

In addition to today being the 6th Sunday of Easter, it's also Rogationtide, which is recognized the days before Jesus' ascension. Rogation means "TO ASK" and it is customary for the church to set aside time to "ask" for God's blessings, particularly on the earth and her harvest. We've long known that even when we do everything "right" we still need "to ask" God's blessing for a fruitful harvest, health for human labors, and protection from hardships like flooding or droughts.

In today's gospel, we find Jesus preparing his disciples for his departure. Veiled in his teaching are a couple of very important indirect "asks."

First, Jesus says, "Those who love me will keep my word." He wants his disciples to remember and follow through with what has taught them. Which is no small ask. Jesus' "word to keep" is to love God and one another, to follow him faithfully, to forgive those who have wronged you and love your enemies, to promote the Kingdom of God and share the Good news of God's redeeming love, to deny yourself and serve the poor, the outcast, and any in need.

The second ask in today's text is to "not let your hearts be troubled...do not be afraid." Jesus has just washed his disciples' feet, predicted that he would be betrayed, and told them he was leaving them. f course they are troubled.

Jesus promises them that the Holy Spirit is coming to continue to teach and remind them of everything he has said. Then Jesus offers them peace. His peace. Not the peace the world gives.

It's hard to imagine what peace the world offers, given the lack of it, but it seems to me that peace in the world largely comes from power. Being a global superpower has its privileges.

A real sense of peace comes from knowing that other countries don't want to mess with you when you have military might, political and economic influence. But that's not how God operates.

God's peace doesn't even match Websters' dictionary definition of peace: which is "a state of quiet or tranquility, freedom from disturbance or agitation."

William Alexander Percy wrote in one of the hymns in our hymnal: "The peace of God, it is no peace, but strife closed in the sod. Yet let us pray for but one thing -- the marvelous peace of God."

God's peace is countercultural. God's peace is not the absence of conflict but of connection: the presence of **right relationship**—with God, with others, with ourselves. It is **shalom**—wholeness, justice, balance. God's peace is participatory. God's peace is about restoration and transformation.

The peace that Jesus offers his disciples comes from following God's commandments and living out his word, through serving others and caring for the least of these.

As Jesus' disciples we find peace in loving our enemies, rather than hating them.

We find peace in supporting missions rather than building mansions.

We find peace in ourselves by being aware of God's abiding presence within us, no matter what our circumstances are.

The psalm for today asks God to be "merciful to us and bless us, to show us the light of his countenance and come to us" and "For God's ways to be known upon earth, God's saving help among all nations."

As we **ask** for God's blessings in all these things, let us also **ask** for courage, clarity, and conviction so that we can do as Jesus asks his disciples and God's ways will be known upon earth through you and me, keeping Jesus' word.