

Sermon fruit of the Spirit is peace and joy

Introduction

(Pp) Keeping in Step with the Spirit means that God is transforming our character so we manifest the fruit of the Spirit. And the fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5 tells us, **(PP)** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

Do you remember the famous quote used to describe the name of the coming Messiah, Jesus? His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, (see if anyone can give the last name -) **Prince of Peace.** The Old Testament word for Peace in this and other OT contexts is shalom. It means complete well-being: peace within our body, peace within our mind, peace with others, and peace with God. I believe this kind of well-being is what billions in the world are actually seeking. And Jesus, the true Messiah gives that peace to all who follow him. He says “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you. Not as the world gives, let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Philip Keller the contemporary pastor in Manhattan New York says “Jesus brings this peace of God which can garrison our hearts against anxiety, difficulties and sorrows. His peace means peace within – a deep inner security, a profound psychological and emotional equilibrium, a quietness and confidence that endures forever (Ps. 4:8, Isa. 26:3, Isaiah 32:17. A peace that maintains the soul even in the midst of threats and difficulties. Christ’s peace.

And this kind of peace is what the Holy Spirit wants to live out in the lives of every Christ-follower – you and me and our church community, multiplied millions of times over across the world. Peace, and joy are the two characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit we will focus on today. **Let us pray**

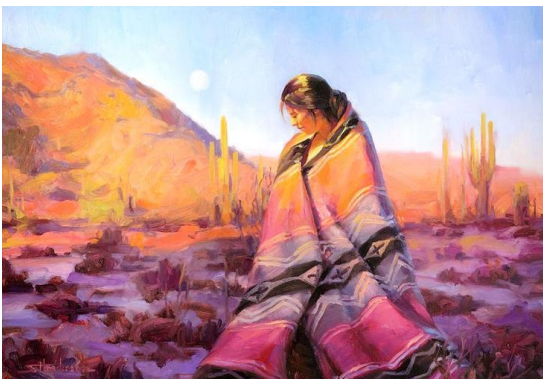
The fruit of the Spirit is peace

Actually the “fruit of the Spirit” is spoken of in the singular because it is a package deal from the Spirit helping Christians become increasingly like Christ in our character.. What a miracle this transformation is for most of us!!

Do you remember the story of an art contest with the prize given to the artist who created the best image of peace? One artist painted a tranquil setting - like this woman sitting in a hammock meditating by calm water. Maybe like Jeri today, right?! 😊 Another artist painted a bird nestled snugly on its nest as a storm raged around her.



The artist whose picture of the bird nesting in the storm won the contest. Why? Because although we all crave tranquil moments of quietness and serenity, real life is often more like the storm and waves crashing over the rocks. With God's peace even in those situations, the believer is not storm-tossed like the waves but is living under God's sovereignty and protection, trusting in God's tranquility which overrules one's concerns and circumstances.



(PP) This kind of peace comes out of a secure relationship with God. It is the heavy blanket like a shawl covering this girl in the desert. It keeps out the things that would make us cold and unable to function well. We are covered with His peace like a shield around us. **(PP)** As Joel Osteen says, "You can be in the storm but don't let the storm get in you."

The fruit of the Spirit which is peace and joy comes from an active faith in Jehovah Shalom **(PP)**The Lord is peace. As I mentioned, in the Old Testament shalom means a profound psychological and emotional wholeness, a peace that can garrison our hearts against anxiety, difficulties, and sorrows. It is a peace that is lived out in the midst of threats and the things which cause anxiety. Biblically, it is significant that this Old Testament Shalom was usually always experienced in community. Walter Bruggeman says it is "a vision of wholeness in which persons are bound not only to God but to one another in a caring, sharing, rejoicing community...it is not idyllic pie in the sky; it is not magical thinking; it is the bedrock of salvation in Jesus Christ, a wholeness that empowers others to live fully."

In the New Testament that shalom is centered in Christ's gift of peace to all his followers. John 14:27: Jesus said, "I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid." Note –Christ's peace is NOT as the world gives – a peace that is circumstantially based or artificially produced or self-indulging. It is a peace that he gives us by His very presence and power when He calms the storms we are facing.



In every sermon I give a story or two to illustrate the point in daily life but in this case the best story comes right out of the New Testament. You may know it. It occurred when the disciples were caught in a furious storm on Lake Galilee. Evelyn Underhill in her book The Light of Christ says this:

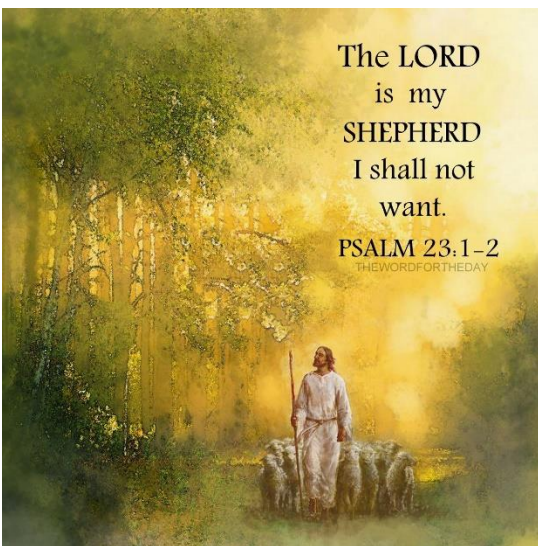
“Sometimes we are, as it were, in the middle of the lake and the storm breaks, usually from a quarter we don’t expect and we are doubtful whether our little boat is going to stand it. We feel

helpless, making no progress and are inclined to say, ‘I have gone to bits; I have no help, no support. This cannot be a spiritual life.’ We begin to lose our grip. We are in utter wretchedness and discouragement.”

But Jesus stilled the storm with His very word. Mark 4:39: “Jesus rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.” He transformed the situation by his presence and His power. Underhill continues, “One way or another, life brings every awakening Christian soul this experience. When we recognize it and reflect on it — it fills us with awe and grateful love. God in Christ intervenes between us and the storms that threaten to overwhelm us. His power is brought into action just where our action fails. . .

That understanding] sheds a tranquil radiance on all our lives; teaches us in the stress and difficulty of these lives, in all the tight places to which we are brought in our work, to look for and trust the rescuing and supporting action of God.” (Evelyn Underhill, *Light of Christ*, David McKay Company, 1944, pp.70-72). Amen!

Jesus’ peace is also our portion when He is our Shepherd. That’s why we opened with the hymn “The King of Love my Shepherd is.” His loving care, His restoration of our soul, His guidance and protection, His sure victory over all the evil forces in our life – resting in His reality is the foundation for our peace. We just need to stay close beside Him. This is why I love this particular picture of Jesus and His flock! Look how close the flock is to Him. And that can be true for us. When the Lord is MY Shepherd, I shall not want. He takes care of all my needs and sees me through each circumstance, blessing me with His goodness and mercy all my life- even before I go to dwell in the House of the Lord forever! Have you committed your life to Jesus as your Shepherd, beloved. He wants to do all this in giving



The LORD
is my
SHEPHERD
I shall not
want.
PSALM 23:1-2
THEWORDFORTHEDAY

you His abundance of life but it is not automatic. You need to actively entrust yourself, your mind, your health, your circumstances, your relationships to Him so He can take proper care of you. Then, you shall lack nothing and peace will be your portion.

Finally, when Jesus is holding us close and granting His peace, our hearts are freed to know His joy as well. The text in this joyous picture is from Ps. 30:11: “You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing in your praises and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will praise you forever.”



Peace and joy go together in the fruit of the Spirit.
Hallelujah!

As an opportunity to express this joy more fully, next Sunday, there will be a jazz form of worship throughout the service. We are having a jazz pianist who used to be our accompanist in our international house church and a small ensemble of other musicians from the church lead us in worship. I am so excited about the joy and energy and opportunity for a different form of praise next week. Do invite your friends – especially those who don't attend here regularly and are part of the younger generations. I think they will love it.

Peace and Joy are our heritage as Jesus followers when we allow the Spirit to transform us into Christ's character. How amazing. Let's pray. Amen.

Dr. M.L. Codman-Wilson, Permanent Preaching Pastor
Ogden Dunes Community Church 1 22 23