

The First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham
“Youth Sunday: Second Sermon”
Jenny Schlafhauser
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John 14: 25-31

When I read this passage I knew I wanted to give my sermon on it because it has been so applicable to my, and I'm sure many of your, lives. There have been many instances in my life where I have experienced the Holy Spirit and the peace that Jesus promises us in this passage. However, there has also been many more times where I haven't.

I immediately started racking my brain for the perfect story to fit this sermon, but it didn't take me long to realize there was an obvious story to tell. It's the kind of story that people always say “oh it's bad now but you will laugh at it in the future.” Well I'm still waiting for it to be funny. So I go to Oakland University to take the ACT. I get there with plenty of time to find the building I'm supposed to take it in, but lets just say it took a lot longer than I thought. I went around the entire campus trying to find the building and of course was stressing out. I did end up finding the building only to realize I didn't have my ACT ticket with me. The ticket was my registration confirmation and was needed to take the test. I knew I had it with me when I was running around campus trying to find the building, so that meant I must have dropped it somewhere along the way. It could have been anywhere in the entire Oakland campus. That is when I really started freaking out. I ran, literally ran faster then i ever did in gym class, all over Oakland retracing my footsteps looking everywhere for it. The whole time I was thinking “ Its getting too late they probably already started taking the test. I need to take the this ACT or my future will be ruined.”

And just when I was about to give up and leave and cry the whole way home only what I can describe as an act of God occurred. I saw this white sheet of paper on the grass. I ran to it picked it up and lo and behold it was my soaked by still useable ticket lying in the grass. So I got the ticket and ran to the building the ACT was at, and miraculously I got there in time to take the test.

I experienced a lot of emotions that day. I was Scared I wouldn't make it to the test in time. I was tired from running about two miles around the OU campus. And I was beyond stressed about the test and unnecessarily worried about my future. but I had no peace. I never felt the Holy spirit. But that was a part of Jesus's promise in this passage, so why didn't I have it? It is what Jesus says I should have.

When Jesus promises peace, he is basically saying you will be okay with God by your side. He also is saying that his peace is different than the world's definition of peace. The world's definition of peace is the absence of troubles, but Jesus's promise of peace is to be calm and collected in the midst of troubles. Our lives are partly defined by the struggles and troubles we face. Its a weirdly essential part of life that Jesus knows we can't escape nor should we. As every gym teacher has said “no pain no gain.” So instead of Jesus promising that we have no struggle he promises that he will be there right next to us during all of

our trouble. We just need to reach out and hold his hand. Jesus promises you that if you stick by him and focus on him you will have this peace.

This would have been good to remember while searching frantically for my ACT ticket. That all I needed was to stretch out my hand to the Holy Spirit. But Jesus doesn't just want us to just half-heartedly believe this. He wants us to wholeheartedly believe and trust him. Just knowing a promise anyone makes isn't enough to make the anxiety about the future disappear. We need to know how the promise will be fulfilled in order to rid us of our worry. The Holy Spirit is the how. The Spirit he sends is what will bring us peace and what will stay with us through all of our troubles. It is the means by which we will receive peace. It is the form God will take in order to be with us. Knowing the Holy Spirit will be with us helps us feel less anxious about future troubles because we know how God is going to help us. This promise helps us understand that we just need to let the Holy Spirit do its work in us and we will be okay.

The promises of peace and the Holy Spirit are of course not promises. They are another of the multiple ways God shows his loves us. These promises make us feel so loved and protected. God's love is his greatest gift that he wants us to open and embrace. Wasn't that what Jesus was trying to do on earth? Love us. And with his love comes his care and promises of help. I wish I would have remembered this passage and God's promise when I was running (with burning lungs) around OUs campus. I should have reached my hand to the Holy Spirit that was running next to me the whole time. I then would have realized I would be cared for by God no matter if I found that ticket or not. If I did I wouldn't have been worried or upset or afraid.

Three things I was and three things Jesus tells us not to be in this passage, and three things I didn't have to be if I only let the Holy spirit do its job. So I just spent a lot of time talking about how I didn't experience this peace that Jesus promises. But I haven't talked about what exactly this peace feels like and any experience with it. I am not an experienced and super-wise person, but I will share with you most recent experience where Jesus fulfills this promise. It was just last night actually. I was sitting in bed practicing my sermon when I started to get incredibly nervous about giving it. I'm a little embarrassed to admit this. I was so overwhelmed I just started to cry. I then remembered what my sermon was about and how I just needed to reach out to the Holy Spirit.

So I began to pray that God grant me peace of mind, and shortly after I said Amen I stopped crying and this wave of excitement came over me. I was no longer nervous. I was looking forward to giving the Sermon. It was the weirdest and most sudden shift in mood that I ever experienced. I have been continually nervous about giving the Sermon for months and with just one prayer my nervousness was mostly gone and excitement took its place. I was texting my friend about how nervous I was and then I after I prayed I texted him saying, "I'm actually okay now. The Holy spirit is at work!" The Holy Spirit is always here to work. God is always here to love. And Jesus always follows through on his promises. So if I have one challenge for you (sorry pastor John I stole your idea to tell them a story and give them a challenge) it would be, whenever you're feeling stressed or overwhelmed or struggling just reach out to the Holy Spirit and pray. And Peace will be provided.