

A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

"Peace Like a River" 9/13/23

Peace, I leave with you. My peace I give you. I give to you not as the world gives. Do not be troubled or afraid. (John 14:27)

We want to have less stress, fewer heart palpitations, fewer pills, less anxiety, a good night's sleep, peace. Be still. Be quiet. Breathe. Wait for it. Wait for the answer, the missing word, the next step, a clear vision of the end product to come to you in stillness. What stillness? My life just got tossed into the blender and it's set on puree.

Then I remember Jesus' words, "This is my parting gift to you. Peace. I don't leave you the way you're used to being left, feeling abandoned, bereft. So don't be upset. Don't be distraught." And peace like a river comes to me and I take a deep breath and realize, it is well with my soul.

We all want to live along this river, and we momentarily do, until we are distracted by bills, schedules, traffic jams, others who are late, throwing our perfectly well laid out plan for the day out the window. We can feel comfortable with ourselves, our lives, our situations, then someone looks at us with, what we take as a judgmental eye, and we begin to doubt ourselves, wonder what's wrong, we get defensive. It doesn't take much to throw us off. A wrongly perceived slight, an outright putdown, a bad review, anything which causes us to question our ability, our sanity, another's judgment.

Then there are big things which throw us off course. Natural disasters, an accident, a layoff, a break-up, a difficult diagnosis, a failure. Where is God? Why didn't this work? How could this go sideways so badly? Any change throws us off course. We want what others have, we want to look like we're in control, we deserve to have the peace the world gives. Which really isn't peace at all.

The Stoic, Seneca, described peace this way, "The quiet confidence that comes from being on the right path, and not being distracted by all those which crisscross ours." It is being where God wants us to be, remembering it may not be the destination we set out for this morning. We are to keep our eyes and our expectation on God, not on our vision of what and where we should or deserve or want to be. We need to not care what others say or think or do – that's their reality and we are not responsible for it. We'd like to control the world, but God did not give us that right or the ability to do so.

Don't let others blow you off course. Do what you can with what you have, let the other stuff go, it's not yours to worry about. Stop. Be still. Be quiet. Breathe. Allow God's peace to flow over you like a river.

Please pray with me:

God of peace, thank You for never abandoning us, for being present to bless us with Your peace so we can face and continue our journey. You enable us to deal with the bumps, dead ends, and the unexpected detours with Your grace. Help us to hold on to and live in Your peace and to reflect Your love to others in all we do and say.

Amen.