

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Sermon: "The Fruit of the Spirit: PEACE"

Scripture: Galatians 5:16-23, Philippians 4:1-9

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October 4, 2026

Opening Hymn: All Creatures Of Our God And King #433

Choruses: Be still and know, Holy Spirit, Whom Shall I Fear (God Of Angel Armies)

Communion Hymn: How Deep The Father's Love For Us or Jesus Paid It All (Christ I Owe) Closing Hymn: Great is Thy Faithfulness

#324 or Make me a channel of your peace #740 or A Mighty

Fortress Is Our God #315

Communion Sunday

Let me describe a morning
that is probably familiar to most of us.

You wake up early to a brand new day.
With a coffee in hand, you turn on the news,
it's all trade war and inflation.
When you look out your window,
you see the neighbour's dog
squatting and making a deposit on your front lawn.

After getting dressed, you go run some errands.
While you are waiting for a space in the parking lot
Someone quickly turns in and steals it from the other direction.
Once out of the car, you see that your shirt
is marked by spaghetti from dinner the night before.

This is all before 10:00 in the morning.
None of these things is a crisis.
But add them together and suddenly the peace
you started the morning with has slowly disappeared.

That is the kind of ordinary,
everyday life into which Paul speaks about peace.
Today we are continuing our exploration of the fruit of the Spirit.
Of all the fruit listed in Galatians,
peace counters the greatest number
of those 'works of the flesh' that Paul lists earlier:
"hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage,
selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy".
[Also known as local politics...]

As Christians, we know that we have been given peace
With God through the death and resurrection of Jesus.
Most of us understand that
"This is the point at which all peace begins.
[That we] cannot have peace within
or peace with other people
until we first have peace with God." (Jeff Bridges *The Fruitful Life*
74)

So how do we cultivate this peace God has given us???
By learning the way of Jesus in how we treat people,
where we take our worries,
and what we allow to occupy our minds.
This is what the Apostle Paul tells us
in his letter to the church in Philippi.

The Apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians
probably while he was under guard in Rome.
This church had been established through his efforts
And the efforts of Silas.
And it was there they had been beaten with rods and jailed
for freeing a woman from a spirit of fortune-telling.

This passage is often noted for its focus on joy,
But it speaks just as loudly of peace.

Paul helps us to see that the key to peace
is not simply learning to get along.
It is learning to approach other people
with the mind and humility of Jesus.
Paul highlights division between two women, Euodia and
Syntyche,
Who had previously worked alongside him.

He doesn't give us any details about their conflict.

Paul doesn't tell us who was right.
He doesn't tell us who was wrong.
He doesn't even tell us what the argument was about.
Instead, he points them toward Jesus.
"Be of the same mind in the Lord."

In other words, when conflict comes,
the first question isn't always,
"How do I prove that I'm right?"
but, "How would Jesus have me treat this person?"

If you read the opening chapters of this letter
You'll note Paul's famous description of Jesus,
Who "being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God
something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness." Philippians 2:6-7

Paul helps us to see that the key to peace
Is following this model
in our own dealings with people.

Imagine what might happen if instead of seeing our competitor
As a devil, we see them as someone who is loved by Jesus
Just as much as we are?

Imagine the possibilities for peace
If we spent less time trying to justify our own behavior
And more time serving others with gentleness?

So how do we cultivate the peace God has given us?
First, we learn the way of Jesus in how we treat people.

Then we learn what to do with our worries
And how to occupy our minds.

Paul's wisdom on these matters is worth considering.
Paul practised what he preached.
He is remembered for singing hymns in prison.
Paul tells us "Do not be anxious about anything,
but in every situation, by prayer and petition,
with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

Paul isn't denying that we all
face anxiety-producing situations.
What he is telling us is how to best respond to them.

Instead of allowing ourselves to ruminate
We are to offer ourselves in prayer.
Instead of despairing that there are no good solutions
we are to share our concerns with God.
And do this with thanksgiving.

Did you notice that?

This is an interesting addition.

We are to remind ourselves of God's faithfulness.

Maybe this is so we will have greater confidence

In what we are asking God to do.

And maybe this is so we have greater confidence

That God will care for us whether

Any hoped-for relief comes.

Paul says that even while we are waiting for God to act,
his peace can guard us. [see Jeff Bridges *The Fruitful Life* 77]

So how do we cultivate the peace God has given us?

We learn the way of Jesus in how we treat people,

In where we take our worries,

AND in what we allow to occupy our minds.

Sometimes anxiety comes knocking.

But sometimes we go looking for it.

We repeatedly give our attention
to the very things that rob us of peace.

But Paul invites us to refocus our thoughts on

“whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right,
whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—
[excellent or praiseworthy].

How many of you would consider yourselves news junkies?

It is good to be informed.

We should care about what is happening in our world.

But there is a difference between being informed
and being consumed.

We can spend twenty minutes learning

what is happening in the world.

And we can spend all morning

hearing those same reports again and again

filling our minds with worries

that we have no capacity to resolve.

But what if we were better curators of our own attention?

How might life be different if we took

Even half of the time we give to news updates

And used it to read the Psalms and reflect on Scripture,

Or take a walk in the park and offer a few prayers?

As we focus on the good things God has blessed us with,
the Spirit cultivates a more peaceful spirit in us.

This isn't simply positive thinking.

Paul is teaching us to deliberately focus our minds

On what is true, good and worthy of praise

and to do that in the presence of God.

As we do, the Spirit cultivates in us a more peaceful spirit.

And here's the kicker.

When the more peaceful you is interacting with others

your behaviour toward them will change.

You will be more gentle and less controlling

You will be more thoughtful and less impulsive.

Conflict will be diminished.

We often complain about how frenzied our lives are.

Paul gives us a different way to live.

Because we have been reconciled to God through Christ,
we can become people through whom his peace spreads.

Not by eliminating every conflict.
 Not by eliminating every source of anxiety.
 But through small, Spirit-shaped choices in how we treat people,
 where we take our worries, and what we allow to occupy our
 minds.
 As we practice the way of peace, the fruit of peace begins to grow
 and begins to affect the communities in which we live.

Today we are again at the Lord's Table.
 We don't come because we have mastered the way of peace.
 We come because Christ has made peace for us.
 We come with our conflicts, our anxieties,
 our restless minds and our failures.

Before we are called to become people who make peace,
 we are invited to receive the peace Christ has already made.
 This peace with God is not something we manufacture or earn.
 It is a gift of grace, given to us through Jesus.
 And from that peace, we learn to become people of peace.

Let me close with a prayer of St. Francis:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
 Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
 Where there is injury, pardon;
 Where there is doubt, faith;
 Where there is despair, hope;
 Where there is darkness, light;
 Where there is sadness, joy.
 O Divine Master,
 Grant that I may not so much seek
 To be consoled as to console,
 To be understood as to understand,
 To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,
 It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
 And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
 Amen.