

John 14: 23 – 29

'What kind of peace?

Extract from a pupil's essay: **"Armistice was signed on 11th November 1918. Since then, every year on that date, we have had two minutes of peace"!!**

More accurate than we might like to think

In today's gospel, Jesus offers his peace to his followers; a peace that, he says, is different from the worldly peace known to the people of his day.

It's worth stopping to think what that worldly peace was like.

It was a peace enforced by the military might of the Roman empire. It was a peace that was an absence of armed conflict, but it wasn't necessarily a peace that brought well-being or freedom or justice. It was a peace that had deep fear and great resentment woven through it. It was a peace with winners and losers. No wonder Jesus states that the peace he gives us is not **"as the world gives."**

Centuries after Jesus, Albert Einstein wrote: **"Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding."**

It's worth remembering that Jesus is saying that he offers a different kind of peace when we see images of conflict across the world daily. It can be easy to slip into thinking that a cessation of military action is what will bring peace. It can be easy to fall into the trap of thinking of peace as solely an absence of armed conflict. However, maybe we have become more aware from recent wars that the peace which follows the war has got to have justice and righteousness woven through it. **Not** fear and resentment but justice (fairness, integrity, reparation) and righteousness (restoration of lasting relationships).

The Context of Jesus

For Jesus, and the Jewish people, peace (shalom) was a concept with much breadth as well as depth. It was about being whole, about being inclusive, about right relationships.

Muriel Lester – a Baptist, pacifist and one-time companion of Gandhi, famously said:

'The job of the peacemaker is to stop war, to purify the world, to get it saved from poverty and riches, to heal the sick, to comfort the sad, to wake up those who have not yet found God, to create joy and beauty wherever you go, to find God in everything and in everyone.'

That is quite a list, isn't it?

Local example

I'd like to give an example of this at a level of the local community – as well as including Ukraine in our thoughts.

Years ago, I was asked to go along to a meeting between a disgruntled parent and a Headteacher. There was certainly conflict and a lack of peace. I sat and I listened. At the end of just over an hour, the parent left and the Head turned to me and said:

"Well, that went better than I'd feared – what did you think?"

I paused and said: “I’m not so sure.”

“But the parent went away without any further arguments to raise with me, didn’t she?”

I replied: “I think that’s because she’d given up – you’d talked her down.”

“What do you mean?”

“I’m not sure if you’re aware of how much you talked and how much she talked during the hour?”

The Head pulled a face indicating that she wasn’t sure ...

“After the first 5 minutes, I did surreptitiously time it – and in the next 55 minutes – you talked for 50 of them”

That meeting had not brought peace – even though initially the Head thought that it had because she felt she’d got her points across. Instead – it festered resentment. Though to finish on a more hope-filled note – eventually things did improve!

When you read the gospels in terms of the conversations Jesus had – notice how much he asked questions or answered questions rather than launching in himself!

Conclusion

So as we continue to pray for Ukraine, for other areas of the world in conflict and as we think about conflicts or arguments on a much smaller scale which involve us personally ... as we pray and think – let’s bear in mind what God longs for the end result to be. **Amen.**

Some material: [Explore & respond \(rootsontheweb.com\)](https://www.rootsontheweb.com)