

## **“4 Unwelcome Visitors”**

Message by DD Adams

Providence United Methodist Church

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

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Today’s gospel lesson comes from the book of John, chapter 14, verses 23 through 29. I’ll be reading from the New Revised Standard Version. “Jesus answered him, ‘Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.’”

“I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.

Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, “I am going away, and I am coming to you.” If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.” This is God’s word for God’s people.

Thanks be to God. Let’s pray. God of comfort and peace, you are the Comforter of all souls. Do today what you do best—in all your perfection—open our hearts as we listen to you in eagerness with willing and joyful hearts and minds let us receive from today . . . for with God . . . *all things* work to bless and make your face shine upon us. Amen.

Peace be with you! When I returned from my leave away from you I was happy to be home, but the next day it wasn't long before everything hit the fan. The phone didn't stop ringing, there's no food in the fridge, my car's transmission needed changed, there's way too much laundry to do, and most importantly, what's going on this Sunday at church!! But, I was finally home . . . . I could relax, take off my shoes, and take a few minutes to center myself.

When I began to get back to work my emotions started to drain. Soon there's a knock at the door. I open the door and let in 4 very disturbing visitors . . . . . anxiety, worry, discouragement, and fear. Many of us invite these unwelcome visitors into our homes and hearts daily. Of course they're not welcome, but we let them in anyway, and they disturb everything around us.

These unwelcome visitors steal our joy and interrupt our peace. You've heard the expression, "Your castle is your hassle." I guess a home is all you make it. I like to think of my home as a place where God is welcome and comfortable, but there's a problem. If we keep letting these destructive, unwelcome buggers into our hearts and home we literally squeeze God out and make it virtually impossible for God to grant us peace. There's simply not room, there's a feeling of being home alone but with the wrong visitors. The visitor we want is the One that comes in the door, feels comfortable, and gives a peaceful presence.

Jesus said to his disciples, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." The Holy Spirit *wants* to rule and reign in our hearts, but we squeeze God's spirit out. There's simply not room, so we hinder and limit God's power in our lives to give us the very thing we want and need.

In verse 23 Jesus said, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them."

There's an emphasis on doing God's word. Maybe you're at a place in your life where God is *trying* to do a work—trying to clean up the clutter and the distractions we give into.

Jesus said that through the Holy Spirit's working in our hearts that he would expand on his teaching. Listen again to verse 26, "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, *will teach you everything.*" Now that's a big promise!

Last week we talked about how we're empowered to expand and stretch our ability to love people; that's the greatest or surely one of the greatest promises God gives us! Today, we're challenged to receive the peace of God and to make more room in our hearts for God. That requires us *to do* the basics of God's word. In verse 23 Jesus says, "Those who love me will keep my word." So the progression is like this; instead of opening the door of our hearts to unwelcome visitors like anxiety, worry, fear, and discouragement—we decide take a stand and refuse the unwelcome visitors.

We make a determined decision to make more room for God in our lives. Please know I'm not speaking to anyone in particular here today. This topic and lectionary text was planned 6 months ago. To obey God we've got to remind ourselves who God is in our lives.

Prior to the last Lenten season we had this year I made a promise to God and myself. When I read God's word I would do a better job of focusing. I would take my time. And with my prayer life, I would pray until I absolutely was prayed out. I would take the time.

I promised I would remain patient to pray for every need of yours and my family that came to mind. I've kept that promise. God has helped me. The result is that the peace and comfort of God floods my heart much more consistently. I'm

trusting God more, forgiving others and myself is a daily occurrence. I let go of things out of my control.

To feel the presence of the Peace Giver who wants the very best for us we must *acknowledge* the Peace Giver and receive. God takes the initiative and promises to give us peace, but the call is reciprocal. *We* must make more space for God every day. I understand people don't have as much time these days, but all of us should take *some* time to pray and receive peace. We can't love others fully and completely without the love that God has poured into our hearts. It's God's love that empowers us to love others. Peace is a byproduct of the love of God.

The peace we feel comes to us through the doing and loving of others. The anxiety, the worry, the discouragement, and the fear gives way when we realize the strong presence of God walking along side of us helping. Let's embrace the peace from God. Let's shut-out those 4 unwelcome visitors. Let's slam the door of our heart on their face and receive God's peace. In so doing, the peace of God that passes all understanding unfolds within you.

Let's pray. Peace giver, touch our hearts this day and help us make more room for you. We'll always struggle with the challenges that life gives us, but our peace is not dependent on our circumstances. Let us be consumed with your peace that brings comfort and guidance. Let us only welcome into our hearts your presence. And now, may the God of peace himself cause you to be completely dedicated to him. Amen.