

December 14, 2008
Advent 3

Pastor Russell Lackey
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Philippians 4:7

The Peace of God

And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”

A few weeks ago, a member of the church gave me a shirt with a fish on the front and the words, “Lutefisk, the piece of cod that passes all understanding.” If you have ever tasted lutefisk, then you know the truth of these words.

I share this with you because throughout the service peace has been our theme. We sang about it in the Gloria. We shared the “Peace of the Lord” with each other. It was the theme of the Cantata. The benediction will end with the words, “The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.”

You would think that since we are always talking about peace, we would be a people filled with peace. We are not. Instead, we are people filled with conflict. Marriages are factious, friendships are antagonistic, and families are divided. There is conflict in our streets, in our workplace, in our homes, and even in our churches. Disharmony is everywhere, inside and out. Just look at the parking lots around the mall. Last minute shoppers share holiday greetings (if you catch my drift) with each other.

Last year, I was driving by the mall and I cut off a car unintentionally. The person came alongside me and flipped my off. As I looked at the person and as the person looked at me, we realized that we knew each other. Even more, he was a member of the church. You can image how nervous he was the following Sunday when he came to church.

The reason for our conflict is not the market. We were just as afflicted last year. The fault does not lie with the President of the United States. We cannot even blame our jobs. Our conflict is due to the deeper conflict we have with God. You see, ever since the fall, humanity has experienced conflict. If you remember, when confronted in the garden, Eve blamed the serpent. Adam blamed both Eve and God: “The woman that YOU gave me made me eat.” We have been blaming each other and God ever since.

What is worse, when Jesus, the Prince of Peace, actually came to bring peace on earth, humanity violently killed him. Jeremiah is right to say, “The people say, ‘Peace, peace,’ there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:14).

The good news is that God’s love for us is greater than our hatred. The peace that Christ offers is greater than our conflict. It is truer than our doubt.

It is true that we do not always feel this peace. However, there is a day coming when we will experience it fully. On that day, all conflict will cease. There will be no more tears, pain, or death. God will make everything new.

Until that day, listen to the words of the apostle Paul: “And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and mind in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7).

Now isn't that better than Lutefisk?

**In Jesus Name,
Amen**