

## Pentecost on John 14:23-31

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful, and kindle them in the fire of Your love. Amen. Consider what it means to love someone. It means that you enjoy his company. You share what you have with him. You listen to him, and he listens to you. What he says brings you joy, and what you say brings him joy. You are at peace and completely at home with one another. This is the life God has had in himself from eternity. The Father possessed the Son from eternity. He was always his delight. He was always with him, rejoicing in everything he did. The Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father, perfectly united as one eternal God with the Holy Spirit. This unity of God is perfect love, joy, and peace. It is eternal life. This is the same love, joy, and peace – the same life – that Jesus shares with those who believe in him.

The world can't recognize this life, because the world doesn't believe in Jesus. It therefore doesn't love what he loves. It doesn't rejoice in what he rejoices in. It doesn't know the peace that he gives. Instead, the love of this world is fickle and undependable. The joy of this world relies on short-lived and fleeting pleasures. And the peace of this world is only a dream of a life without disagreements, wars, and uncomfortable conflicts. Let's briefly consider the world's view of love, joy, and peace.

The way the world experiences love is by setting its own standards. Hang out with those who already agree with you. Who doesn't want to be with such people? After all, it adds a pep in your step when you can have a good conversation without any controversy. A boy and a girl meet, and they are excited that they seem to have a lot in common. They share similar interests and opinions, and they find it easy, even energizing and ecstatic, to talk to one another. Eventually the excitement settles down, and by the time they realize that they don't actually care for each other as much as they thought they did, it's often too late. They're stuck with one another. The joy they once felt in spending time together has fizzled down to boredom.

The world recognizes how easily love can grow cold like this. People therefore find ways to keep the spark alive. They figure that they can continue to enjoy the ones they love if they just maximize their pleasure. A couple can avoid the responsibilities and burdens that often go along with marriage, all while enjoying the pleasures of the marriage bed. Or if a guy's girlfriend breaks up with him, so can go and get drunk with his buddies to drown away the sorrows.

Whatever you do, avoid anyone who would rain on your parade and tell you that you are doing something wrong. Rid yourself of those you deem too negative. In this way, the world figures out how to keep its joy alive. Of course, this joy lasts only as long as earthly pleasures last. Finally, the world imagines it can achieve peace by its own works and compromises. Of course, no one would argue against avoiding war and conflict whenever possible. After all, the Bible says that we should live at peace with all people as much as it depends on us. There are all sorts of bad rulers around the world, and any unbeliever who thinks reasonably would say that we shouldn't therefore start wars with all of them. But there is a deep arrogance that drives the people of this world, making them think that their ability to get along with other people is what makes for true peace. Over a century ago, people foolishly referred to World War I as the war to end all wars, and people still think they can achieve world peace by controlling the economy, the environment, the culture, or even the population.

But this foolish arrogance doesn't only exist on a global scale. It exists in the living rooms and businesses all around us. When I was in high school, I worked at a restaurant, and I would often sit at the bar drinking lemonade while waiting for a ride home. Whenever I got into conversations about God, his Word, and what was right and wrong, I often heard someone say,

“No talking politics or religion at the bar.” In other words, avoid discussing anything of lasting substance and truth, and then everyone can remain merry and at peace. In the same way, parents often become too afraid to speak against the prevailing immoral behavior promoted in the culture, because their own children are caught up in it, and they don’t want conflict with them. Even churches water down their messages about sin, God’s judgment, repentance, or a host of other unpopular teachings of Scripture, because they are afraid that it will cause a stir among some people. Folks strive for peace by avoiding the truth. Such peace, of course, can never last. What kind of life is that? Loving people based on your own fickle standards, finding joy in fleeting pleasures, and striving for peace by sacrificing your own convictions – that’s no way to live! That’s not life! That’s death. It’s nothing more than the deceitful cloud of unbelief, which is blinding this dying world.

Instead, Jesus teaches us what kind of life he has given us. He gives us a life of lasting love, fulfilling joy, and eternal peace. Because this is the life God has had in himself from all eternity. It is the love, joy, and peace the Father has shared with the Son since before anything was made. The world can’t see this life. It only sees death as it tries in vain to make the best out of this short time on earth. But God has revealed his life through his Son. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He came into this world, born in the flesh. By his love, he bore all our sins in his own body. He didn’t run away from conflict or avoid speaking the truth. He was not discouraged by the shame of his cross, but he had joy in the salvation he was securing for poor sinners. And when we were still enemies cut off from the life of God, he reconciled us to the Father, establishing peace by the blood of his cross.

Jesus ascended into heaven to the right hand of the Father. There he shares in that eternal life of love, joy, and peace. But he did not leave us as orphans. Instead, he promised that he and his Father would come to us and make their home in us. The Father loves the Son. The Son loves the Father. It is a love that surpasses the knowledge of this world. And God’s Holy Spirit pours this very love into the hearts of those who trust in him.

So how do you know this love? You know it by the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit speaks through the words of Christ. Jesus says, “If you love me, you will keep my Word, and my Father will love you, and we will come to you and live with you.” Here Jesus is describing the life of every believer. Those who hear his words and believe in the Father who sent him have eternal life. This life is presently theirs by faith in God’s Son, because he has already done it all. His blood already declares us righteous and redeemed before the Father. Nothing more needs to be added to this faith for it to have what God gives it. But now Jesus is teaching us what that life is. It is to enjoy and share in his love. And with that love, he gives us joy to know that Christ has returned to his Father with our salvation in his hands. With that joy, he gives us peace. This is not the peace given by this world. No, it is the peace of knowing that our Father in heaven does not count our sins against us. It is the peace we rely on when we forgive one another and strive for unity in what we say and do.

We know the life of Christ – we know his love, his joy, and his peace – because of the Holy Spirit. Jesus does not leave us as orphans. The Spirit of Truth comes to us through his Word, giving us faith to believe his promises, filling our hearts with God’s own love, instructing us in all things concerning our salvation, warning us against all falsehood, and comforting us with the truth of our salvation. He takes everything the Father has shared with the Son – his life, his love, his joy, and his peace – and he declares it to us. The Holy Spirit therefore also makes his home in us. He fights against the sinful passions that still wage war against our faith. He teaches us to cry

out in prayer to our Father, and when we are too weak, or when we can't find the words to say, he intercedes for us with sighs that are too deep for words.

This is the life God has given to us. It's why he sent his Son into the flesh to bear the cross in our place. It's why he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand. And it's why he poured out his Holy Spirit on his church. It's why he has baptized you and continues to nurture you with the Spirit, Word, body, and blood of his Son. It's because he wants to share his life with you.

So live this life God has given you. Love Jesus by growing in his Word and learning to confess him with your fellow Christians. Share this love with one another as you rejoice together in your shared inheritance with Christ. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, the peace that this world cannot possibly give you, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus your Lord. Amen.