what's going on? Well, I think there is something going on here. As Dallas Willard points out, God, what he does with his disciples as we begin to follow Jesus, what he is doing, he is moving us from the immature place of faith in Jesus and growing us up into maturity so that we have the faith of Jesus.

There's a big difference. And I do have to give credit to where credit is due, because I read that from Dallas Willard this past week, and I was like, that's interesting. But Jamie Weatherington in the back there on the sound desk, he hit me up about that two weeks ago.

And, like, thanks, Jamie. That messed with my head for a long time. And I was like, I think there is something to this. What is going on? But there's a big difference between starting with faith in Jesus and moving into the faith of Jesus.

And we see it when we look at Jesus in the storm versus his disciples in the storm. They had faith in Jesus, right? But their faith in Jesus rose and fell with the circumstances and what was going on around them.

[12 : 49] And also they were looking to Jesus and saying, like, Jesus, you are not responding in the right way in this moment. Like, you asleep, that is not good. Jesus sleeping in the storm led them to, we are doomed, we are going to die, we're anxious, we're freaking out, no peace.

For you and me, Jesus, you're not fixing the situation I'm in. You're not fixing my circumstance. You seem to be asleep on the job. What is going on? I am doomed.

And then we don't have peace. But look at the faith of Jesus in the storm. He knows his heavenly father is always near. He knows the authority he has.

He knows the plan and purpose for which he came into this world. He knows the plan and purpose he and the father have for each of the men on that boat. That's the faith of Jesus. And for him, everything is still as it ought to be, despite the storm raging around him.

Hence, he had peace. He could take the good cushion in the boat, go to the back, fall asleep, and be okay. He has rest knowing that the father is with him in that storm.

[13 : 53] And peace is the fruit of a relational reality where we deeply know and deeply trust the father's love and faithfulness. And also that all his purposes for you and me are ultimately good.

Man, it would be nice to live there all the time, right? And we can hear that in two ways. We'd be like, oh yeah, I got this. Or we could be filled with shame and just like, man, Jess, that seems like an impossibility to like stay in that place.

Well, here's the good news. Jesus is so kind and so patient with us as we wrestle through and grow and mature from faith in him to the faith of him. And here's also the good news of that.

At the same time that he is patient with us, he steps in to help us. How can we know that he steps in to help us? Well, look at the scenario of how Jesus stepped in and calmed the storm.

He didn't just tell the wind and the sea to be calm. Isn't it interesting that Peter's account that he passed on to Mark, that Mark captured in his gospel, that what they hear Jesus do is rebuke the wind and the sea, which means that Jesus is speaking a correction to his creation.

[15 : 10] He's saying, stop being stormy. This is not what I want you to do. This is going to lead to destruction. And there is something there for us that we need to learn. Sometimes peace comes through Jesus's corrections.

When something isn't as it should be. And if that goes on remaining uncorrected, it will cause destruction. Jesus stands up and he rebukes his creation when it's being stormy and destructive.

Guess what, friends? He does that to you and me. And you know what? He does it because he loves us and it's for our own good. The apostle Peter knows all about that.

He tells us about this story. It's kind of telling on himself here. Where Jesus had told them that he's going to have to go and suffer at the hands of the priests and the elders and die and then rise again in three days.

And Peter's like, no, Jesus, you're wrong. You need to be quiet. Jesus got a little stormy with Jesus. Now, and he gave Jesus a little talking to you in that moment based on what he thought was right.

[16 : 17] Now, I've done some dumb stuff in my following of Jesus, but Peter's always so kind to read because like I've been that dumb, right? Probably a lot of us have been like, we've done some dumb things.

We haven't done like Peter dumb. Gives us all hope, right? So then what does the creator of the universe, the eternal word that has existed forever, made flesh, come into this place, has all power, all wisdom, all knowledge.

How does he respond to this upstart disciple who's corrected him? He rebukes Peter. See, Peter didn't have the faith of Jesus yet.

Jesus knew that. He's telling Jesus, you know, your idea stinks. I've got a better version. Listen to me. And Jesus says, bro, you sound a lot like Satan right now.

Shut up and get behind me. And I'm leading the way you're not. Ouch. If you're Peter, you're feeling that you're just like, ooh, I just, I just got home with a little bit.

[17 : 19] In Christ's corrections, they can hurt momentarily. But there is a peace that comes through them and with them. But here's the thing.

You and I have to be willing to hear them. And we have to be willing to receive them and respond to them. Today we call those convictions of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes that conviction comes through reading Scripture.

And the Holy Spirit uses words in Scripture, the truths in Scripture to come and to reset our hearts and rebuke things that are incorrect and off kilter. And he does those things.

Sometimes that conviction comes through other people where they see us doing things. And they're just like, hey, man, love you. But like, man, that is not in line with how Jesus intends his followers to behave and act and talk and speak toward one another.

Are you humble enough to listen for the Christ's corrections as they come that are speaking to your storminess? And that's one of the pathways of peace.

[18 : 18] That's one of the pathways on offer to us, the peace of Jesus that he's giving to us. And here's another one. Peace also comes as Jesus heals us and draws us out of hiding.

There's a great little story about this in Luke's Gospel. A guy named Jairus came to Jesus, is in dire straits, pleading that Jesus would come to his house, heal his only daughter, who's only 12 years old and on her deathbed.

And at the same time, Jairus is fighting through to get to Jesus because there's this big crowd following Jesus at this time. Jesus says, yeah, let's go do this thing. They're on their way to Jairus'

house.

Something interesting happens. Luke chapter 8, verse 42. As Jesus went, the people pressed around him. That crowd is like, it is tightly compressed around Jesus.

And there was a woman who had a discharge of blood for 12 years. And though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone. She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment.

[19 : 20] And immediately, her discharge of blood ceased. And Jesus said, who was it that touched me? When all denied it, Peter said, master, the crowd surrounds you and are pressing in on you.

But Jesus said, someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me. And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling.

And falling down before him, declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him and how she had been immediately healed. And he said to her, daughter, your faith has made you well.

Go in peace. What's interesting about this story, the person who was telling it, he doesn't want us to walk away with the healing as the main part of the story.

It isn't. If you notice, most of the story is what happens after she's healed. She tries to slip away quietly. Jesus says, hey, let's stop.

[20 : 32] Power's gone out of me. Who touched me? Everybody denies it, which means she did too. And he says again, no, no, no. Power has gone out of me. Jesus doesn't let her slip away quietly.

Why? Why is Jesus doing that? Because he loves to heal, but he does it holistically. See, this lady's bleeding made her a social outcast, much like lepers of their day.

Her life was lived at a distance from people because any God-fearing Jew would be unclean if they touched her or were touched by her. So she learned for 12 years that nobody wanted to be near her.

If people saw her coming, they would go the other way. If she moved toward them, they would call it out. Call her unclean. Add to that, most likely everybody would have assumed that because of this bleeding, it is God's judgment for something she had done.

That's how they believe things worked in those days. This lady lived in shame, heaped upon shame. Society had firmly cast her identity for her.

[21 : 43] And now, think about this. In her condition, by society's rules, how do you get a miracle from Jesus if there is no way to get near him?

Especially if he is surrounded by a great crowd of people. Well, you break the rules. And you hope nobody notices. You slip in, touch the hem of his garment, and you slip out.

And doesn't this explain why she did a silent retreat even after she was healed? See, there is a kind of healing that we need that goes beyond our physical bodies, a healing at the soul level.

Think about it this way. We're like the elephant that gets tied to a stake from birth. And when they do that, they're doing that because it gets ingrained into their head that every time they move away, they realize that they can't go, they're on a short leash.

And after a while, the elephant begins to believe a rope around the leg equals immobility or imprisonment. And they become these big, massive creatures, and they don't have to tie their legs to a stake anymore.

[22 : 51] All they have to do is put a rope around their leg, and they're convinced that they're in prison and have nowhere to go. These massive animals, they can control them by an illusion. For this lady, yeah, the bleeding was gone, but shame was still there.

She was still imprisoned to it like a rope around an elephant's leg. See, in one way, her bleeding had stopped, and in another way, it actually hadn't.

Jesus wasn't going to let that go. Just like the storm, he had to correct it. But here, he does it with kindness by stopping her silent escape and drawing her near to him and drawing her out of hiding. Friends, there are things that have happened to you and me. Things done to us, there are things that we have done. These things can fill us with shame, and they can fill us with guilt.

They can fill us with despair, and they can fill us with hopelessness. And when you are filled with those things, you can't be filled with the peace of Jesus. But Jesus is able to heal us, even from those things.

[24 : 05] So what does it take? What does it require of you and me? What do we have to do? Well, you've got to bring it to Jesus. You've got to respond to his guidance.

You've got to let him heal you, but you have to let him draw you out of hiding to speak the thing that you don't want to speak. And then finally, you get to let him have the last word.

If that lady slipped away how she wanted to, she may have been healed, but she would have had a hard time convincing everybody about that. And in those days, a woman's word wasn't worth much. Also, people didn't get healed like that. It would have been a hard sell for her to say, guess what, guys? I got healed. That blood issuing out of me for the last 12 years, it's no more.

Years, it's no more. People would have been like, yeah, nice try. I wasn't born yesterday. They would have continued to run from her. They would have continued to keep her distance.

[25 : 07] But Jesus, this radical, controversial rabbi, the one who had healed so many by that time, the one that so many had borne witness of his healings, this Jesus stops and he declares out loud to this crowd, what you have said, woman, what you have said is true.

You are healed. Your faith has made you well. Go in peace. She came with faith in what Jesus might, could do for her.

She left with the confidence of what Jesus had done and also the further blessing of what he had said over her in the presence of so many witnesses.

By his authority, he declared her healed. By his authority, the cloud would hear him bear witness to her restoration back into normal social standing. Think about this.

In one moment, Jesus took away all her shame, all her guilt, removed all her fear, all her anxiety. He took away the stigma that God was punishing her for her sins. He rehealed and restored her, restored her dignity as a person, restored her worthiness for her to be among people again, to be touched, to be held, to be loved, to be hugged, all those things.

[26 : 25] He restored her, restored her, to be loved, to be loved, to be loved, all those things. Those places where God's presence would be, where his word was read, and to enjoy that.

Jesus restored back to her what ought to be, peace. And that kind of healing, that kind of restoration is available to us today.

And Jesus did this once and for all through the cross and resurrection. Friends, Jesus is our peace as we remain in him. Here's the thing.

All the negative things of our past, all the possible negative things ahead of us in the unknown tomorrows, none of those things are just going to disappear. But in Christ, they are transformed. Everything that you give to Jesus, every past sin, every wound, every hurt, every fear and anxiety that the future might have hold over you, when we are in Christ with the faith of Christ, they aren't what they once were.

[27 : 31] I can look back at my past porn addiction. I can look at my failures as husband and father of not being attentive like I should be, not being loving like I should be. And I can look back at those things, and those things, they still are there, but I'm looking at them through being united with Jesus, with the faith of Jesus, and what Jesus has done for me.

And I can look at them and say, those things don't define for me who I am anymore. Like, I have gone to him. I have repented of those things. I've been healed of those things. And you know what those things are?

They are now trophies of the goodness and the grace of Jesus Christ, who has changed and transformed me and healed me from those things. Transforms our past.

I can look ahead to an unknown future and trust that God knows what he is doing, and that I don't have to try to write a better script for him. Think about this.

Jesus knows how we're going to struggle with this. In a garden called Gethsemane, he prayed to the Father, trembling, sweating drops of blood as he faced the cross that was before him.

[28 : 50] Did he have peace in that moment? Well, we know that he is able to sympathize with us in our weakness. The writer of Hebrews says that.

Says that he was tempted in every way and yet without sin. Perhaps in the garden and on the cross, he suffered under a lack of peace we may not even fully experience here on earth.

Because if Jesus fully experienced God's judgment in our place for our sin, then he would have experienced in that moment what eternal death feels like.

And I do believe because of that, we have to conclude that Jesus suffered the fullness of what it means to live in existence without any modicum of God's peace. Did he deserve that?

No. Of course he didn't. But he did it so that you and me, people like you and me, could be restored into his perfect peace.

[29 : 50] By being restored to our place as children of God who get to enjoy the presence of God. We get to do that. We have access to this abiding presence.

We have access to participate in that presence. But what does that look like? Jesus said, man, I abide in you, but you need to abide in me. There's some responsibility as followers of Jesus we have to take for this abiding.

What does that look like, Jesse? It looks like daily rhythms of getting into your word, reading scripture. Let that scripture read you. Let it come into your heart. It's times of prayer. It's times of singing worship songs, maybe.

It's weekly rhythms of gathering in large and small groups of believers to give and receive of God's grace and truths and consolations. It's doing those things and engaging in those things.

It's taking part in the thing we're going to do in a week's time of fasting and setting aside some things to press further into the presence of God and the presence of his people for joy. As we follow the way of Jesus, what we are doing is we are remaining in the person of Jesus.

[30 : 57] And that means we are growing in the faith of Jesus. And the faith of Jesus is faith in the goodness and kindness of God the Father who sent his one and only son to reconcile his lost children to himself.

Friends, Jesus is our peace as we remain in him. The question for us today is do you have the faith of Jesus to abide in him and in his peace?

As the band comes up and we look to respond. And we're going to take communion in a moment. And we have got two tables in the front. We got two tables in the back. And when you're released, go to the one nearest you.

Bring it back to your seat and take it when you're ready. But let me first say this before we do any of that. If you're here, you're not yet a follower of Jesus. Before you come to the table, you need to come to the one that the table points to.

You need to come to the one that the bread and the blood points to. And this Jesus, who is our peace, he is holding out to you today, friends, like the offer of salvation in him. The offer of an abiding peace that the world cannot offer, only God can offer.

[32 : 06] You can take a hold of it today by believing in him and repenting and turning to him and trusting in him. And there's going to be a prayer up on the screen that you can pray. All the rest of us are taking communion.

You can pray that prayer. And the promise is that you will be saved. Now, if you're already a follower of Jesus, as you come to the table today, I want you to go to the table.

Grab that bread. Grab that cup. Take it back to your seat. And just spend some time with God, responding to him. Maybe it is just being flabbergasted in wonder that this God would choose to draw near to us.

He's here right now. And as we take communion, he's here. His real presence is here. And I'm not saying those things are the body and blood of Jesus.

But, man, they remind us that one day we're going to be able to touch that body that has a side pierced by a spear, that has nail-pierced hands.

[33 : 09] We're going to see him in all his glory, in all his goodness. And we get to partake knowing that one day that is going to be ours in its fullness.

But now we get to receive it in part. So I'm going to pray for us. Bless this moment right now. Lord, we ask you to bless this moment right now.

Come with your very presence and draw so near as we come to the table. We come to the table and we're going to eat of your body broken for us.

Broken so that we could have peace. We're going to drink of your blood shed for us. Shed for the forgiveness of our sins so that we could have your peace.

Your peace you give to us. Not as the world gives do you give to us. Let us receive it today. Amen.