

The Cost of our Peace

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- [0 : 0 0] Well thank you Thomas again for just leading the beginning of the service and again a warm welcome.
- We are in John's Gospel and chapter 16 and verse 33 of John's Gospel chapter 16 says this I have said these things to you that in me you may have peace.
- In the world you will have tribulation but take heart I have overcome the world.
- One of my brothers prayed right towards the end of his prayer he prayed for the family or families that are grieving and he prayed for those families that they would have peace in their grief and it's an entirely legitimate prayer and a great prayer that those who are hurting those who are troubled would have peace in their troubles.
- And that's really what we're going to be thinking about tonight. In and through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ we are able to have peace. We are able to experience an element of comfort, an element of rest inside of us because of what he has accomplished on the cross and what we will celebrate tomorrow, his death.
- [1 : 3 0] We noticed this afternoon the assault on that peace in the sense that there is persecution. There are those who will seek to undermine us as Christians.
- There is the opposition that we face as Christians. There are powers and principalities. There are people who will seek to bring us down and not lift us up because of our status as Christians.
- So this evening we're going to look at the fact that there is a cost to that peace. There is a cost to that peace and that sense that it doesn't simply come freely.
- There is cost to the peace that we have as Christians. This section here in John's Gospel is right at the end of what theologians might call a farewell discourse.
- As he says goodbye to his disciples, he prepares them. He warns them. He sets them up. For what? For his death.
- [2 : 3 3] He is about to die. He is about to face that horrific death on the crucifixion. And he prepares his people for his departure.
- He warns them again. He encourages them. And he says to them some pretty difficult things like you will go through struggles. You will face persecution.
- Life for you will not be easy. But right at the end of that section he lifts them up and he encourages them by saying, I have said these things to you that in me you may have peace.
- In the world you will have tribulation but take heart I have overcome the world. His desire is that they would know that peace.
- That is what he wants. His desire is that they would have that in a rest and in a peace despite what they are experiencing in their lives.
- [3 : 3 4] Despite what you are experiencing in your lives. His desire is that they would know and experience that peace.

His warning is that they will have trouble. That's his warning. That preparation if you like is that they will have trouble.

And his comfort is that in his words I have overcome the world. That's his comfort.

And what we are going to notice tomorrow is his victory and the victory that gives us and brings us that peace and that is his death on that cross.

So we are going to notice first of all that there is a cost to the disciples. The cost to the disciples. There is a great book by a guy by the name of Dereck Bonhoeffer who was a pastor.

[4 : 38] He was one of the guys if you have never heard of Dereck Bonhoeffer. He was a guy who stood up against Hitler during the Second World War and he would speak out against the Nazi regime.

And he wrote a great book called The Cost to Discipleship. It's a fantastic book, The Cost to Discipleship. And it really talks about the fact that as Christians there is a cost for us.

It is not plain sailing. Life is not all simply a bed of roses for us as Christians. We notice something of that this morning that we will face persecution. But there is a cost to the peace that we are able to experience in the Lord Jesus Christ by following him and having faith in him.

Because first of all for the disciples that persecution. That is the first area where we see where there is a cost to their peace. That persecution.

And the heading of the NIV of that section which we looked at this morning is the world hates the disciples. The world hates the disciples.

[5 : 41] We saw that in John 15 and 18. And this area where we see this cost to them and to their lives is the fact that they will experience grief before they experience joy.

We see that in verse 20. And here Jesus is saying to the disciples, you will experience grief. You will grieve. And he is talking about his death. When I die, when I leave you, when I am hung up there on the cross, you will grieve.

When the rest of the world rejoices, when the rest of the world and powers and principalities will believe that they have taken care of Jesus and that is the end of them, they will rejoice and he says to his people, you will grieve when the rest of the world rejoices.

And in that he is warning them about his death. He is warning them what they will have to face. But he says you will grieve. I took a funeral just a couple of weeks ago or about a week ago.

I know Thomas was taking a funeral just yesterday. One of the things that I said to the people that were grieving, I said to them, you need to grieve.

[6 : 49] You need to go through that experience of grief. Show your emotions. Cry. Be emotional. There is an element in the world. There is a section of the church that says, well you can't show your feelings, especially if you are a Christian.

You shouldn't show your feelings, you shouldn't be emotional. That's not the sort of thing that we do. I said to them, show your emotions. Grieve. And the sense here in which Jesus is rubber stamping that, grief is part of our brokenness.

It's part of the broken world in which we live. In which we live. But he says to his people, you will grieve.

It's an expression of their love for loved ones, isn't it? It's an expression of their feelings and their love for those who have departed.

Thirdly, we notice that they will be scattered. Jesus says to his disciples in verse 32, they will be scattered.

[7 : 50] Behold, the hour is coming indeed. It has come when you will be scattered each to his own home and will leave me alone.

Another, one of the other gospels, and it's Mark's gospel, Jesus actually quotes Zechariah 13.7 there, where he says, strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.

And in Zechariah, what has been spoken about there is that the shepherd will be struck by God. And we see that in the death of Jesus, that it is the Father who will actually allow him to go through that death.

The Father will strike the shepherd. So here we have Jesus saying to his disciples, you will be scattered. And our part of that is the fact that they are denying Jesus, but we see part of their turmoil around that time in which he will die, around that time of confusion, around his death.

They will be scattered, Jesus says. There will be this difficulty. There will be this persecution. There will be the scattering. And so there will be cost to their lives.

[9 : 07] And then we come fourthly to what he says there in verse 33, in this world you will have trouble. And there is certainty there.

He says in this world you will have trouble. There is no ambiguity here. There is no question about whether you will have trouble. He says in this world you will have trouble. Christian, your life is not going to be a bed of roses.

The fallacy and the lie that we might say to people, come to Jesus, come to church, come to know Jesus, and your life will go swimmingly from there on.

Sections of the church, and I know not in this one, but section of the church around the world, there is that lie that is peddled out there. Come to Jesus. And everything will be a bed of roses.

Come to Jesus as you will never face difficulties. You will never face trouble. You will never face hardship. You will never face grief because everything will be absolutely perfect.

[10 : 07] And we know dear friends that that is just not true. We know that even after we came to faith, life was difficult. You faced trouble. You faced difficulty.

We faced hardship. And he says it was certainty. You will face trouble. Now, when John uses the word trouble in John's Gospel, it could mean one of two things.

It could mean either a general eschatological and time trouble, talking about evil, talking about sin.

So that's what it could mean. A sort of general problem with sin, a general problem with evil. Romans 2.9 says there will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil.

Or again, when John uses that word trouble, it could mean particularly persecution. We've already covered something of that this afternoon.

[11 : 08] It could mean persecution. Paul talks about his own persecution in Ephesians 3.13. I ask you therefore not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

We know that Paul was under house arrest. We know that he was under chains while he was writing some of his letter. Paul is a great example for us about one who went through troubles.

That we know with Paul that he wasn't somebody who simply became a Christian and everything was just rosy and everything just worked out absolutely perfectly for him. No.

He says to his people, don't be distressed about my suffering. Don't be distressed about the trouble that I go through. In John, trouble could mean one of these two things.

I think it actually means both things here. There is a broad spectrum of what trouble could mean. It could mean a myriad of things for John.

[12 : 12] What's his point, dear friends? His point is that you will face trouble. That's what he's saying. You will face difficulties.

You will face trouble. John Stott said this. He said, to follow Jesus is always to accept at least a measure of uncertainty, danger and rejection for his sake.

You heard of that term while it's a hard providence. Have you ever heard of that phrase? That person has gone through one thing after the other thing after the other thing after the other thing.

There have been hard providences for that's a hard providence. That's a really tough providence. I want to dear friends, if that's perhaps you tonight or somebody that you know or friends or family for that's a hard providence.

Jesus says you will face trouble. You will go through difficulties. You will go through tough times. Now that doesn't mean that when we go through hardship God has lost control.

[13 : 22] That is really, really important for us to think about. When we go through our troubles it doesn't mean that God has somehow lost control.

Oh jeepers, I let it slip there. God doesn't say that. God doesn't lose control. Ever, ever, ever does God lose control.

He is one who is always in control. These things, these difficulties, these hard providences are things that are not random coincidences in a chaotic world outside of God's control.

That is a belief out there. The atheists will say, oh that's just a misfortune. That's tough luck. That's tough luck for you.

God never loses control. We believe in a sovereign God. We believe in a God who is always in control. We believe in a God who created the universe.

[14 : 23] We believe in a God that never loses an ounce of control. Whatever the circumstances, whatever is going on in the world, whatever is going on in Syria, whatever is going on in politics, whatever is going on in dictatorships, whatever is going in an all evil in the whole world. God is sovereign and God does never ever lose control.

And dear friends, we can be comforted by that fact tonight. We can be comforted by the fact that God is in control and that he will never leave us nor forsake us. He was always in control. He is sovereign and he is not the cause of evil. He is not the cause of sin.

He is not the cause of all the evil going on in the world. Evil is controlled by God. There are times when he allows evil. There are times when he allows Satan even to affect our lives in measure in order that we might grow, in order that we might grow into the likeness of Jesus. Revelation 7 and 13 to 14 says this, and just bear with me. It's a great little passage in Revelation. Then one of the elders asked me, that's John. One of the elders asked me, these in white robes, who are they and where did they come from?

I answered, sir, you know. And he said, these are they who have come out of the Great Tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white on the blood of the Lamb. Their robes have been washed by the blood of the Lamb. They are clean. They are wearing those robes of righteousness. The elders and John are looking on at what is a miracle. In fact, they're looking on at what is a myriad of miracles as they look on at believers as those who have been converted in the world who have come to believe and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. They look on at this myriad, this mass of people, this multitude of people.

They look on at this incredible sight of all those who have been converted, who have come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and put their trust in Him. Those who are sinners and those who are now righteous, perfectly righteous, perfectly holy, a mass of people, a mass of miracles. They look on at that. And the point of this little text is this.

[17:16] They have come out of the Great Tribulation. They've come out of the Great Tribulation, which means all the persecutions and all the trials of God's people over all of Christian history. They look on at this beautiful picture of all these people who are righteous, who are holy, who are absolutely holy, wearing those robes of righteousness. And they have been made white through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a sight, what an incredible sight as they look on at this. And we can think about that for those who come to the Lord's Supper. Maybe you're facing your own tribulations tonight. Maybe you're coming to that Lord's Supper thinking, oh, I wonder how I actually got here after that incident or that thing last week or this last year, which was a trial. And here we have a picture of the new heaven and the new earth, of all God's children, all God's people, a whole mass of people so that you cannot even count them. And they are clothed in the righteous robes of righteousness. And those robes have been made clean, that pure white by the blood of the Lamb on the cross in and through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, as somebody prayed today, not because of their own works, not because of your own works, not because of anything that you have done, but because of that finished work on the cross at Calvary. There is a Dutch saying for those who are dying or those who have died, which literally means to get over or to get beyond suffering. And it's the same for Christians.

It's the same and it's true for the believer as well. To get over, to die is to get over, is to get over the Great Tribulation, is to get over all the cancer, is to get over all that time, the weeping and the mourning and all the trouble that we face in the world.

To get over that and to be with Jesus, that is the comfort of the believer. And so in our tribulations, our faith is tested, is it not? And so through our tribulations, God is molding us and he is shaping us. Our faith is tested in affliction. Charles Spurgeon says this, do you not know that your faith never looks so grand in summer weather as it does in winter? I love that. So I know it's true for me, I don't know if it's true for you. It's in the wintertime and by the way I really struggled in the wintertime coming from the southern hemisphere. Those dark, dark, dark days. The dark nights and the dark days and the troubles and the difficulties and the weather. This one has been great but normally it just rains every single day on the west coast. But it's through those times that I feel that I'm closest to the Lord. I don't know about you, do you feel the same? It's through the valleys that God often takes us through. That our faith is being tested. That we ourselves are being molded and we are being shaped and he's making us more into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we come tonight and we come expectantly before we come to the table we come with all our brokenness and all our troubles and all our difficulties coming knowing that we come to Jesus who welcomes us. So he says to his disciples before his death he says in this world you will face trouble but notice what he says by contrast.

He says in me you will have peace. Here is the great contrast here. He says in me you will have peace and here is the language of John 15 if you know your Bibles. That wonderful picture of the vine and the branches. He says in me you will bear fruit. He says abide in me, remain in me, always remain in me. Never depart from me, remain in me and abide in me and you will bear great fruit in your life. And here he says in me in the world you will face trouble but in me you will have peace. I just think that's absolutely great. I think that's great. Here is the promise of Jesus Christ and we can trust his promises. And I wonder how many people tonight are far away from God, far away from Jesus. And for you he says it's only in me that you can know that peace. The reality is that as Christians we straddle both worlds don't we? We're in the world. We're in the troubles. In the world there is troubles and we're in the world and we can do nothing about that. But also we're in Jesus. Yes we're in the world. We've experienced all the troubles of the world. We've experienced elements of that evil in our lives. We'll experience the sin that is in our hearts and that will affect ourselves. It'll affect other people as well because that's what sin does.

It affects it. It's like a ripple effect. It affects many people. But at the same time Jesus says in me you will have peace. And that's why it's a legitimate prayer to pray for the Christian that is mourning, to pray for the Christian that is struggling. That they would know that peace which surpasses all understanding. Paul says that in you contentment whatever his situation, in you contentment and that is similar to what Jesus is saying.

[23 : 39] There is a cost to us as disciples. And he makes it very clear to his people he doesn't just leave them to go into the world without warning them that there is a cost to discipleship.

But we notice secondly that there is a cost to Jesus. There is a cost to Jesus and quite simply and that is his life isn't it? We live in freedom in the UK and Scotland we live in a peaceful situation relatively speaking. We have peace. We don't have people coming on to our beaches. We have peace. We don't have people bombing us. In the second world war there was much blood spilt for our freedom. And it's the same with Jesus having died for us on the cross. And the reality is that a light Christianity because churches can have a light Christianity where the holiness of God and the righteousness of God isn't really thought about a light Christianity doesn't take into account that there was a great cost to our salvation. And that's something that we remember tonight for those who are coming to the Lord's table tomorrow. That there was a cost to our salvation. Remember my death until I come again. Notice first of all that we see the cost of Jesus in his incarnation.

If you're following me with me in the Bible there is a cost in his incarnation in verse 28. Verse 28 says this, I came from the Father and have come into the world and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father. So there is a cost in his incarnation. If you know your Bibles you know there's a fantastic passage in Philippians 2 that says who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross. So there is a cost in his incarnation as he lost his glory as he became nothing for our sakes as he became a child he became vulnerable. We note to secondly that there is a cost in the fact that he suffered. He suffered on the way to the cross. He suffered in his life. He suffered in so many aspects of his life. He says there in verse 32 to the disciples he says you will leave me and that's just a little hint of the fact that he will suffer on the way to the cross and he will suffer on that cross his suffering.

And of course there is a cost to Jesus in his death. We see that in verse 31 he says a time is coming when I will not be with you anymore. A time is coming where I will be gone. A time is coming where I will depart from you. Remember the apostles creed part of the apostles creed said he descended into hell. There is a cost to the peace that we have in Christ and the greatest cost is the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not simply free. There is a cost to it. And I suppose the main thing for us to take away with us tonight is that we must remember that. And somebody again I just love the prayers that we heard earlier. Somebody again a couple of times talk about gratitude. We come to the table with gratitude. Grateful yes for our lives. Grateful for our relationships.

Grateful for all that God has given us in our lives. But we come grateful for what Jesus has done for us on the cross. He died for us. It cost God the life of his son. So whatever our experience of suffering, whatever our humility, whatever our being made vulnerable, whatever our trials, whatever our loneliness, whatever perhaps the effect of death or grief in our lives. One of the great comforts for us as the children of God is that Jesus knows.

[28 : 20] Jesus understands. Jesus knows what it is to grieve. Jesus knows what it is to suffer. Jesus knows what it is to have turmoil in the family. Jesus knows what it is. All these things he knows and he understands. He understands what we go through. God understands. There was a cost to the peace that we have. And that was the death and the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ. As he gave up his life obediently going to the cross and giving of himself that you and I might have life and have life to the full. Christians, one day you, we will be part of that great multitude of which the elder said, these are they who have come out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. Their purity comes from them having been washed. Their robes has made them white in the blood of the lamb. In other words, they have placed all their trust in the saving blood of Jesus Christ. They put their faith in the saving blood of Jesus Christ. They've given their whole lives, every single aspect of their lives to Jesus and submitted their lives to Jesus. This blood has cleansed them of their guilt and their pollution from sin. And so the great cost to Jesus was his life and his blood. On the 17th of February 1941, the Polish Catholic monk Maximilian Kolby was arrested by the Gestapo for his human rights activism. Sheltering Jews and other refugees. After his arrest, Kolby was shipped to the notorious Auschwitz concentration camp. A year later, three prisoners escaped and to deter further escape attempts, the deputy camp commander picked ten men at random to be locked in an underground bunker and starved to death. When one of the selected men, a friend of Kolby's, cried out, my wife, my children, he burst into tears. Kolby volunteered to take his place. He says to the gods, he said to the deputy camp commander, I will go and I will go into that bunker and I will starve to death. That that man and his family might have life. He was thrown into a tiny bunker with the other nine men and left to die of starvation and dehydration. Why did he do this? He believed that love was the supreme ethic and it compelled him to act, of acting on Jesus' words, greater love has no one than this. Jesus demonstrated that himself on the cross. There is no greater love than Jesus giving up his life for you and for me as sinners, as we come in all our sinfulness and our brokenness. Dear friends, we need Jesus and he waits for us with open arms and he says, come to me, come to me all you who are heavy laden and I will give you rest and that's the peace that we're talking about. And I wonder if there are any people here tonight who have never come to the table ever before. My dear friends, the table is for those who are broken and in need of God's grace. The table is for those who are sinners.

You hear people saying, well, I'm not going to the table because I'm not like them. I'm a bad person. Join the club, dear friends. The table is for sinners. The table is for those who recognize their deep, deep need for the forgiveness and the grace of the living God. And so the children of God, we come with gratitude to the table. We come resting in the finished work of Jesus on the cross and we come rejoicing and singing because it is good news that he has done for us. As we remember his death, we look ahead as well. We look ahead to that time when God will look on us and say, well done, good and faithful servant.

Come and join me and we will be with him. Let's bow our heads and pray. Father God, we thank you so much for the death of Jesus on the cross. We thank you, Lord God, that we can come with all our failings, with all our faults and we can humble ourselves at the foot of the cross, recognizing that we come not because we have it all sorted, but we come recognizing that we're broken and in need of your forgiveness. Oh, Lord Jesus, we thank you for that finished work. We thank you for your obedience. Lord, help us to take us through the tribulations that you promised that we would face. Give us the grace and the strength that we need, whatever our circumstances, and give us a recognition as well of the cost that you faced, the cost of death. Lord, continue on in our presence. We pray and in Jesus, we ask it. Amen.