

## **Sermon: Ann**

I am sure we have all commented on how quickly time passes and the older we grow the quicker it seems to pass! Jesus in the passage we heard from John this morning is all too aware of how swiftly the time with the disciples is moving and he has so much to say to try to reassure them. Did they grasp the fact that he was soon to be arrested and executed? Did they close their minds to something that none of us want to face; the death of someone who we love? Jesus had already given them the commandment to love one another as he had loved them. That in itself was a tall order but he is continuing to speak urgently to them.

There is a very important point in Jesus' words which is relevant to us today; the Holy Spirit will teach them everything and remind them of all he has taught them. The word for Holy Spirit is *parakletos* which has been variously translated as advocate, comforter, counsellor, helper, there forever. Much more than a solicitor or a counsellor as we know them today. The *paraklete* stands beside us and leads us to the way of truth.

Jesus goes on to give the disciples comfort by saying that they should be glad that he is returning home to his Father. He has said that there are many mansions, room for each of us. Hopefully this did give the disciples some comfort but in the dark days ahead it must have been so difficult to accept what he had said. I will not leave you orphaned, bereft. And he gives us the same promise.

I'd like to read part of an advert for a beauty salon.

“When you need to get away from the demands of work or everyday existence we can help you find a haven of peace and tranquillity.” A haven of peace and tranquillity! What a picture and a wonderful thought! Jesus said “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.” So we have a choice! The beauty salon or what Jesus offers? Either down to the shop to be pampered or acceptance of the promises given to us?

Jesus goes on to say “I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid.”

The beauty salon has existed for a few years; Christ's promise has lasted more than two thousand! So what is peace? There was the Pax Romana, brought about and sustained by force; the Jews thought that the Messiah would be a great warrior; Christ brought true peace into the world by the death of one man. Bede Griffiths was quoted in Peter Spinks book *The Universal Christ* as saying "In India the great example of the power of peace was seen in Mahatma Ghandi whose inner peace influenced the whole nation. Work for peace must first of all be a work within ourselves." William Barclay wrote, "In the Bible the word peace, shalom, never simply means the absence of trouble. Peace means everything which makes for our highest good. The peace which the world offers us is the peace of escape, the peace which comes from the avoidance of trouble, the peace which comes from refusing to face things. The peace which Jesus offers us is the peace of conquest. It is the peace which no experience in life can ever take from us. It is the peace which no sorrow, no danger,

no suffering can make less. It is the peace which is independent of outward circumstances.”

We are asked to step out in faith to show God’s love and peace but we are not alone. The Holy Spirit is beside us, waiting to show us the way towards that wonderful inner peace, promised to us as to the disciples. And we too find it as difficult.

The reading from Acts, written by St Luke, tells us of the conversion of Lydia. One of the strange things in this story is that the first convert in Europe was a woman and a wealthy one at that! We have already heard of the lowly position of women and yet Lydia ran her own business and was hospitable and head of her household. You can imagine the gossip which would follow after her conversion. Poor Lydia! Caught up with these strange men! But it shows the Holy Spirit at work in unlikely places and today too it can be found working where perhaps we would not expect it.

Jesus promised us the gift of peace and the Holy Spirit to help us. What are we going to do? Do we want the peace that doesn’t

make life flawless but gives us the inner strength to keep going when all seems lost or the peace from the salon? It is only with a relationship with Christ that we will step out in faith and love to show God's peace.

Later in the service we will give one another a sign of peace. May that gift be truly the peace of God.