

'My peace', John 14. 27.

As soon as Judas left the upper room¹, Jesus began to speak to the remaining apostles of His own imminent departure.

It isn't difficult to imagine how they must have felt. He had won their hearts to a man. For His sake they had forsaken all (father and mother, wife and children, home and occupation²), and had found in Him more than adequate compensation for their sacrifice. They had been with Him now for over three years, continuing with Him through all His temptations and trials.³

Yes, there had been times in the past when He had sent them out alone to preach, to heal and to cast out demons, but He had always been there when they had returned to tell Him all they had done and taught.⁴ And He had always been there to shelter them when they came under fire from their foes.⁵

But now, here in the 'upper room', the disciples were made to realise that Jesus was about to leave them ... that shortly He was to die. The Lord therefore spoke to dispel their fears and anxieties, and to assure them that, difficult as it was for them to accept, His going would prove to be for their good.⁶

In one sense, the two occurrences of His expression, 'Let not your heart be troubled',⁷ serve as bookends to John 14. Everything He said between was aimed at comforting and encouraging their troubled hearts. He began with the promise of a future hope,⁸ and ended with the promise of a present peace.⁹

But now was not the first time He used the word 'troubled' in this section of the gospel. In chapter 12, knowing that the hour had come for Him to be glorified through His sufferings, He had said, 'Now is my soul troubled'.¹⁰ In chapter 13, John noted that, with the treachery of Judas in mind, 'Jesus ... was troubled in spirit'.¹¹

It was Jesus who was facing the agony and anguish of the cross. It was Jesus who was 'troubled' in soul and in spirit. One would have thought therefore that this was the time for the disciples to comfort and to encourage Him.¹² But they were concerned only with their own impending loss, leaving it for *Him* to comfort *them*.

In our text, the Lord Jesus spoke of His peace in two ways.

On the one hand it was **a legacy bequeathed**. David once wrote of the 'men of this world, which have their portion in this life', who '*leave* the rest of their substance to their babes'.¹³ And, when Jesus declares, 'Peace I *leave* to you', He uses the same word¹⁴ as is found in the Greek Old Testament version of David's words. We might say then that Jesus speaks of His peace as His last will and testament. He had no *earthly* possessions to leave His disciples: no property, investments or wealth, such as men usually lay up for their offspring. But the legacy which He bequeathed to them was of far, far greater value; it was *His very own peace*.

But then His peace was also **a gift bestowed**. Among the Jews, 'Peace'¹⁵ was an ordinary, everyday, conventional greeting. In many cases it was an empty form, at most conveying someone's best wishes. But that is not how Jesus '*gives*' peace. Unlike the world, He actually bestows peace. And it was *His own peace* which He '*gives*' - His calm serenity in the face of all kinds of pressures, trials and dangers, which nothing had been able to shake. Rouse Him from well-deserved sleep if you must, tell Him the boat itself is about to sink underneath Him, but you would not ruffle Him.¹⁶

And we cannot miss that He speaks of His peace *now*; not at some idyllic moment when sitting on a sunlit grassy slope overlooking the Sea of Galilee, but on the very evening before His suffering, at the moment of supreme crisis when He knows that 'His hour was come'¹⁷ Clearly then the (well-earned and proven) peace He '*leaves*' and '*gives*' to His own is altogether independent of outward circumstances.

And so we hear the Living Lord say to each of us today, 'Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid'.

Peace, perfect peace, **with loved ones far away?**
In Jesus' keeping we are safe, and they.

Peace, perfect peace, **our future all unknown?**
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.¹⁸

Notes

¹ John 13. 30 (Mark 14. 15).

² Matt. 19. 27.

³ Luke 22. 28.

⁴ Mark 6. 30.

⁵ Mark 2. 24-26.

⁶ John 16. 7.

⁷ John 14. 1, 27.

⁸ John 14. 1-3.

⁹ John 14. 27.

¹⁰ John 12. 27.

¹¹ John 13. 21.

¹² Cf. Psa. 69. 20.

¹³ Psa. 17. 14.

¹⁴ 'ἀφίημι'.

¹⁵ 'Shālōm'.

¹⁶ Mark 4. 37-39.

¹⁷ John 13. 1.

¹⁸ From Edward Henry Bickersteth's hymn, '*Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?*'