

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

First Sunday of Lent – March 6, 2022

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil.”

- Luke 4:1-2a -

Every Sunday he made his way toward the exit. George shook my hand and always said the same thing, “Peace be with you.” This has stood out for me in a couple of different ways. The first is that George never participated in the sharing of the peace, unless I or someone in the congregation made it a point to go to him, but this peace was almost always shared as he was leaving the church. It would be the last words I heard from him most weeks.

When George came to the point where he could no longer attend the liturgy due to health issues, I realized how much I missed this simple greeting, especially in light of the verse noted above. As Jesus is preparing for the time of his ascension, he is imparting to the disciples peace. Such peace is not the absence of conflict. Jesus prepared the disciples not simply to be ready for conflict, but hatred and persecution. He further prepared them for the reality of death, that as Jesus was put to death by those who hated him, so too would be his disciples.

The peace we have comes in Jesus’ promise going back to his final words before his crucifixion. “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.” (Jn. 16:33)

When we go out into the world, we enter a world where Christian values are, or already have, eroded. We go into a world that has drastically different values. The world has rejected basic biology of being created male and female, has abandoned God’s design for marriage as being between a man and woman, has lifted up abortion as the answer to unexpected pregnancies, and labels as hate speech basic biblical teaching that does not endorse the “almighty me” ideology. Yes, faithful witness to Christ will be challenging. Yet, in our witness to Jesus we have peace.

As we go, remember that we go with the presence of Christ. “Lo, I am with you always to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20) We go with the one who is the Prince of Peace, from whom nothing can separate us (Romans 8).