

Heaven is our final destination. God is our home there. Peace at the last.

So I was excited again to reread this morning's collect. From its words, I realize my finitude before a God who has prepared for those who love Him such good things as pass man's understanding, whose promises exceed all we can desire THROUGH Jesus Christ.. because of what he has done for us... Think about that for a second. Finite people receiving infinite blessing.

That infinite blessing includes the peace of God, which we can enjoy now in part now by coming to know him and love in the reading of scripture, in the liturgies of the church, in the shady rests and fiery crises of life. So what about this word "Peace"? And the peace of god?

We imagine heaven to be a peaceful place.. or state of eternal joy being in God's presence and serving Him. We owe this way of understanding peace as "rest and tranquility" to the Greek word in the New Testament, "eirēnē", as in irenic, its derived adjective peaceful. But there are miles and miles to go before we know the "peace of Heaven." Such an understanding of peace as rest is incomplete because we overlook a related understanding of Peace -meaning wholeness, fulness of well being, and security- to the Old Testament word, "Shalom".

For until Satan is finally beaten down under our feet, war goes on in Heaven. For until God's lovers are all resurrected and entering into His eternity, Peace is not perfectly whole in heaven. God does not rest until then.

What about peace on earth, and specifically this morning, peace among those who have been born to us?

Many of our children venting aimlessly in the public square are seeking peace within themselves,. They have not known peace in their families, because families are no longer

whole..security is something related only to intruders . They are not whole because there is no peace from above or from hands joined at their dinner tables to bind them..Dad is never home, and brothers and sisters are set aside for digital companionship.

They do not have peace within because their parents never radiated it.. because *they* did not have a purpose which put them at peace: coming to know and love God-only lots of new and shiny choices for living. They had decided to let God go in the 60s.

These are people Isaiah addresses as being “afar off”...afar off as young St. Augustine was...that is until Isaiah’s message of Peace in God rests on their ears.

In the meantime, we will cling to this and then we must share it with the restless and discontented: “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son Jesus Christ. By grace, The only heavenly peace we can begin to appreciate on earth derives from knowing God and loving God. That is a take-home definition of peace. The prayer is sending us to our study bibles and prayer books and hymnals..and into the parking lot to lift someone up we’d rather not touch.

Using our hearts and minds. We could also say, this “peace” we can enjoy now comes from our sanctification ..allowing that the Holy Ghost is sending us to the parking lot ..to begin molding our hearts and minds FOR heaven..and secondly God’s peace comes in our preservation, our lives being preserved by the body and blood of Jesus as our heavenly food.

God speaks through Isaiah this morning this with these words: “I create the fruit of the lips:Peace....Peace to him that is far off and to him that is near, saith the Lord, and I will heal him.”

The fruit of the lips is speech, and the first fruit of God’s speech is the word from Isaiah, “Peace”. Peace upon those who are near Jerusalem... ground zero, where the Cross of Jesus brought about the salvation of those who grew to know and love Him.

God's peace descends upon those afar off. It says a lot about God's character when he says the word "peace" going first to those who are far off, far from Jerusalem. Souls anxious they are too far out or too far gone for salvation to come to them... can be at Peace.

The whole saving work of God in bringing you and me peace are these three: from Hebrews, the resurrection and the eternal covenant in the blood of Christ; from St. Paul in Romans, final victory over Satan; from St. Paul in his first letter to those Thessalonians so anxious for Christ's immediate return..as we are.. sanctification and preservation for the present , as I mentioned earlier. Paul prays for us this: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of Jesus Christ."

Let us consider and look at the world around us. From the 6th chapter of the book of Revelation, now hear this: the forces of evil are allowed "to take peace from the earth." Man's sin and God's judgment go hand in hand. Human history runs its crooked circular course between the growing menace of the forces of evil and the rescue of that faithful "remnant" to whom the promise of peace was always spoken.

Peace can only be preserved by the Lord's precepts, as Christ said: "I leave you in peace, my peace I give you". That is, as I left you in peace, in peace I shall find you." As Christ left the world, he wished to leave the gift he wanted to find when he returned. We have a commandment from heaven to retain his gift of peace, the knowledge and love of God, for Jesus said, "I shall find what I left."